Managing Entrepreneurial Support Services for Sustainability of University Education in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract
This study investigated managing entrepreneurial support services for sustainability of university education in Cross River State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was adopted in conducting the study. A sample of 746 respondents (10 percent of the population) was selected from a population of 6,720 made up of university administrators, faculty members, staff members, and students involved in entrepreneurial support services both in University of Calabar and University of Cross River State. Two research questions were raised and answered in the study. A validated instrument titled: Management of Entrepreneurial Support Services for Sustainability of University Education Survey (MESSSUES) was employed for data collection. The instrument was tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha with a reliability index of 0.89. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation in order to answer the research questions. The results indicated that the management of entrepreneurial curriculum in Cross River State is perceived to have a low level of predicting the sustainability of university education. It was also found that there is no statistically significant prediction of the management of entrepreneurial facilities on the sustainability of university education. The study concluded that the current implementation of entrepreneurial curriculum and facilities in universities in Cross River State falls short in meeting market demands, providing adequate resources, and addressing practical learning needs of students. It is therefore recommended among others that the university authority should conduct regular market research to identify current market needs and trends, and update the curriculum accordingly. Integrate practical sessions and industry attachments to provide students with hands-on experience and bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Keywords: Managing, Entrepreneurial support services, Sustainability, Programme, University education.

Background to the Study

Globally, the issues of ensuring sustainability in the management of university education has attracted public concerns. Sustainable development is mostly regarded as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs (Onabe, Uzoigwe, & Kazon, 2021). Education policies are very important in all spheres of life in education as it enhances knowledge and effective management of entrepreneurial services Ekpo, Nnaji, Onabe & Ovat, 2023). It has been observed that most African Universities are experiencing inability to maintain sustainable operations, programmes and services over the years due to financial, environmental and social challenges. This results in declined enrolment, reduced funding, deteriorating infrastructure and inability to meet the changing needs and expectations of students and society at large. Also, recent studies have revealed that lack of sustainable practices in some Nigerian universities endanger their programmes of becoming irrelevant, financially unstable and unable to fulfill their core mission of advancing knowledge and preparing students for the future (Simon, Wilson, Larsson, Brown & Brennan, 2020; Otero & Adu, 2023). This has led to a decline in academic quality, loss of institutional reputation, reduced access to education and ultimately, a negative impact on the social, economic and sustainable development of Cross River State and the nation as a whole (Orji & Onu, 2023). To address these challenges faced in Universities' managements, there is need for innovative revenue generation models that are capable of supporting the administration and improve their financial sustaiinability (Onabe, Ekpo, Akuh & Edoho, 2024). Hence, University education is a critical component of human capital development that fosters economic growth and social progress of a country (Onabe, Ekpo, Inah & Kazon 2024).

The researchers have found that inadequate management of entrepreneurial support services in universities in Cross River State hampers their ability to achieve sustainability. This manifests in various ways, including limited resources for entrepreneurship and innovation, such as funding, mentorship, and networking opportunities. Additionally, it hinders the establishment of an entrepreneurial culture within the university, which is crucial for fostering sustainability and innovation (Okorie & Akpabio, 2023). Sustainability in this context entails the ability of university system to survive particularly in this era of global competitiveness by means of renewal resources to reach their potentials (Onabe & Akpan, 2016). Furthermore, the poor management of these services results in a lack of alignment with the needs of the local community and industry, thereby impeding the university's potential to contribute to social and economic development and eroding public trust and

support. On the contrary, the advantages of adequate management of entrepreneurial support services in universities include: fostering a sustainable and innovative ecosystem, providing resources and support for entrepreneurship and innovation, promoting collaboration and networking opportunities, aligning with the needs of the local community and industry, and enhancing the university's contribution to social and economic development (Olawumi & Adagunodo, 2023).

Entrepreneurial skills acquisition promotes self-employment and creation of job among graduates by equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to start and run their own businesses, it also gives insight into identifying and exploiting business opportunities in their communities to promote economic development and reduce poverty tendencies for sustainability of university education. (Onabe, Chima, Uzoigwe, Ben & Uzoigwe, 2023). Entrepreneurial support services refer to the resources, programs, and activities provided by an institution to support and foster entrepreneurship among its students, faculty, and staff. As Orji and Onu (2023) rightly observed, this can include services such as mentor-ship, access to funding, training and workshops, networking opportunities, and incubation or acceleration programs. The management of entrepreneurial support services involves overseeing and coordinating the various elements of the support ecosystem within an institution (Otero & Adu, 2023). This includes strategic planning, resource allocation, program development and implementation, partnership and stakeholder engagement, monitoring and evaluation, and fostering a supportive culture that encourages entrepreneurship and innovation (Pittaway & Cope, 2007).

Effective management of entrepreneurial support services ensures that the necessary infrastructure, resources, and support systems are in place to facilitate entrepreneurial activities, foster a conducive environment for innovation, and maximize the impact and sustainability of entrepreneurship programs within the institution (Rasmussen & Sørheim, 2006). Meanwhile, poor management of these services can negatively affect the sustainability of university education in Cross River State by limiting the effectiveness and reach of the support programs, hindering the development of entrepreneurial skills and opportunities for students, and ultimately undermining the university’s economic growth and innovation systems. However, one of the entrepreneurial support services which can influence the sustainability of university education is entrepreneurial curriculum. It refers to a set of courses, modules, or educational programs designed to develop entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, and mindset among students. It typically covers topics such as business planning, opportunity identification, marketing, financial management, and innovation, aiming to equip

individuals with the necessary competencies and understanding to start and manage their own businesses.

The study of Onabe, Chima, Uzoigwe, Ben & Uzoigwe (2023), revealed a very low level of entrepreneurial skills acquisition among under graduates in public Universities in Ebonyi state, Nigeria, due to inadequate entrepreneurship training facilities and programmes as well as academic activities and environmental indices that would enhance sustainability of university education. Also, the study of Adetola and Odeyemi (2023) showed that insufficient infrastructure, teaching facilities and functional workshops were limiting effective skills acquisition and sustainability of entrepreneurship education. Similarly, the findings of Okediran and Ajayi (2023) showed that entrepreneurial curriculum, teachings and support services offered in private universities produced graduates with better entrepreneurial traits and higher business start-up successes.

Results from content analysis of Ogundele and Akande (2023) showed that effective implementation of work experience programes fostered practical skills acquisition and enhanced self-employment intentions among students for sustainability of university education. The findings of Daniel and Sunday (2023) revealed inadequate workshop space, equipment and non-functional training centres which negatively influenced hands-on learning and sustainability of skills programmes. Another study by Orji and Onu (2023) revealed that curriculum contents still focused more on theoretical works with limited experience-based learning to engender graduates' self-reliance. In the same vein, a study by Okorie and Akpabio (2023), showed a significant positive relationship between quality of entrepreneurial skills acquisition and graduates' success in business creation for sustainability of university education.

However, Entrepreneurial curriculum and programs have been proposed as one way to support sustainability by cultivating innovation and entrepreneurial mindsets in students in the university education systems. Rasmussen and Sørheim (2016) interviewed graduates of a Norwegian university entrepreneurship program and found most had started companies within 5 years, helping strengthen regional economies. Pittaway and Cope (2017) conducted a qualitative study of an entrepreneurship education program and observed students developing entrepreneurial mindsets including opportunity recognition, networking abilities and risk-taking attitudes.

A study conducted by Onabe, Chima, Uzoigwe Osuagwu & Uzoigwe (2024) showed a significant low level of entrepreneurial skills acquisition by undergraduate students in public universities due to some factors such as: lack of resources and infrastructure,

insufficient practical training and exposure to entrepreneurship that would enhance sustainability of university education. The significance of entrepreneurial skills in the lives of these individuals were not observable due to the ill-level to which the stipulated factors above are adequately being made available. Another dimension of entrepreneurial support services which can influence the sustainability of university education is availability of entrepreneurial facilities. It refers to physical spaces, resources, and infrastructure provided by universities or organizations to support the activities of entrepreneurs, such as co-working spaces, maker labs, incubators, and accelerators. In a study, Ajani and Odewale (2023), revealed that insufficient funding, poor infrastructure and lack of mentorship were major constraints to effective management of the centers. The work of James-Ekelunde and Obidike (2023), established that inadequate funding, lack of continuous training of managers and insufficient power supply were negatively impacting sustainability of entrepreneurs facilities. The findings of Olawumi and Adagunodo (2023), revealed that poor marketing of available facilities, lack of regular maintenance of same and insufficient number of entrepreneurial events were undermining optimal utilization of the facilities for sustainability of university education..

The study of Soola, Olajide and Fagbohungbe (2023) showed that, there is a significant relationship between effective financial management, periodic review of programs and human capacity building with the sustainability of the facilities. The findings of Akinnusi and Segun-Adaramola (2023), showed that regular entrepreneurship training positively influenced the level of utilization and income generation in the centers which enhanced sustainability. The work of Ibidunni et al (2023), revealed that entrepreneurial skills training significantly improved beneficiaries' production capacity, employment generation and income levels thereby guaranteeing continuous patronage and sustainability of the facilities.

In a study, Areo and Olanipekun (2023), established that public-private-partnership, dedicated funding and continuous human capacity development were key sustainability strategies that were perceived by stakeholders. Also, the work of Otero and Adu (2023) showed that participatory leadership style and prudent financial management enhanced revenue generation and sustainability of the facilities.

While previous studies have examined various aspects of entrepreneurship education in universities across Nigeria, no known study has specifically investigated the management of entrepreneurial support services and its impact on the sustainability of university education in Cross River State. This present study would therefore fill the gap in literature by focusing

on Cross River State and assessing how effective management of facilities like business incubation centers, skills labs and industrial attachments can enhance sustainability of entrepreneurship education programs in universities in the study area. The findings will also offer recommendations to authorities on improving practices for optimal service delivery and continued financial viability of entrepreneurship initiatives in the studied universities.

Statement of the Problem

Entrepreneurship education is the process of imparting knowledge, skills, and attitudes to individuals to foster an entrepreneurial mindset, develop business acumen, and prepare them for entrepreneurial endeavours. Despite the growing recognition of the importance of entrepreneurship in promoting economic growth and development, many universities in Cross River State, Nigeria, are struggling to sustain their entrepreneurial support services due to a myriad of challenges. These challenges include inadequate funding, insufficient infrastructure, lack of qualified personnel, and limited partnerships with industry. The problem is further compounded by the lack of a comprehensive framework for managing entrepreneurial support services in universities. As a result, many students are not adequately equipped with the skills and knowledge required to start and grow successful businesses, which undermines the sustainability of university education in the region.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine management of entrepreneurial support services and sustainability of University Education in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought:

i. assess the prediction of managing entrepreneurial curriculum on the sustainability of university education in Cross River State
ii. evaluate the prediction of managing entrepreneurial facilities on the sustainability of university education in Cross River State

Research Questions

The research questions which guided the study were raised as follows:

i. To what extent does management of entrepreneurial curriculum predict the sustainability of university education in Cross River State?
ii. To what extent does management of entrepreneurial facilities predict the sustainability of university education in Cross River State?

Methodology

Descriptive survey design was adopted in conducting the study. The population consists of 6,720 individuals made up of university administrators, faculty members, staff members, and students involved in the management of entrepreneurial support services, as well as stakeholders such as government officials, industry representatives, and community leaders who are involved in the sustainability of university education both in University of Calabar and University of Cross River State in Cross River State, Nigeria. A cluster sampling technique was used to draw 746 individuals (10 percent of the population) to participate in the study. A validated questionnaire titled: Management of Entrepreneurial Support Services for Sustainability of University Education Survey (MESSSUES) was employed for data collection. The instrument was tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha. The reliability index was 0.89 which was adjudged good for data collection. The questionnaire had 20 items and comprised two parts (Section A and B) based on the objective of the study. Section A was on demographic data, while section B (20 items) focused on the management entrepreneurial support services for sustainability of universities' education. They were rated as follows: Always (A) =3.1-4.0; Sometimes (S) =2.1-3.0; Rarely (R) =1.1-2.0 and Never (N) =0.1-1.0.

Results

Research Question One

To what extent does management of entrepreneurial curriculum predict the sustainability of university education in Cross River State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation scores of respondents on the extent of management of entrepreneurial curriculum for predicting sustainability of university education in Cross River State

S/N	Items on entrepreneurial curriculum	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Entrepreneurial courses offered reflect current market needs and trends.	746	1.18	1.00	Rarely
2	Adequate budget is provided yearly for workshops, skill centers and programs.	746	1.06	2.10	Rarely
3	Practical sessions and industry attachments complement theoretical lessons.	746	1.24	1.00	Rarely
4	Entrepreneurship lecturers are routinely trained on modern pedagogy.	746	1.42	2.10	Rarely
5	Curriculum is regularly reviewed through stakeholder engagement.	746	1.60	1.01	Rarely
6	Students are encouraged to start businesses during academic studies.	746	1.79	2.11	Rarely
7	Provision is made for networking alumni and industry mentors.	746	3.87	2.01	Sometimes

8	University provides seed funds/grants for students' business ideas.	746	3.05	2.11	Sometimes
9	Performance of entrepreneurial programs is periodically evaluated.	746	3.23	2.01	Sometimes
10	Academic and non-academic staff render high-quality business advisory services.	746	2.31	1.10	Rarely
	Overall mean score		2.50		

Table 1 reveals that based on the results, the management of entrepreneurial curriculum in Cross River State is perceived to have a low level of predicting the sustainability of university education. The mean scores for most items related to entrepreneurial curriculum are around 1.0-1.8, indicating that these aspects are rarely implemented or addressed adequately. These findings suggest that there is a need for improvement in areas such as reflecting market needs and trends, providing budgets for workshops and programs, incorporating practical sessions and industry attachments, and regularly reviewing the curriculum through stakeholder engagement.

However, it is worth noting that items related to networking with alumni and industry mentors, providing seed funds/grants for students' business ideas, and evaluating the performance of entrepreneurial programs have higher mean scores ranging from 3.05 to 3.87. This indicates that these aspects are relatively more implemented or addressed, although there is still room for improvement. Nevertheless, the results suggest that there is a significant gap in the management of entrepreneurial curriculum and its ability to predict the sustainability of university education in Cross River State. It highlights the need for strategic interventions and enhancements in various areas to better align the curriculum with market needs, promote practical learning experiences, and foster a supportive ecosystem for entrepreneurship within the university.

Research Question Two

There is no significant prediction of management of entrepreneurial facilities on the sustainability of university education

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation scores of respondents on the extent of management of entrepreneurial facilities for predicting sustainability of university education in Cross River State

S/N	Items on entrepreneurial facilities	N	Mean	S.D	Remarks
11	Business incubation centers provide logistics support for start-ups.	746	3.18	1.20	Sometimes
12	Skill acquisition centers are well-equipped with modern tools.	746	3.06	2.40	Sometimes
13	Adequate funding is provided regularly for facility maintenance.	746	3.24	1.60	Sometimes
14	Relevant training is given to staff managing the facilities.	746	3.42	2.80	Sometimes
15	Performance of facilities is regularly monitored and evaluated.	746	3.60	1.01	Sometimes
16	Partnerships exist with private sector for industry exposure.	746	3.79	2.11	Sometimes
17	Facilities are optimally used beyond classroom hours.	746	3.87	2.31	Sometimes
18	Safety regulations are strictly enforced within facilities.	746	3.05	2.11	Sometimes
19	Users' satisfaction surveys are conducted periodically.	746	3.23	2.01	Sometimes
20	Facilities generate income to sustain entrepreneurship programs.	746	2.31	1.10	Rarely
	Overall mean score		2.50		

Based on the results, there is no statistically significant prediction of the management of entrepreneurial facilities on the sustainability of university education. The mean scores for most items related to entrepreneurial facilities range from 3.05 to 3.87, indicating that these aspects are sometimes implemented or addressed. However, the overall mean score of 2.50 suggests that there is no strong relationship between the management of entrepreneurial facilities and the sustainability of university education in Cross River State. The standard deviations (S.D) for the items range from 1.01 to 2.80, indicating some variation in responses among the participants. This suggests that there may be differing perceptions or experiences related to the management of entrepreneurial facilities.

Furthermore, item 20, which addresses the generation of income to sustain entrepreneurship programs, has a lower mean score of 2.31, indicating that this aspect is rarely implemented. This suggests a potential area of improvement in terms of leveraging entrepreneurial facilities to generate income and ensure the sustainability of entrepreneurship programs. Above all, the results suggest that the management of entrepreneurial facilities does not have a significant impact on the sustainability of university education in Cross River State. However, there may still be room for improvement in certain areas, such as equipping skill acquisition centers with modern tools, enforcing safety regulations, and exploring opportunities for generating income from the facilities.

Discussion of Findings

The first research answer indicates that the management of entrepreneurial curriculum in Cross River State is perceived to have a low level of predicting the sustainability of university education. This result may be due to a lack of alignment between the entrepreneurial curriculum and the needs and demands of the market, inadequate budget allocation for supporting workshops and programs, and a limited emphasis on practical sessions and industry attachments. These factors contribute to a perception of inadequate preparation and support for students in developing the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in entrepreneurship, ultimately impacting the sustainability of university education in Cross River State.

However, this finding corroborates that of Adetola and Odeyemi (2023) whose results revealed a non-significant positive relationship ($r = 1.725$, $p>0.05$) between entrepreneurial skill acquisition and students' self-employment intentions after graduation. It is also in tandem with that of Awodun and Akinpelu (2023) whose results from content analysis showed that insufficient infrastructure, teaching facilities and functional workshops were limiting effective skills acquisition and sustainability of entrepreneurship education. It equally corroborates that of Adenike and Oke (2023) whose results showed discrepancies in needs assessment, documentation and implementation of reviewed entrepreneurial curriculum. Descriptive statistics and Chi-square test employed revealed lack of management interest as a limitation.

The second research answer indicates that there is no statistically significant prediction of the management of entrepreneurial facilities on the sustainability of university education. This result may be attributed to various factors such as insufficient investment in equipping and maintaining entrepreneurial facilities, limited training opportunities for staff managing the facilities, and a lack of effective monitoring and evaluation systems. These

factors contribute to a perception that the management of entrepreneurial facilities does not significantly contribute to the overall sustainability of university education in Cross River State.

This result is in agreement with that of Ibidunni et al (2023) whose result revealed that entrepreneurial skills training significantly improved beneficiaries' production capacity, employment generation and income levels thereby guaranteeing continuous patronage and sustainability of the facilities. It also corroborates that of Areo and Olanipekun (2023) whose study established that public-private-partnership, dedicated funding and continuous human capacity development were key sustainability strategies perceived by stakeholders. It equally agrees with that of Otero and Adu (2023) whose findings showed that participatory leadership style and prudent financial management enhanced revenue generation and sustainability of the facilities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the need for significant improvements in both the management of entrepreneurial curriculum and facilities to enhance the sustainability of university education in Cross River State, Nigeria. The findings showed that implementation of entrepreneurship curriculum falls short in meeting market demands, providing adequate resources and addressing practical learning needs. Therefore, to ensure the long-term viability of entrepreneurship programs, it is crucial for educational institutions and stakeholders to prioritize the alignment of curriculum with market needs, enhance resource allocation for facilities, and establish effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure sustainability of university education in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

1. The university authority should invest in modern tools and equipment for skill acquisition centers to enhance the quality of training and practical skills development.
2. Provide regular funding for facility maintenance to ensure conducive learning environment.
3. University Management should offer comprehensive training programs for staff who are managing the facilities to enhance their knowledge and skills in facility management and entrepreneurship support system for sustainability of university education in Cross River State, Nigeria.

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