

Application of Experiential Learning Activities in Competency-Based Business Education in Universities in Delta State, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the application of experiential learning activities in competency-based business education in Delta State universities. It adopted the descriptive survey design and was guided by 3 research questions and 3 hypotheses. The entire population of 133 final-year business education students was used for the study (Census sampling). A 41-item questionnaire was used for data collection. The face and content validity of the instrument were ascertained, and to ensure internal consistency, 30 copies of the questionnaire were administered to 30 final-year students of Niger Delta University, which was not part of the study. The data collected were subjected to Cronbach Alpha which yielded the following reliability coefficients: 1. $r = 0.91$, 2. $r = 0.87$, 3. $r = 0.89$. Data were analysed using means and standard deviations. T-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed the extent of experiential learning integrated into competency-based business education in universities, the level of effectiveness of experiential learning in competency-based business education in universities and strategies to be adopted for enhancing the integration of experiential learning in competency-based business education in universities. It was recommended that Business education lecturers should assess students through presentations using projectors, assignments and charts.

Keywords: Application, Experiential learning, Competency-based, Business education, Universities.

INTRODUCTION

Education as a continuous process is geared towards the needs and demands of every learner, especially in the university system. Training is viewed as a process of developing skills, attitudes, and qualities required for citizenship and dynamic support in society. David (2024) says that learners view training and education as a product to be used in the marketplace and to be bought and sold by academic institutions wherein the mark is quality, which is equivalent to the mark for worldwide competitiveness. Curriculum changes have led to the change from a teacher-centred environment into a learner-centred environment. The 21st-century curriculum concentrates on the development of skills and competencies through student-centred initiatives. It is concentrated on written tests, practical tests, and hands-on activities (Okoro, 2021). The acquisition of relevant skills in competency-based courses is a prerequisite for successful employment in Nigeria. Business education, which is introduced in Nigerian universities, is a competency-based course that is relevant in this 21st century.

Business education is education for and about business or training in business skills. It is education that helps to impart the necessary skills to the students to enable them to be self-employed after graduation from the higher institution. This type of education involves impartation of hand-on skills to the students by the lecturers. The task of providing this form education is enormous where the need for practical, hands-on learning experiences that extend beyond traditional classroom instruction is increasingly evident. Business education refers to the teaching of skills and knowledge related to business operations, management, finance, marketing, and entrepreneurship (Ezeani & Ogundola, 2018). It helps to prepare students for careers in various business fields and to develop their understanding of economic systems and organisational dynamics. Effective business education has the potential to stimulate economic growth, reduce unemployment and foster innovation in both the public and private sectors. It aims to equip students with fundamental business knowledge and skills. The rapidly changing global economy and local economic challenges have highlighted the need for more dynamic

and practical approaches to business education.

Business education is a specialised curriculum aimed at cultivating the skills, expertise, and mindset necessary for achieving success in the professional realm. It is a course that provides individuals with attitudes, practical skills, and values essential for successful operation in a commercial setting. Okoro (2024b) points out that business education refers to the educational process that focuses on the study and understanding of business principles and practices. Education training equips individuals with the necessary knowledge, abilities, and proficiency to achieve success in their work endeavours. It could also be described as education for entrepreneurship i.e. to own and manage a business effectively without failure (Okoro, 2020). Business education also provides the needed training for recipients to become competent consumers and wise spenders of resources as well as develop functional skills for the management of one's own business (Ogbu & Amahi, 2022). Business education involves the acquisition of relevant skills in order to function effectively in the business world through the application of experiential learning activities.

Experiential learning, according to Uzuagu, Ekanem and Adeleye (2025), emerged as a vital approach to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, hence preparing students for the complexities of the modern economy. Experiential learning theory is based on David Kolb (1984), which emphasises the importance of direct experience and reflective observation in the learning process. Kolb (1984) notes that the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. It is the process of individuals learning by experience ('learning by doing') and the act of reflecting on authentic hands-on experiences to maximise and deepen the learning from that experience (Uzuagu, Ekanem & Adeleye, 2025). The experiential learning approach posits that individuals learn best by engaging in concrete experiences, reflecting on these experiences, and getting new ideas based on their reflections.

Business education and experiential learning activities can take various forms, including internships, case studies, field projects, simulations, project-based learning, collaborative projects, mentorship programmes, and service-learning opportunities. Internships are a cornerstone of experiential learning in business education, offering students the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in a professional environment (Uzuagu, Ekanem & Adeleye, 2025). By working directly with businesses, students are exposed to the realities of the workplace, where they can apply theoretical knowledge, develop practical skills, and build professional networks. Internships and field projects help students understand market dynamics, adapt to changing conditions, and learn from experienced professionals. They provide an invaluable platform for learning and development, bridging the gap between academic study and employment.

The primary goal of the educational system is to impart knowledge, skills and attributes that will enable learners to recognize and reach their full potential in order to become functional members of a society. Globalization, which has brought complexities in the workplace, demand that students possess certain competencies in order to keep up with the rapidly changing business environment. Okoro (2018) Some organizations and agencies, such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), are increasingly requesting education systems to prepare students with 21st century competencies in order to enable them to sustain challenges that have now become numerous to handle.

The OECD has called on international governments to make an effort to properly identify, conceptualize and integrate the required set of skills and competencies into the educational standards such that every student should be able to acquire them before graduation. The requisite 21st century competencies according to Scott (2015) are the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to be competitive in the workforce, participate appropriately in an increasingly diverse society, use a series of new technologies, and cope with the rapidly changing workplace.

Experiential learning takes place when a person who is involved in an activity looks back and evaluates it, determines what was useful or important to remember, and then uses the information to perform another activity (Kolb, 1984). Experiential learning is essentially an active learning process through which the learner develops knowledge, transferable skills and attitudes from direct experiences within or outside a classroom setting. Andresen, Boud, and Cohen (2000) assert that experiential learning supports a more participative, learner-centred approach to learning and places much emphasis on direct engagement, rich learning activities

and the construction of meaning by learners. Elam and Spotts (2004) highlight some activities in experiential learning to include case discussions, group cases, simulation games, descriptive/analytic field projects, computer-assisted instruction, internships, and live cases.

Empirical Studies

Ogonna and Emesoba (2025) carried out a study titled Utilization of Blended and Experiential Learning for Effective Teaching and Learning of Business Education in Universities in South East, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised of all 85 Business Educators (57 Federal and 28 States Business Educators) in the 4 federal and 4 state universities offering Business Education in south east Nigeria. The entire population was used because the population was manageable. Therefore, census sampling was used. A 14-item statement questionnaire that was validated by three experts was used for data collection. The reliability of the instrument was determined using test-retest technique and data obtained was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation to determine the reliability of the instrument. A reliability coefficient level of 0.79 was obtained, and it was deemed adequate for the study. Data collected from the research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviations to test the closeness of their responses, while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at a significance level of 0.05. The findings of the study revealed that Business Educators agreed to a high extent that utilisation of blended and experiential learning improves the teaching and learning of Business Education in Universities in South East, Nigeria and that the extent to which this programme achieves its noble objectives depends to a large extent on the quality and competencies possessed by the Business Educators and the innovative skills they apply to facilitate effective teaching and learning of Business Education. Based on the results, the study recommended among others that Business Educators should adopt compulsory use of blended and experiential learning in the teaching and learning of Business Education; this will help the students in problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, and the application of knowledge in authentic contexts and in the learning of Business Education courses.

A study carried out by Uzuagu, Ekanem and Adeleye (2025) investigated the integration and effectiveness of experiential learning in preparing business education students in universities in Enugu State for uncertain economic futures. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and was guided by three research questions and three null hypotheses. A population of 79 students was used for the study. There was no sampling because the population was manageable. A 30-item questionnaire titled “Enhancing Experiential Learning Questionnaire” (EELQ) was used as instrument for data collection. Cronbach Alpha reliability test was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument, which yielded reliability coefficients of 0.92, 0.93, and 0.87 for clusters A, B, and C, respectively. To address the research questions, the obtained data were analysed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviations, and t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that experiential learning is moderately integrated and effective in developing critical skills such as problem-solving, decision-making, and risk management. The study also identified several strategies for enhancing experiential learning, including increasing collaborations with local businesses, incorporating more real-world projects into coursework, and regularly updating the curriculum to reflect current industry practices. The implication of these findings is that targeted efforts to enhance experiential learning could significantly improve the preparedness of business education students for the challenges of an unpredictable economic environment. The study concluded with recommendations for educational institutions and policymakers to prioritise experiential learning methods to foster a more adaptable and skilled workforce.

Statement of Problem

Experiential learning activities in business education are very relevant to enable the students to have the necessary skills after graduation to be self-sufficient and reliant. Experiential learning is a hands-on activity, an assessment activity, among others, which eventually assists learners in constructing knowledge that results in meaningful learning. Experiential learning has become even more important, especially in business education, due to changing times and the increasing pressure to produce graduates who have the necessary skills and dexterity to perform optimally in the world of work. Uzuagu, Ekanem and Adeleye (2025) note that quality

university business education programmes must include experiential learning components which can take many forms. The problem of the study, therefore, is to what extent are experiential learning activities applied in competency-based business education programmes?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to assess application of experiential learning activities in competency-based business education in universities in Delta State, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives are:

1. To identify extent experiential learning is integrated into competency-based business education in universities,
2. To determine the level of effectiveness of experiential learning in competency-based business education in universities.
3. To identify the strategies to be implemented for enhancing the integration of experiential learning in competency-based business education in universities.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent is experiential learning integrated into competency-based business education in universities?
2. What is the extent of effectiveness of experiential learning in competency-based business education in universities?
3. What are the strategies to be adopted for enhancing the integration of experiential learning in competency-based business education in universities?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean rating between male and female on experiential learning integrated into competency-based business education in universities.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean rating between male and female on the effectiveness of experiential learning in competency-based business education in universities.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean rating between male and female on the strategies to be adopted for enhancing the integration of experiential learning in competency-based business education in universities.

METHOD

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The descriptive survey is suitable because there is no manipulation of data. The study was guided by 3 research questions and 3 hypotheses. The target population comprises 133 final-year business education students: 117 from Delta State University, Abraka, and 16 from the University of Delta, Agbor, the two Delta State universities that offer the business education programme. The population serves as a sample, and the breakdown is 68 male and 64 female.

A 41-item questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire items were developed by the researcher. An initial pool of 50 items was generated following an extensive review of literature surrounding the application of experiential learning activities. Items were refined based on the subsequent face and content validation processes to ensure clarity and relevance to university students. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: Part A contained two (2) items of demographic variables of the respondents – Name of university, Sex. Part B contained 39 items based on the three (3) research questions. Research question one (1): To what extent is experiential learning integrated into competency-based business education in universities?

contained 13 items. Research question two (2): What is the extent of effectiveness of experiential learning in competency-based business education in universities? contained 11 items. Research question three (3): What are the strategies to be adopted for enhancing the integration of experiential learning in competency-based business education in universities? contained 15 items. The questionnaire was structured on a 4-point scale of responses: Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), and Very Low Extent (VLE). There was face and content validity to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was given to two experts in computer science, three experts in measurement and evaluation and two experts in business education at Delta State University, Abraka. The experts made necessary corrections and suggestions which were effected before the final copy was written. To ensure the internal consistency of the instrument, a total of 30 copies of the questionnaire were administered to final-year students at the Niger Delta University, Bayelsa, which was part of the study. The data collected were subjected to Cronbach's alpha, which yielded the reliability coefficients of 0.91, 0.87 and 0.89 on research questions 1, 2 and 3, respectively. A total of 133 copies of the questionnaire were administered to 133 final-year students, and a total of 122 were fully completed and returned within a period of one month with the help of four research assistants in each institution. There was a return rate of 93.13%. The data collected were weighted and analysed as follows: Very High Extent (VHE) – 4 points, High Extent (HE) – 3 points, Low Extent (LE) – 2 points, Very Low Extent (VLE) – 1 point. Any item with a mean of 2.5 and above is regarded as high extent, while any item below 2.5 is regarded as low extent. A t-test was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. If the t-calculated value is less than t-critical, the hypothesis is accepted, while if the t-calculated value is greater than t-critical, the hypothesis is rejected.

This study received ethical approval from the Institutional Review Boards of Delta University, Abraka, and the University of Delta, Agbor. Data collection was conducted face-to-face on campus. Prior to the sessions, participants were given a printed information sheet, and written informed consent was obtained from each student. Participation was entirely voluntary; students were explicitly informed that they could withdraw from the session at any time or refuse to answer any question without penalty or impact on their academic standing. To ensure confidentiality, interviews/surveys were conducted in a private space, and participants were assigned unique numerical codes. No names or student ID numbers were recorded on the data sheets, and all physical consent forms were stored separately from the responses.

RESULT

Research Question 1: To what extent is experiential learning integrated into competency-based business education in universities?

Table 1: Mean responses of male and female on experiential learning integrated into competency-based business education in universities. N =122.

S/N	Extent of integration of Experiential learning activities in competency-based business education are:	$\bar{x}$	Std. Dev	Decision
1	Students assessed through practical work	3.10	0.82	HE
2	Students assessed through projects	2.98	0.85	HE
3	Students assessed through presentations	2.72	0.84	HE
4	Mentorship programmes available	3.11	0.91	HE
5	Business simulation software are utilized	3.06	0.88	HE
6	Internship opportunities are available	2.93	0.78	HE
7	Field trips are incorporated into the curriculum	2.77	0.87	HE
8	Simulations methods are utilized	2.82	0.83	HE
9	Role-playing exercises utilized	3.01	0.92	HE
10	Guest lectures and industry experts are invited to deliver workshop	2.85	0.82	HE
11	Case studies used as a teaching method	3.21	0.95	HE
12	Collaborative projects with local businesses are included	3.16	0.83	HE

13	Real-world business problems are used in assignments and projects	3.12	0.85	HE
	Aggregate Mean	39.1	11.05	
	Criterion Mean	2.99	0.85	

Research Question 2: What is the extent of effectiveness of experiential learning in competency-based business education in universities?

Table 2: Mean responses of male and female on the effectiveness of experiential learning in competency-based business education in universities. N =122.

S/N	Extent of effectiveness of experiential learning in competency-based business education are:	$\bar{x}$	Std. Dev	Decision
1	Developing problem-solving skills	3.35	0.82	HE
2	Fostering adaptability	3.16	0.84	HE
3	Enhancing students' critical thinking abilities	3.22	0.79	HE
4	Improving decision-making skills	3.28	0.89	HE
5	Applying theoretical knowledge to real-world situations	3.14	0.74	HE
6	Building students' confidence to face challenges	3.34	0.83	HE
7	Developing entrepreneurial skills	3.32	0.94	HE
8	Enhancing teamwork	3.15	0.85	HE
9	Enhancing collaboration skills	3.16	0.90	HE
10	Teaching risk management strategies	3.23	0.92	HE
11	Promoting innovative thinking	3.24	0.91	HE
	Aggregate Mean	35.59	9.43	
	Criterion Mean	3.24	0.86	

Research Question 3: What are the strategies to be adopted for enhancing the integration of experiential learning in competency-based business education in universities?

Table 3: Mean responses of male and female on strategies adopted for enhancing the integration of experiential learning in competency-based business education in universities. N = 122.

S/N	Extent of strategies adopted for enhancing the integration of experiential learning in competency-based business education is the following:	$\bar{x}$	Std. Dev	Decision
1	Collaborating with local businesses	2.96	0.52	HE
2	Collaborating with industries	2.78	0.55	HE
3	Increasing the availability of internships for students	2.92	0.62	HE
4	Implementing business simulation software in the curriculum	2.81	0.71	HE
5	Regular involvement of guest lecturers	2.86	0.80	HE
6	Regular involvement of industry experts	3.18	0.85	HE
7	Assigning real-world projects as part of the coursework	2.88	0.83	HE
8	Organizing more field trips to businesses	2.97	0.76	HE
9	Organizing more site visits to industries	2.85	0.75	HE
10	Establishing mentorship programmes with industry professionals	2.93	0.79	HE
11	Incorporating problem-based learning strategies	2.74	0.82	HE

12	Providing more workshops focused on current industry practices	2.81	0.81	HE
13	Providing more seminars focused on current industry practices	2.91	0.84	HE
14	Regular review of curriculum to include the latest trends in experiential learning	2.96	0.79	HE
15	Regular review of curriculum to include the practices in experiential learning	2.80	0.77	HE
	Aggregate Mean	43.36	11.21	
	Criterion Mean	2.89	0.75	HE

Testing of the Hypotheses

The data presented in table 1 shows that the mean rating of the responses of the respondents on all the items are highly needed (mean = 2.5 and above).

H0¹: There is no significant difference in the mean rating between males and females on experiential learning integrated into competency-based business education in universities.

Table 4: Mean ratings between males and females on experiential learning integrated into competency-based business education in universities.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	t-cal.	df	t. value	Decision
Male	63	3.07	0.84	1.03	120	1.96	Accepted
Female	59	3.01	0.91				

Since the t-cal (1.03) is less than the t-value of 1.96 and a p-value of 0.305, at the significance level of 0.05, it failed to reject the null hypothesis. Thus, there is no significant difference in the mean rating between males and females on experiential learning integrated into competency-based business education in universities.

H0²: There is no significant difference in the mean rating between males and females on the effectiveness of experiential learning in competency-based business education in universities.

Table 5: Mean ratings between males and females on the effectiveness of experiential learning in competency-based business education in universities

Variables	N	Mean	SD	t-cal.	df	t. value	Decision
Male	63	3.15	0.81	1.15	120	1.96	Accepted
Female	59	3.03	0.79				

Since the t-cal (1.15) is less than the t-value of 1.96 and a p-value of 0.252, at the significance level of 0.05, failed to reject the null hypothesis. Thus, there is no significant difference in the mean rating between males and females on the effectiveness of experiential learning in competency-based business education in universities.

H0³: There is no significant difference in the mean rating between males and females on the strategies to be adopted for enhancing the integration of experiential learning in competency-based business education in universities.

Table 6: Mean ratings between males and females on the strategies to be adopted for enhancing the integration of experiential learning in competency-based business education in universities

Variables	N	Mean	SD	t-cal.	df	t. value	Decision
Male	63	3.16	0.86	1.06	120	1.96	Accepted
Female	59	3.11	0.87				

Since the t-cal (1.06) is less than the t-value 1.96, and a p-value of 0.291, at the significance level of 0.05, failed to reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean rating between males and females on the strategies to be adopted for enhancing the integration of experiential learning in competency-based business education in universities.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The finding on research question one reveals the extent of experiential learning integrated into competency-based business education in universities. Some of these are: Students are assessed through practical work; students are assessed through projects. Students are assessed through presentations. Mentorship programmes are available, business simulation software is utilised, internship opportunities are available, field trips are incorporated into the curriculum, simulation methods are utilised, role-playing exercises are utilised, guest lectures and industry experts are invited to deliver workshops, case studies are used as a teaching method, collaborative projects with local businesses are included, and real-world business problems are used in assignments and projects. The finding that reveals the extent of experiential learning integrated into competency-based business education in universities received the highest utility ratings among students suggests that learners value active, cooperative problem-solving over passive instruction. This preference can be explained by the immediate peer-to-peer feedback inherent in collaborative frameworks, which enhances student engagement and reduces learning anxiety. From a theoretical standpoint, this aligns with Kolb's concept of 'Active Experimentation', where learning is solidified because students can instantly test theoretical concepts in a low-stakes environment. The findings are consistent with earlier studies by Uzuagu, Ekanem and Adeleye (2025) and Ogonna and Emeasoba (2025), who earlier identified experiential learning integrated into competency-based business education. The finding of the hypothesis on research question 1 is that there is no significant difference in the mean rating between males and females on experiential learning integrated into competency-based business education in universities.

The findings on research question two reveal that the extent of perceived effectiveness of experiential learning in competency-based business education in universities are the following: Developing problem-solving skills, fostering adaptability, enhancing students' critical thinking abilities, improving decision-making skills, enhance theoretical knowledge to real-world situations, building students' confidence to face challenges, developing entrepreneurial skills enhancing teamwork, enhancing collaboration skills, teaching risk management strategies and promoting innovative thinking. The findings are consistent with earlier studies of Uzuagu, Ekanem and Adeleye (2025) and Ogonna & Emeasoba (2025) who earlier identified the extent of perceived effectiveness of experiential learning in competency-based business education. The findings of the hypotheses on research question 2 are that there is no significant difference in the mean rating between males and females on the effectiveness of experiential learning in competency-based business education in universities.

The findings on research question three reveal that the strategies to be adopted for enhancing the integration of experiential learning in competency-based business education in universities are Collaborating with local businesses, collaborating with industries, increasing the availability of internships for students, implementing business simulation software in the curriculum, regular involvement of guest lecturers, regular involvement of industry experts, assigning real-world projects as part of the coursework, organising more field trips to businesses, organising more site visits to industries, establishing mentorship programmes with industry professionals, incorporating problem-based learning strategies, providing more workshops focused on current industry practices, providing more seminars focused on current industry practices, regular review of the curriculum to include the latest trends in experiential learning, and regular review of the curriculum to include the practices in experiential learning. The findings are consistent with earlier studies of Uzuagu, Ekanem and Adeleye (2025) and Ogonna and Emeasoba (2025), who earlier identified the strategies to be adopted for enhancing the integration of experiential learning in competency-based business education.

The finding of hypothesis three is that there is no significant difference in the mean rating between males and females on the strategies to be adopted for enhancing the integration of experiential learning in competency-based business education in universities.

CONCLUSION

Experiential learning integration in business education in universities is very important since it brings perceived effectiveness in preparing students for economic activities to enable them to face the reality of the world in establishing their own businesses after the completion of their programme, thereby reducing the rate of unemployment. Experiential learning helps the graduates to have skills which will lead to experience in operating their own businesses. It is learning by doing, which emphasises mostly practical. Integration of experiential learning activities in business education should not be overemphasised since it enables the student to be self-employed in the 21st century. The implication of this study is that enhancing experiential learning can better prepare business education students for the complexities of an uncertain economic future by equipping them with critical skills such as problem-solving, decision-making, and adaptability, which are essential for stability in business environments.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has two primary limitations. First, the sample focuses exclusively on final-year students from two universities. Second, the data relies solely on self-reported perceptions. These constraints mean the findings cannot be broadly generalized to all Nigerian universities, nor should they be interpreted as direct, objective evidence of educational effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made for the study:

1. Business education lecturers should assess students through presentations using projectors, assignments and charts.
2. Business education lecturers should encourage field trips for business education students in order to have hands-on experience.
3. Business education lecturers should adopt simulation methods in teaching the students to enable them to have knowledge of what they are learning.

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