

**REPOSITIONING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN BUSINESS EDUCATION FOR YOUTH
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION IN THE NIGER DELTA**

Ogbonnaya Nwachuku OKIKE
Department of Entrepreneurship Education,
Federal College of Education (Technical) Akoka, Lagos Nigeria
08125858606, okikemog2016@gmail.

and

Vivian Agburuga
Department of Accounting Education, School of Business Education,
Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku Rivers State

ABSTRACT

The continuing need to prepare young people for productive employment, self-reliance and enterprise creation has increased attention to the practical orientation of Business Education in the Niger Delta. Although Business Education is expected to develop occupational and entrepreneurial competencies, achieving this mandate requires learning experiences that connect classroom knowledge with authentic business situations. This opinion paper examines the need to reposition experiential learning in Business Education for youth entrepreneurship and economic transformation in the Niger Delta. It discusses experiential learning as an approach through which students acquire entrepreneurial competencies by participating in practical activities, reflecting on experience and applying knowledge to real business problems. Project-based learning, problem-based learning, business simulations, internships, mentorship, student enterprise projects and industry-linked activities are examined as approaches capable of strengthening opportunity recognition, creativity, problem-solving, financial management and enterprise-management competencies. The paper argues that moving from predominantly classroom-centred instruction towards purposeful classroom-to-enterprise experiences can improve young people's preparedness for self-employment and productive participation in the economy. Inadequate facilities, weak institution-industry linkages, limited funding, educator capacity and insufficient exposure to authentic enterprise environments may, however, constrain implementation. The paper concludes that experiential learning can strengthen the contribution of Business Education to youth entrepreneurship and economic transformation when systematically integrated into curriculum implementation. It recommends stronger experiential curriculum implementation, sustained educator development, institution-enterprise partnerships, improved learning resources and competency-based assessment.

Keywords: Business Education; experiential learning; youth entrepreneurship; entrepreneurial competencies; economic transformation; Niger Delta

INTRODUCTION

The changing nature of employment and enterprise development has increased the importance of educational programmes that enable young people to translate knowledge into productive economic activities. This is particularly important for Business Education because the programme combines business knowledge, occupational preparation and entrepreneurial development. Its relevance should therefore be reflected not only in what students know after graduation but also in what they can practically accomplish with the knowledge and competencies acquired. Obidile and Onyeneke (2023) identified soft and hard entrepreneurial competencies required by Business Education graduates, while Bessong et al. (2023) similarly emphasised organising and customer-related competencies for entrepreneurial development.

Within the Niger Delta, the need to connect education with entrepreneurial development deserves particular attention. Evidence from Rivers State indicates that Business Education students exposed to entrepreneurship education developed entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and attitudes and reported strong intentions towards self-employment (Abdulkarim & Danagogo, 2023). Recent work in Rivers State also links beyond-classroom learning with entrepreneurial readiness among Business Education postgraduate students (Moses & Ile, 2026). These studies suggest that entrepreneurial

preparation becomes stronger when learning moves beyond abstract knowledge towards opportunities for application.

Business Education has an important role in this process because its curriculum encompasses entrepreneurship, accounting, marketing, office and administrative competencies and other business-related knowledge. However, theoretical knowledge alone does not guarantee the ability to identify opportunities, solve business problems or operate an enterprise. Nwaokokorom and Ikpeama (2023) emphasised accounting and problem-solving skills required of Business Education students for performance in the digital era. Ukata and Nmehielle (2023) likewise drew attention to data-analytical entrepreneurial skills among Business Education students in Rivers State. These competencies are best strengthened when learners repeatedly apply knowledge to meaningful tasks. Experiential learning offers a suitable pathway for narrowing the gap between classroom knowledge and entrepreneurial action. Motta and Galina (2023), in a systematic review, described experiential entrepreneurship education as learning by doing and concluded that it contributes to entrepreneurial intention and the development of entrepreneurial skills and competencies. Obi et al. (2022) found that Business Education students engaged in simulations, role plays, business laboratory practice, real-life cases, peer assessment, creative competitions and self-directed projects, although reflective activities were less evident.

The Niger Delta context makes this discussion especially timely. Akele and Duoduo (2024) examined mentoring and experiential-learning strategies for entrepreneurship instruction in Business Education programmes in Bayelsa State. Ito and Okudaye (2025) reported the relevance of experiential learning and practical skills acquisition to entrepreneurial intentions among Business Education students in Delta State-owned institutions. More recently, Okoro (2026) examined the application of experiential-learning activities in competency-based Business Education in Delta State universities. These studies provide a direct regional basis for considering how experiential learning can be repositioned as a central component of entrepreneurial preparation. Against this background, this paper examines experiential learning in Business Education, classroom-to-enterprise approaches, entrepreneurial competency development, implications for youth entrepreneurship and economic transformation in the Niger Delta, implementation challenges and strategies for repositioning experiential learning.

Experiential Learning as an Instructional Approach in Business Education

Experiential learning is an instructional approach that develops knowledge, skills and competencies through active participation in meaningful learning experiences. Rather than relying mainly on theoretical instruction, it enables students to perform tasks, solve practical problems, reflect on experiences and apply acquired knowledge to real situations. This makes experiential learning particularly relevant to Business Education, which prepares students for employment, entrepreneurship and participation in contemporary business environments.

Kolb (1984) views experiential learning as a process through which knowledge is created from the transformation of experience. In Business Education, this involves applying concepts in entrepreneurship, accounting, marketing and office administration through project-based activities, simulations, case analysis, internships, mentorship and student enterprise projects. Obi et al. (2022) identified simulations, role-playing, business laboratory activities, real-life cases and self-directed projects as relevant experiential activities. Similarly, Motta and Galina (2023) highlighted the importance of learning-by-doing in developing entrepreneurial knowledge and competencies.

Within the Niger Delta, Akele and Duoduo (2024) identified mentoring and experiential learning as useful strategies for enhancing entrepreneurship instruction in Bayelsa State. Moses and Ile (2026) further linked beyond-classroom experiences with entrepreneurial readiness among Business Education postgraduate students in Rivers State, while Okoro (2026) examined experiential learning within competency-based Business Education in Delta State.

Consequently, experiential learning should be integral to Business Education rather than an occasional instructional technique. Authentic projects, workplace experiences and enterprise-related

activities can bridge classroom knowledge and entrepreneurial practice, thereby strengthening competencies for employment, self-employment and enterprise development.

Classroom Learning to Enterprise Experience

Repositioning experiential learning requires a deliberate movement from predominantly classroom-based instruction towards learning experiences that expose students to authentic entrepreneurial activities. The classroom remains important for developing conceptual foundations, but entrepreneurial competence is strengthened when learners apply those concepts to practical situations. A classroom-to-enterprise transition can begin with controlled activities such as cases, role plays and simulations before progressing to projects, field experiences, internships, mentorship and supervised enterprise activities.

Project-based learning can require students to develop business plans, conduct market surveys, design promotional campaigns, prepare financial records or implement supervised micro-enterprise projects. Project-based entrepreneurial learning has been presented as a model capable of connecting higher education with startup creation through authentic projects and blended support (Santoso et al., 2023). In Business Education, such projects allow students to integrate accounting, marketing, communication, planning and digital competencies around a practical outcome.

Problem-based learning similarly exposes students to realistic business challenges such as declining sales, poor record keeping, inappropriate pricing, customer-service problems or cash-management difficulties. Students investigate the problem, evaluate alternatives and justify proposed solutions. The value of the approach is that it makes knowledge functional: learners are required to use concepts to address uncertainty rather than reproduce definitions.

Business simulations and student enterprise projects can deepen this experience. Simulations permit students to practise management, accounting, marketing and customer-service decisions within a controlled environment. Enterprise projects move further by requiring students to identify opportunities, estimate costs, organise resources, promote products or services, keep records and evaluate outcomes. Okpue and Eshemoghie (2025) also demonstrate growing interest in immersive technologies such as virtual and augmented reality for experiential learning in Business and Entrepreneurship Education at Delta State University.

Internships and structured workplace experiences provide another important connection between classroom learning and enterprise realities. Placement alone, however, does not guarantee learning. Students should undertake relevant tasks, receive supervision and reflect on the relationship between workplace experience and Business Education competencies. Mentorship is equally important. Akele and Duoduo (2024) found mentoring and experiential-learning strategies relevant to entrepreneurship instruction in Bayelsa State. Mentors can expose students to opportunity recognition, customer development, resource constraints, uncertainty and adaptation in ways that textbooks cannot fully reproduce.

Experiential Learning and Entrepreneurial Competency Development

The strongest justification for experiential learning in Business Education is its capacity to develop competencies required for entrepreneurial activity. Entrepreneurial competency includes knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavioural capabilities that enable individuals to recognise opportunities, organise resources, solve problems and manage enterprise activities. Obidile and Onyeneke (2023) identified both soft and hard competencies for successful entrepreneurial development, while Akeke et al. (2023) emphasised competencies required of university Business Education graduates for employability.

Experiential activities can strengthen opportunity recognition by exposing students to customers, communities and business environments where unmet needs can be observed. Market surveys, field investigations and interactions with entrepreneurs allow students to examine opportunities rather than merely study definitions of opportunity recognition. Creativity and innovation can similarly be strengthened when projects and business problems permit multiple possible solutions.

Problem-solving and decision-making are particularly important. Business operations continually require decisions concerning resources, prices, customers, records and competition. Repeated exposure to authentic problems can help students evaluate alternatives and justify decisions. Financial and business-management competence can also be developed through practical budgeting, costing, pricing, record keeping and performance evaluation. These capabilities complement the accounting and problem-solving skills identified by Nwaokokorom and Ikpeama (2023).

Experiential activities also develop communication, teamwork and customer relations. Students working on enterprise projects distribute responsibilities, communicate ideas, resolve disagreements and interact with potential customers. Bessong et al. (2023) emphasised organising and customer-related soft skills for entrepreneurship development, showing why collaborative and customer-facing learning experiences deserve attention in Business Education.

Experiential Learning, Youth Entrepreneurship and Economic Transformation in the Niger Delta

The contribution of experiential learning to youth entrepreneurship should be understood in terms of entrepreneurial preparedness rather than the assumption that every Business Education graduate must immediately establish a business. Some graduates may enter paid employment before entrepreneurship, while others may combine employment with enterprise activities. The educational objective is to develop the competence, judgement and confidence required to recognise and pursue viable opportunities when circumstances permit.

Evidence from the Niger Delta supports this emphasis on preparedness. Abdulkarim and Danagogo (2023) found that developed entrepreneurial competencies predicted Business Education students' intention to be self-employed in Rivers State. Ito and Okudaye (2025) reported a positive relationship between experiential learning and entrepreneurial intentions among Business Education students in Delta State-owned institutions. Okoro (2026) further examined the extent and effectiveness of experiential learning within competency-based Business Education in Delta State universities. Together, these studies indicate that the regional argument for experiential learning is not merely theoretical.

Economic transformation involves improvements in productive capacity, enterprise activity, employment opportunities and the ability of individuals and communities to create sustainable value. Business Education can contribute by preparing graduates capable of participating productively in organisations and creating new economic activities. Experiential learning contributes indirectly by strengthening the human competencies upon which productive enterprise depends. It can prepare graduates to identify local opportunities, apply accounting and managerial knowledge, use appropriate technologies, organise small enterprises and provide business-related services.

This contribution should nevertheless be presented cautiously. Experiential learning alone cannot resolve unemployment or transform the Niger Delta economy. Enterprise outcomes are also shaped by access to finance, infrastructure, markets, regulation, technology and the wider business environment. The educational contribution is to ensure that young people leave Business Education better prepared to navigate these realities and make informed entrepreneurial decisions.

Challenges to Effective Experiential Learning

Several factors may constrain effective implementation. One is inadequate practical resources. Paul-Mgbeafulike and Onyeneke (2023) found concerns regarding the adequacy of entrepreneurship resources for practical skill acquisition and effective delivery of Business Education. Where business laboratories, digital technologies, internet connectivity and enterprise-development spaces are inadequate, the range and quality of practical experiences available to students may be restricted. Educator capacity is another challenge. Experiential teaching requires lecturers to function as facilitators, mentors, project supervisors and designers of authentic learning experiences. Larsen et

al. (2024) show that experiential entrepreneurship educators must initiate experiences, manage students' access to practical competence and actively support students in doing entrepreneurship. This places demands on pedagogical competence and educators' familiarity with contemporary business practice.

Weak institution-industry relationships also affect internships, mentorship, enterprise visits and authentic business projects. Without sustained partnerships, practical activities may become irregular or disconnected from learning objectives. Funding presents a related challenge because enterprise projects, field activities and practical facilities require resources. Assessment practices may also undermine experiential learning where practical activities are taught but achievement is evaluated almost entirely through written examinations. Finally, experience without structured reflection can become activity without deep learning.

Strategies for Repositioning Experiential Learning

Repositioning experiential learning requires systematic institutional action rather than isolated activities by individual lecturers. First, experiential learning should be deliberately embedded in Business Education course implementation. Relevant courses should specify the practical experiences through which expected competencies will be developed and assessed.

Second, tertiary institutions should establish stronger partnerships with businesses and entrepreneurs within the Niger Delta. Such partnerships can support internships, mentorship, enterprise visits, authentic business problems and collaborative projects. The Rivers State evidence reported by Moses and Ile (2026) reinforces the relevance of beyond-classroom enterprise activities and entrepreneurial networking.

Third, Business educators require continuous professional development in experiential pedagogies. Training should cover project-based learning, problem-based learning, simulations, enterprise mentoring, reflective learning and competency-based assessment. Educators should also maintain contact with contemporary business practice so that classroom experiences remain authentic.

Fourth, students should have structured opportunities to develop enterprise projects before graduation. These projects should integrate accounting, entrepreneurship, marketing, office management and digital business applications rather than treating each area as isolated. Digital entrepreneurial competencies are increasingly relevant to contemporary business activity (Enang, 2023), so experiential projects should also expose students to appropriate digital tools.

Finally, assessment should recognise performance and reflection alongside theoretical understanding. Portfolios, project reports, demonstrations, presentations, simulations and reflective reports can complement written examinations. This creates stronger alignment between the competencies Business Education claims to develop and the methods used to evaluate student achievement.

CONCLUSION

Experiential learning provides an important pathway for repositioning Business Education towards stronger entrepreneurial and practical outcomes in the Niger Delta. Moving from predominantly classroom-centred instruction to purposeful classroom-to-enterprise experiences can provide students with opportunities to apply knowledge, solve authentic problems, interact with business environments and develop competencies required for entrepreneurship and productive employment. Project-based learning, problem-based learning, simulations, internships, mentorship and student enterprise projects should therefore become integral components of Business Education rather than occasional supplementary activities. Their effectiveness, however, depends on competent educators, adequate resources, meaningful institution-industry partnerships, appropriate assessment and structured reflection. When these conditions are strengthened, experiential learning can improve youth entrepreneurial preparedness and enhance the contribution of Business Education to economic transformation in the Niger Delta.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the issues discussed in this paper, the following recommendations are made:

1. Business Education departments in tertiary institutions in the Niger Delta should deliberately integrate project-based learning, problem-based learning, business simulations and supervised enterprise projects into relevant courses to strengthen students' practical entrepreneurial competencies.
2. Tertiary institutions should establish sustainable partnerships with entrepreneurs, small and medium enterprises and relevant industries to provide structured internships, mentorship, field experiences and authentic business projects for Business Education students.
3. Business educators should be provided with continuous professional development in experiential instructional strategies, enterprise mentoring, contemporary business practices and competency-based assessment.
4. Government and tertiary institutions should improve Business Education laboratories, digital facilities, enterprise-development spaces and other resources required for effective experiential learning.
5. Business Education programmes should adopt assessment approaches that recognise practical performance, enterprise projects, problem-solving, portfolios and reflective learning alongside conventional written examinations.

REFERENCES

- Abdulkarim, A. M., & Danagogo, T. E. (2023). Business education students' developed entrepreneurial competencies and intention to be self-employed after graduation from degree awarding institutions in Rivers State. *The COLLOQUIUM*, 10(1), 49–60.
- Akele, E. F., & Duoduo, G. (2024). Assessment of mentoring/experiential learning instructional delivery enhancement strategies for teaching entrepreneurship education in Business Education programme in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research*, 7(3), 1542-1557. <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijsshr/v7-i03-07>
- Akeke, M. N. G., Atah, C. A., & Bessong, E. B. (2023). Assessment of competencies required of university Business Education graduates for employability. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education*, 10(2), 201–211.
- Bessong, E. B., Atah, C. A., & Ugbadu, D. I. (2023). Evaluating the soft skill competences required of Business Education students for entrepreneurial development. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education*, 10(2) 189–200.
- Enang, C. E. (2023). Digital entrepreneurial skills and competencies required from Business Education students to work in the digital era. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education*, 10(2), 172–178
- Ito, F. M., & Okudaye, I. N. (2025). Experiential learning, practical skills acquisition and entrepreneurial intentions among Business Education students in Delta State owned institutions. *International Journal of Business & Law Research*, 13(2), 288–295. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15735025>
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice Hall.
- Larsen, E. S. H., Haneberg, D. H., & Lakså, S. (2024). Revealing three anomalies: Extending Kolb educator roles profile in experiential entrepreneurship education. *The International Journal of Management Education*, 22(3), 101048. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2024.101048>

- Moses, P. Z. O., & Ile, V. C. (2026). Beyond-classroom learning and entrepreneurial readiness among Business Education postgraduate students in Rivers State public universities. Wellspring University *Journal of Social and Management Sciences*, 5(2), 71–85.
- Motta, V. F., & Galina, S. V. R. (2023). Experiential learning in entrepreneurship education: A systematic literature review. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 121, 103919.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2022.103919>
- Nwaokokorom, O. W., & Ikpeama, F. U. (2023). Accounting and problem-solving skills required of Business Education students for job performance in organisations in a digital era. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education*, 10(1), 20–26.
- Obi, C. A., Eze, T. I., & Chibuzo, N. F. (2022). Experiential learning activities in Business Education for developing 21st century competencies. *Journal of Education for Business*, 97(1), 36–42.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08832323.2021.1884521>
- Obidile, J. I., & Onyeneke, E. N. (2023). Entrepreneurial competencies required by Business Education graduates for successful entrepreneurial development. *Covenant Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 6(1), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08832323.2021.1884521>
- Okoro, J. (2026). Application of experiential learning activities in competency-based Business Education in universities in Delta State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 10(8), 9312–9321.
- Okpue, M. E., & Eshemoghie, K. (2025). Virtual reality and augmented reality in enhancing experiential learning in Business and Entrepreneurship Education curriculum at Delta State University, Abraka. *ESUI Business and Management Journal*, 2(2), 73–80.
- Paul-Mgbeafulike, V. S., & Onyeneke, E. N. (2023). Adequacy of entrepreneurship resources for practical skill acquisition and effective delivery of core Business Education instruction in digital era. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education*, 10(2), 39–48.
- Santoso, R. T. P. B., Priyanto, S. H., Junaedi, I. W. R., & Santoso, D. S. (2023). Project-based entrepreneurial learning (PBEL): A blended model for startup creations at higher education institutions. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 12, Article 18.
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s13731-023-00276-1>
- Ukata, P. F., & Nmehielle, E. L. (2023). Data analytical entrepreneurial skills acquired by Business Education students for decent works in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education*, 10(1), 368–375.