

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP COMPETENCY REQUIRED BY BUSINESSES
EDUCATION STUDENTS IN ESTABLISHING SMALL-SCALE
ENTERPRISES IN ESAN NORTH EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA IN
EDO STATE.**

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UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY.**

NOVEMBER, 2025

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**A PROJECT WORK SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF VOCATIONAL
AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY ON
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CERTIFICATION

We the undersigned names thereby certify that this research work was carried out by ELIZABETH MABEL OMOREJIE with matriculation Number EDU2011145 in the Department of Vocation and Technical Education, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, in Partial fulfillment of the requirements of the award (B. Sc. Ed) Degree in Vocation and Technical Education

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DEDICATION

This project work is dedicated to our lady MOTHER of Perpetual help and undoer of the knots.

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The Researcher thank God almighty for his Mercy and compassion on me to have successfully completed my programme may the name of the Lord be praised forever Amen. My profound gratitude goes to my project supervisor DR. S. O. Osuyi for his guidance and correction for a meaningful project work, the researcher also appreciate professor Mrs Danner and Miss mercy Atiboroko for their unrelenting effort during the admission process may God bless you all. The researcher also appreciate the project coordinator DR. (MRS) L.O Oshio for her prompt advice. The researcher also appreciate the HOD and all the lecturers in Vocational and Technical Education may God bless you all. The researcher also appreciate her parents MR Lawrence and MRS Theresa OMOREJIE my sincere thanks goes to them for their financial support and advice, God bless my parents abundantly.

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the entrepreneurial competencies necessary for Small Business Education students to successfully establish and manage small-scale enterprises in Esan North East Local Government Area of Edo State. The study is driven by the recognition that entrepreneurship plays a vital role in economic growth, job creation, and innovation, yet many graduates continue to face challenges in translating theoretical knowledge into practical business success. Employing a descriptive survey design, data was collected from 50 students using a validated questionnaire to assess their awareness and possession of core entrepreneurial skills, including opportunity recognition, business planning, financial literacy, marketing competence, problem-solving ability, and resilience. The findings reveal that students generally recognize these competencies as essential; however, their current levels of practical application and mastery are only moderate, highlighting a significant gap between knowledge and real-world entrepreneurial readiness.

The study also identifies critical challenges hindering students' acquisition and application of entrepreneurial competencies. Students face substantial obstacles such as limited access to practical exposure, inadequate access to financial and technological resources, and insufficient emphasis on experiential learning within the existing entrepreneurship curriculum. These issues contribute to learners' moderate competency levels and their inability to confidently initiate and sustain small-scale businesses. The research emphasizes that current entrepreneurship education predominantly focuses on theoretical instruction, which is insufficient for fostering the practical skills required in the dynamic and resource-constrained local business environment. Consequently, students are often ill-prepared to navigate market complexities, leading to low venture success rates and issues such as waste of resources and increased unemployment.

Based on these findings, the study advocates for strategic enhancements in entrepreneurial training programs, including increasing funding, improving administrative and infrastructural support, and integrating more practical, hands-on learning experiences. Recommendations suggest that curriculum reform should prioritize experiential learning activities such as business simulations, internships, and community-based projects to build confidence and competence among students. Strengthening entrepreneurial skills is expected to improve students' readiness for real business challenges, stimulate local economic development, and contribute to sustainable community empowerment. The research thereby underscores the importance of a holistic approach to entrepreneurship education—one that combines theoretical knowledge with practical experience—to produce competent, confident, and resourceful entrepreneurs capable of thriving in the local context.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

In the 21st century, entrepreneurship has emerged as a critical driver of economic growth, job creation, and innovation, particularly in developing economies. The increasing emphasis on entrepreneurship education across higher institutions is a response to the growing need for graduates who possess not only theoretical knowledge but also the competencies required to start and manage successful small-scale enterprises (Olawale & Omisakin, 2022). Entrepreneurship competency refers to the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that enable individuals to identify opportunities, mobilize resources, manage risks, and create value in the marketplace (Nkang et al., 2021).

Globally, educational institutions are aligning their curricula with the demands of a knowledge-based economy, placing strong emphasis on practical, competency-based entrepreneurship training. This trend is grounded in the belief that entrepreneurial competencies such as opportunity recognition, business planning, financial literacy, marketing, problem-solving, and resilience are essential for sustainable business creation and management (Eze & Chukwu, 2022; Mohammed & Salihu, 2024).

Entrepreneurial competencies are widely recognized as the foundation for successful and sustainable business ventures. Opportunity recognition refers to the ability of entrepreneurs to identify and evaluate viable business prospects within their environment, allowing them to respond effectively to market needs. Business planning involves

systematically outlining goals, strategies, and operational steps, providing a clear roadmap that guides decision-making and resource allocation. Financial literacy equips entrepreneurs with the knowledge to manage budgets, analyze cash flow, and make informed financial decisions critical for the longevity of their enterprises. Marketing competency enables entrepreneurs to understand consumer behavior, promote their products or services effectively, and maintain a competitive edge in the marketplace. Problem-solving skills are essential for navigating the uncertainties and challenges inherent in business operations, ensuring that entrepreneurs can adapt to changing circumstances and sustain growth. Finally, resilience embodies the capacity to recover from setbacks, persist through difficulties, and maintain motivation in the face of adversity. Together, these competencies form an integrated framework that supports sustainable business creation and long-term management success.

In Nigeria, small-scale enterprises (SSEs) constitute a significant portion of the economy, contributing to poverty reduction, employment generation, and local development (Ogunyemi & Adebayo, 2023).

Small Business Education students, particularly those in colleges of education, polytechnics, and universities, are strategically positioned to contribute to this sector. However, the transition from entrepreneurship education to actual business creation often depends on the extent to which students have acquired the necessary competencies during their studies (Onwe et al., 2021). While many students graduate with entrepreneurial

intentions, a skills gap often hinders their ability to establish and sustain small businesses successfully (Oseghale & Ugiagbe, 2022).

In Esan-North East Local Government Area of Edo State, the socio-economic environment presents both opportunities and challenges for small business creation. While there is a vibrant market culture and potential demand for innovative goods and services, entrepreneurs often face barriers such as limited access to finance, inadequate infrastructure, unstable market conditions, and insufficient managerial skills (Oluwaseun et al., 2023). Entrepreneurship education programs are expected to equip students with the competencies to navigate these challenges.

Recent studies have emphasized that entrepreneurial competency is multi-dimensional, comprising technical skills (e.g., production, ICT use, and product design), business management skills (e.g., financial management, marketing, and customer relations), and personal entrepreneurial traits (e.g., creativity, self-motivation, and risk-taking) (Oluwatayo & Ojo, 2021; Abiola & Adekeye, 2023). Yet, evidence suggests that many Nigerian graduates lack adequate practical exposure and entrepreneurial readiness, raising concerns about the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education delivery (Oyelere et al., 2022). Given the growing demand for youth-led small enterprises and the pressing need to address graduate unemployment, it is critical to investigate the entrepreneurial competencies required by Small Business Education students to establish successful SSEs in Esan-North East LGA. Such an investigation will help bridge the gap between

entrepreneurship theory and practice and guide curriculum improvement, policy development, and targeted capacity-building programs.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the inclusion of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian tertiary institutions, the rate of successful small business start-ups among graduates remains relatively low. Many Small Business Education students possess theoretical knowledge of entrepreneurship but lack the practical competencies to navigate the realities of establishing and sustaining a business. This mismatch between training and practical outcomes suggests that existing entrepreneurship programs may not be adequately equipping students with critical competencies such as opportunity identification, business planning, financial management, and adaptability to changing market conditions.

In Esan-North East LGA, the challenges of limited capital, infrastructural gaps, and competitive markets exacerbate the difficulties faced by new entrepreneurs. Without a strong foundation in entrepreneurial competencies, Small Business Education graduates may struggle to convert their business ideas into viable enterprises, resulting in wasted resources, business failures, and increased unemployment. To the best of the researcher's knowledge there is no study on the entrepreneurial competencies required by Small Business Education students in in Esan North East, in the quest to fill this gap, this study seeks to assess the competencies needed for successful small business establishment in Esan-North East, Edo State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine the entrepreneurial competencies required by Small Business Education students to establish small-scale enterprises in Esan-North East Local Government Area, Edo State. The specific purpose were to:

1. Identify the core entrepreneurial competencies required for establishing small-scale enterprises.
2. Examine the extent to which Small Business Education students currently possess these competencies.
3. Assess the challenges students face in acquiring and applying entrepreneurial competencies.
4. Suggest strategies for enhancing entrepreneurial competency acquisition among Small Business Education students.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the core entrepreneurial competencies required for establishing small-scale enterprises in Esan-North East LGA?
2. To what extent do Small Business Education students possess these competencies?
3. What challenges do students face in acquiring and applying entrepreneurial competencies?
4. What strategies could enhance entrepreneurial competency acquisition among Small Business Education students?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study hold significance for various stakeholders within the educational and economic ecosystem. Educational institutions stand to benefit through insights that will guide curriculum review and enhancement, ensuring that entrepreneurship education becomes more practical and competency-based, aligning closely with the real-world demands of small business creation. Students will gain a clearer understanding of the essential entrepreneurial competencies required for success, enabling them to focus their learning efforts on developing critical skills such as innovation, financial management, and problem-solving. Policymakers will also benefit from evidence-based insights that can inform the formulation of targeted entrepreneurship support programs and policies, particularly those aimed at empowering young graduates in Edo State. Ultimately, the local economy in Esan-North East LGA will experience positive ripple effects, as stronger entrepreneurial competencies among graduates are likely to foster higher rates of successful business start-ups, stimulate job creation, and contribute to sustainable economic growth in the region.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses specifically on Small Business Education students in Esan-North East Local Government Area, Edo State. It will assess the entrepreneurial competencies required for starting small-scale enterprises, the extent to which these competencies are possessed by students, and the challenges faced in applying them. Other factors

influencing entrepreneurship, such as macroeconomic policy or national business regulations, are outside the scope of this research.

Operational Definition of Terms

Entrepreneurship Competency: The combination of skills, knowledge, and attitudes required to start, manage, and sustain a business successfully (Oluwatayo & Ojo, 2021).

Small-Scale Enterprise (SSE): A business that operates on a relatively small scale, often with limited capital and workforce, serving a local or niche market.

Small Business Education Students: Students enrolled in business-related programs that focus on preparing them for entrepreneurship and small business management.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter reviewed the related literature of the study under the following subheadings;

- Concept of Entrepreneurial Competence
- Concept of Small Scale Enterprise
- Core Entrepreneurial Competencies for Small-Scale Enterprise Establishment
- Entrepreneurial Competencies among Small Business Education Students
- Challenges in Acquiring and Applying Entrepreneurial Competencies
- Strategies for Enhancing Entrepreneurial Competency Acquisition
- Summary of Reviewed Literature

Concept of Entrepreneurial Competence

Entrepreneurial competence refers to the combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that enable individuals to identify opportunities, mobilize resources, and create value through innovation and enterprise. It is a multidimensional construct that extends beyond mere business knowledge to include cognitive, social, and behavioral capabilities that shape entrepreneurial performance. In contemporary research, entrepreneurial competence is increasingly viewed as both a personal attribute and a learned capability that can be developed through education, experience, and reflective practice (Rivera-Kempis et al., 2021).

At its core, entrepreneurial competence encompasses the ability to recognize and act upon opportunities, plan strategically, and adapt to dynamic environments. It integrates cognitive competencies, such as critical thinking and opportunity evaluation; functional

competencies, like business management and marketing; and meta-competencies, including adaptability, creativity, and resilience (Bacigalupo, 2021). This holistic understanding recognizes that entrepreneurship is not only about starting or managing a business but also about developing the mindset and behaviors necessary for creating economic, social, or cultural value.

Recent studies have emphasized that entrepreneurial competence is best understood as a process that evolves through experience and interaction with the environment. Marschhäuser et al. (2024) highlight that competence involves both theoretical knowledge and applied skills, suggesting that entrepreneurship education should integrate automated and reflective assessment tools to monitor and foster these competencies effectively (Marschhäuser et al., 2024). Similarly, Liu (2024) defines entrepreneurial competence as the capacity to combine knowledge, skills, and personal attributes to identify opportunities, acquire and organize resources, and achieve sustainable business performance (Liu, 2024). The European Commission's "Entrepreneurship Competence Framework" (EntreComp) has become a foundational reference for understanding the components of entrepreneurial competence, identifying three key areas: ideas and opportunities, resources, and action. This framework aligns with the growing consensus that entrepreneurial competence is not innate but can be cultivated through targeted education and experiential learning. According to Tamberg, Kuura, and Soosaar (2021), integrating entrepreneurship with other domains such as project management enhances

the relevance and applicability of these competencies in diverse professional contexts (Tamberg et al., 2021).

Moreover, entrepreneurial competence has been linked to broader psychological and social dimensions. Mikelashvili (2021) describes it as encompassing not only technical business skills but also personal qualities such as vision, self-motivation, risk tolerance, and perseverance, which are essential for navigating uncertainty and failure (Mikelashvili, 2021). Rivera-Kempis et al. (2021) further support this view by using machine learning to classify entrepreneurs based on behavioral attributes, demonstrating that entrepreneurial competence is an observable and measurable construct tied to consistent patterns of action and decision-making.

Contemporary scholarship also points toward the emergence of “meta-competences” higher-order capabilities that allow entrepreneurs to integrate knowledge, adapt to change, and continuously learn. These meta-competences include creativity, self-awareness, problem-solving, and strategic thinking, which are particularly crucial in the rapidly evolving digital economy (Reis et al., 2020). They enable entrepreneurs to manage complexity, engage in lifelong learning, and maintain competitiveness in uncertain markets. The concept of entrepreneurial competence has evolved from a narrow focus on business management skills to a comprehensive model integrating knowledge, behavior, and personal attributes. It is now understood as a dynamic and learnable construct that underpins entrepreneurial success across various domains. The contemporary view recognizes that fostering entrepreneurial competence requires more than teaching

business theory it demands immersive learning experiences, reflective practice, and opportunities to apply knowledge in real-world settings. Through such an integrated approach, individuals can develop the confidence, adaptability, and innovation capacity necessary for sustainable enterprise creation and management.

Concept of Small Scale Enterprise

Small-scale enterprises (SSEs) represent a fundamental pillar of economic development, particularly in developing nations where they serve as engines for job creation, innovation, and poverty reduction. Conceptually, a small-scale enterprise is a business organization that operates with a limited amount of capital investment, workforce, and production capacity, yet plays an outsized role in driving inclusive and sustainable growth. These enterprises are typically characterized by their flexibility, adaptability, and ability to respond quickly to market changes, making them critical actors in both emerging and established economies (Iskandar, 2010).

Defining small-scale enterprises, however, remains context-dependent. The criteria vary across nations and are often determined by parameters such as capital investment, number of employees, annual turnover, and asset value. For instance, in many African and Asian economies, SSEs are defined as businesses employing fewer than 50 workers and operating with modest capital outlays. According to Sulaimana (2012), there is no universal definition, as each country's classification reflects its level of industrial and economic development. Nevertheless, certain common features cut across most

definitions – small capital base, limited mechanization, localized operations, and high reliance on owner management (Sulaimana, 2012).

Small-scale enterprises play several essential roles in national economies. First, they are major contributors to employment generation. In developing economies, where formal job opportunities are scarce, SSEs provide income sources for millions of people, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas. Goswami (2014) notes that SSEs are second only to agriculture in terms of employment creation, making them indispensable to socio-economic stability (Goswami, 2014). Similarly, research in India and Nigeria has shown that small enterprises absorb large segments of the labor force that would otherwise remain unemployed, thus acting as social buffers against economic inequality and social unrest (Gulati, 2015).

In addition to employment generation, small-scale enterprises are crucial drivers of innovation and industrial diversification. Their small size allows them to experiment with new ideas, processes, and products at relatively low risk, thereby fostering technological advancement and market dynamism. Muralikrishna (2011) asserts that SSEs contribute significantly to industrial flexibility, promoting decentralized industrial structures that encourage innovation and adaptability (Muralikrishna, 2011). This flexibility makes small enterprises especially relevant in times of economic volatility, where they can pivot faster than large firms to meet changing consumer demands.

Moreover, SSEs play a vital role in stimulating regional and rural development. By encouraging local entrepreneurship, they facilitate the equitable distribution of wealth

and help curb rural-urban migration. Small-scale enterprises often utilize local resources, which enhances the value chain within communities and reduces dependence on imported goods. As Iskandar (2010) describes, SSEs act as “safety valves” in economic systems, absorbing labor surpluses and reducing social insecurity by ensuring livelihoods for large segments of the population (Iskandar, 2010).

Financial structure is another defining feature of small-scale enterprises. Typically, they rely on personal savings, informal credit sources, or microfinance institutions for startup and operational funding. Yakubu (2015) underscores that access to capital is a critical determinant of small business performance, directly influencing profitability, expansion potential, and long-term sustainability (Yakubu, 2015). However, due to high collateral requirements and limited creditworthiness, many small businesses face chronic financing challenges. This limitation not only restricts their growth potential but also contributes to high failure rates, particularly in developing economies.

Recent studies have further examined the strategic behaviors and adaptability of small-scale enterprises in an increasingly competitive and globalized environment. A 2025 study by Songaling, Toleno, and Decendario revealed that SSEs adjust their strategies based on internal factors such as workforce size and business tenure when responding to external disruptions like supply chain instability and shifting customer demands (Songaling et al., 2025). The study found that SSEs with longer operational experience or more diversified manpower tend to adopt adaptive strategies such as digitalization,

stronger supplier relationships, and product diversification, all of which contribute to resilience and competitiveness.

Despite their advantages, small-scale enterprises face a range of systemic challenges that constrain their potential. Goswami (2014) identifies inadequate financing, gender discrimination, and weak managerial competence as persistent obstacles affecting performance and survival. In Nigeria, Kehinde et al. (2017) further highlight that poor risk management practices and lack of professional oversight expose SSEs to financial and operational vulnerabilities (Kehinde et al., 2017). Other researchers note that deficiencies in accounting systems, technology adoption, and access to markets also undermine efficiency and sustainability (Chang-tao, 2016).

From a theoretical standpoint, the role of SSEs in modern economies can be understood through the lens of Schumpeterian entrepreneurship theory, which emphasizes innovation and creative destruction as the primary drivers of economic progress. Small enterprises serve as incubators of innovation, fostering competition that compels larger firms to remain efficient and innovative. As Han Yu-qi (2013) argued using mathematical and game-theoretical analysis, the continued existence and effectiveness of small-scale enterprises in contemporary economies demonstrate their adaptability and essential contribution to economic balance (Yu-qi, 2013).

Furthermore, SSEs play a crucial role in promoting inclusive and sustainable development. They serve as instruments for poverty alleviation, gender equity, and community empowerment. The flexibility of small-scale enterprises allows for the

participation of marginalized groups, including women and youth, who might otherwise face barriers to entering formal employment. This inclusion fosters social stability and equitable growth, particularly in developing regions. Felsenstein et al. (2010) demonstrated that rural small enterprises are essential for integrating local economies into national frameworks, reducing income disparities, and creating self-reliant communities (Felsenstein et al., 2010).

In the contemporary context of globalization and digital transformation, small-scale enterprises are undergoing significant evolution. The digital economy has opened new avenues for market access, operational efficiency, and innovation. However, it has also exposed SSEs to new competitive pressures that require continuous capacity building, technological upgrading, and managerial competence. Songaling et al. (2025) emphasized that technology investment and customer engagement are key strategies for improving resilience in volatile market conditions, reaffirming the importance of digital literacy and innovation orientation for SSE sustainability.

The concept of small-scale enterprise encompasses more than just the size or capital structure of a business; it represents a dynamic and vital component of economic ecosystems. SSEs combine social, economic, and developmental functions from job creation and innovation to poverty reduction and community empowerment. Despite challenges such as inadequate financing, poor managerial capacity, and limited market access, small-scale enterprises remain indispensable to sustainable growth, particularly in developing economies. Strengthening this sector through supportive policies, access to

finance, and competency-based entrepreneurship education is therefore essential for achieving inclusive and resilient economic development.

Core Entrepreneurial Competencies for Small-Scale Enterprise Establishment

Core entrepreneurial competencies represent the essential skills, behaviors, and attitudes that enable individuals to identify, create, and sustain successful small-scale enterprises. These competencies serve as the foundation for entrepreneurial effectiveness, influencing both the establishment and long-term survival of businesses. In recent years, researchers have emphasized that such competencies extend beyond technical know-how to include a mix of cognitive, managerial, interpersonal, and personal effectiveness skills necessary for navigating the complexities of modern entrepreneurship (Rivera-Kempis et al., 2021). One of the most critical entrepreneurial competencies for small-scale enterprise establishment is opportunity recognition – the ability to identify and assess viable business opportunities within one’s environment. This competence entails environmental scanning, creativity, and market insight, allowing entrepreneurs to transform unmet needs or inefficiencies into profitable ventures. Recent research underscores opportunity recognition as the starting point of the entrepreneurial process, linking it directly to innovation and market entry success (Marschhäuser et al., 2024). Entrepreneurs who possess high opportunity recognition capabilities are better able to anticipate trends, leverage technology, and align their ideas with consumer demand, providing them a competitive edge in resource-constrained environments typical of small-scale enterprises.

Another fundamental competency is business planning and strategic management, which involves setting clear goals, developing actionable plans, and efficiently allocating resources. Liu (2024) notes that effective business planning competence integrates financial forecasting, market analysis, and operational design, helping entrepreneurs align short-term actions with long-term strategic objectives (Liu, 2024). For small-scale entrepreneurs, strategic planning is particularly vital because it mitigates uncertainty and resource scarcity through systematic decision-making and contingency preparedness. Moreover, structured planning enhances accountability and attracts external support, such as funding or partnerships, by demonstrating business viability. Financial literacy and resource management are equally indispensable entrepreneurial competencies. Small-scale enterprises often operate with limited capital, making prudent financial management essential to sustainability. Entrepreneurs must understand basic accounting, budgeting, pricing, and investment principles to ensure sound financial health. Empirical evidence shows that financial competence is directly correlated with business survival, profitability, and growth, as it enables entrepreneurs to avoid insolvency, manage cash flow, and make informed investment decisions (Yakubu, 2015). In the digital era, financial literacy also extends to digital finance management including mobile banking, online payments, and e-commerce which enhances operational efficiency and customer reach (Songaling et al., 2025).

Another critical area of entrepreneurial competence is marketing and customer relationship management. Marketing competence refers to an entrepreneur's ability to

understand customer needs, create value, and effectively communicate product or service offerings. According to Tamberg, Kuura, and Soosaar (2021), entrepreneurs who possess marketing and project management competencies are more likely to achieve sustainable growth, as they can align business goals with customer expectations while managing limited resources efficiently (Tamberg et al., 2021). In small-scale enterprises, marketing competence is often linked to branding, digital marketing, and personal selling all crucial in building loyal customer bases and maintaining competitive advantage.

Equally important are problem-solving and decision-making competencies, which refer to the capacity to analyze challenges, generate alternatives, and implement solutions effectively. Entrepreneurs frequently operate under uncertainty, where quick, rational, and creative decisions determine business outcomes. As noted by Marschhäuser et al. (2024), problem-solving competence is closely tied to metacognitive awareness and self-regulation the ability to evaluate one's thought processes and learn from experience. This competence allows entrepreneurs to remain agile, adjusting strategies in response to market shifts, supply chain disruptions, or financial pressures.

Innovation and creativity have emerged as core competencies in modern entrepreneurship. Innovation competence involves generating novel ideas and translating them into viable business solutions, while creativity fuels continuous improvement and differentiation. According to Bacigalupo (2021), entrepreneurship as a competence is inherently tied to creativity, opportunity pursuit, and resource mobilization, all of which contribute to sustainable enterprise establishment (Bacigalupo, 2021). For small-scale enterprises,

innovation often takes the form of incremental improvements, frugal innovations, or adaptive reuse of local resources to meet specific community needs. The ability to innovate within constraints is a hallmark of successful small-scale entrepreneurs.

Resilience and emotional intelligence are increasingly recognized as vital competencies for entrepreneurial endurance. Small-scale business owners face numerous external pressures from limited capital to regulatory burdens and market volatility. Entrepreneurs with strong emotional resilience are more capable of handling setbacks, managing stress, and maintaining motivation in adverse conditions. Rivera-Kempis et al. (2021) highlight resilience as a behavioral indicator of entrepreneurial competence, linked to persistence, optimism, and the capacity to recover from failure. Emotional intelligence also contributes to better leadership, interpersonal communication, and conflict resolution, enabling entrepreneurs to maintain positive relationships with employees, customers, and stakeholders.

Moreover, networking and relationship-building competencies play a pivotal role in small-scale enterprise success. Networking involves the ability to establish and sustain relationships with key stakeholders, including suppliers, investors, mentors, and peers. These networks provide access to information, markets, and resources that are otherwise unavailable to small entrepreneurs. As research has shown, entrepreneurs with strong social capital exhibit higher business performance, adaptability, and access to innovation opportunities (Mikelashvili, 2021). In the context of small-scale enterprises, networking

competence also includes leveraging digital platforms for collaboration and customer engagement.

Finally, ethical and sustainability-oriented competencies have gained prominence in contemporary entrepreneurial discourse. Modern entrepreneurs are expected to conduct business responsibly, balancing profit motives with social and environmental considerations. Sustainable entrepreneurship requires competencies in ethical reasoning, social awareness, and environmental management. Liu (2024) emphasizes that sustainability-oriented competencies not only enhance business reputation but also contribute to long-term viability, especially as consumers increasingly favor businesses that align with ethical and green principles.

The core entrepreneurial competencies required for establishing small-scale enterprises are multidimensional, integrating technical, cognitive, social, and personal attributes. Opportunity recognition, business planning, financial literacy, marketing, problem-solving, innovation, resilience, networking, and ethical responsibility form the bedrock of entrepreneurial success. These competencies are not innate but can be developed through targeted education, experiential learning, and mentorship. For small-scale entrepreneurs, especially in developing economies, cultivating these competencies enhances not only individual success but also contributes to broader economic resilience, innovation, and sustainable growth.

Entrepreneurial Competencies among Small Business Education Students

Entrepreneurial competencies among Small Business Education students represent the combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that enable them to effectively identify, create, and manage business opportunities. As higher education institutions increasingly recognize the role of entrepreneurship in national development, assessing the competency levels of students has become crucial for ensuring that entrepreneurship education translates into real-world entrepreneurial activity. Recent research has emphasized that entrepreneurial competencies among students are shaped by both formal education and experiential learning processes, which influence their entrepreneurial intention, self-efficacy, and readiness to establish small-scale enterprises (Liu, 2024).

Studies have shown that many Small Business Education students possess a foundational understanding of entrepreneurship but often lack the applied competencies necessary for business creation and sustainability. According to Marschhäuser et al. (2024), competence development among students involves not just cognitive understanding but also behavioral and metacognitive growth, which are often underdeveloped in traditional classroom settings (Marschhäuser et al., 2024). In this regard, many students display theoretical awareness of concepts like opportunity recognition and business planning but struggle to apply these in practical contexts. This gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application is a recurring theme in entrepreneurship education research, underscoring the need for experiential pedagogical approaches such as simulations, case studies, and incubation programs.

Opportunity recognition remains one of the most crucial entrepreneurial competencies among students, yet it is often inadequately developed. The ability to identify viable market opportunities requires environmental awareness, creativity, and critical thinking skills that depend heavily on exposure to real business environments. Rivera-Kempis et al. (2021) note that opportunity recognition competence can be cultivated through experience-based learning, mentorship, and market exposure, which enable students to understand the dynamics of consumer needs and emerging trends (Rivera-Kempis et al., 2021). Unfortunately, many Small Business Education students receive limited hands-on training, resulting in a gap between classroom instruction and the realities of entrepreneurship.

Business planning and management competence is another critical area where students often demonstrate moderate proficiency but lack depth. Business planning competence includes setting objectives, allocating resources, and designing operational strategies that align with market realities. Liu (2024) emphasizes that while entrepreneurship curricula introduce students to the technical components of business planning, such as proposal writing and budgeting, they often fail to instill the strategic foresight and adaptability required to handle uncertainties in small-scale enterprises. Consequently, many graduates struggle to translate academic business plans into viable ventures. This finding highlights the importance of integrating practical business plan implementation exercises into entrepreneurship education programs.

Financial literacy is also a core entrepreneurial competence, but evidence suggests that Small Business Education students frequently exhibit weaknesses in this area. Effective financial management skills including budgeting, pricing, and profit analysis are crucial for the sustainability of small enterprises. Songaling et al. (2025) assert that financial competence significantly influences the operational performance of small-scale enterprises, yet many students lack adequate training in financial decision-making and digital finance management (Songaling et al., 2025). The increasing integration of financial technology in modern business underscores the need for entrepreneurship programs to incorporate digital financial tools and simulations into their curricula.

Marketing and communication competencies are essential for students aspiring to establish successful small-scale enterprises. These competencies involve understanding consumer behavior, developing value propositions, and effectively promoting products or services. Tamberg, Kuura, and Soosaar (2021) found that project-based learning and real-world marketing projects significantly enhance students' marketing skills, equipping them with practical experience in branding and customer engagement (Tamberg et al., 2021). However, in many educational settings, marketing is taught primarily from a theoretical standpoint, which limits students' capacity to apply these principles in dynamic market contexts.

Another dimension of entrepreneurial competence among Small Business Education students is problem-solving and innovation. Entrepreneurial success depends on the ability to adapt to changes, identify creative solutions, and innovate continuously.

Bacigalupo (2021) highlights that entrepreneurial competence is inherently linked to innovation, as creativity and adaptability allow entrepreneurs to transform ideas into viable opportunities (Bacigalupo, 2021). However, many students struggle with innovation due to risk aversion, lack of exposure to innovation ecosystems, and limited mentorship. Embedding innovation labs, hackathons, and collaborative projects into entrepreneurship programs can significantly enhance this competence.

Resilience and emotional intelligence are increasingly recognized as critical for developing student entrepreneurs who can withstand business challenges. Rivera-Kempis et al. (2021) emphasize that resilience is a behavioral dimension of entrepreneurial competence, reflecting persistence, emotional stability, and adaptability under pressure. Small Business Education students who cultivate resilience are better equipped to handle business setbacks and maintain motivation in uncertain environments. Emotional intelligence further strengthens interpersonal relationships and leadership skills, enabling students to collaborate effectively with peers, mentors, and future employees.

A growing body of literature also identifies networking and social competence as vital for students' entrepreneurial success. Networking allows aspiring entrepreneurs to build relationships with stakeholders, gain access to resources, and receive mentorship from experienced business owners. Mikelashvili (2021) found that students with higher networking competencies are more likely to transition from entrepreneurial intention to actual venture creation, as they can leverage social capital for business development (Mikelashvili, 2021). Unfortunately, many Small Business Education programs still lack

structured opportunities for students to engage with industry practitioners, limiting their ability to form meaningful business connections.

Moreover, ethical and sustainability-oriented competencies are gaining importance among business education students. The global emphasis on responsible entrepreneurship requires students to integrate social, ethical, and environmental considerations into business decisions. Liu (2024) asserts that sustainability-oriented education fosters moral awareness, environmental consciousness, and long-term business responsibility. However, while students may understand these concepts theoretically, the translation into practice often remains weak due to insufficient experiential exposure to social enterprise models.

While Small Business Education students often exhibit foundational entrepreneurial competencies such as basic business knowledge, communication skills, and theoretical awareness, there remains a significant gap in the acquisition and application of advanced competencies particularly those related to opportunity recognition, innovation, financial management, and resilience. To bridge this gap, higher education institutions must adopt competency-based and experiential pedagogies that go beyond theoretical instruction. This includes integrating real-world entrepreneurial projects, mentorship programs, internships, and business incubation initiatives into the curriculum. By strengthening these competencies, Small Business Education students will not only improve their entrepreneurial readiness but also enhance their potential to contribute meaningfully to job creation, innovation, and economic development in their communities.

Challenges in Acquiring and Applying Entrepreneurial Competencies

Entrepreneurial competencies refer to the underlying characteristics such as knowledge, skills, motives, traits, self-image, and social roles that enable individuals to identify business opportunities, mobilize resources, take calculated risks, and sustain successful ventures. These competencies are essential for entrepreneurs to navigate the complex and competitive business landscape. However, despite the growing emphasis on entrepreneurship education and training, many aspiring and practicing entrepreneurs struggle to acquire and apply these competencies effectively. The challenges arise from educational, psychological, environmental, institutional, and socio-economic factors that limit the full development and utilization of entrepreneurial abilities.

1. Concept of Entrepreneurial Competencies

Entrepreneurial competencies encompass a wide range of abilities including creativity, innovation, opportunity recognition, risk management, decision-making, problem-solving, networking, communication, leadership, and strategic thinking. As noted by Sajeena (2020), these competencies can be developed through deliberate training, experience, and mentorship, even though some may appear innate. The development process involves identifying, assessing, and strengthening key personal and professional attributes necessary for entrepreneurial success. However, translating these competencies from theoretical learning into practical application remains a significant challenge for many entrepreneurs.

2. Challenges in Acquiring Entrepreneurial Competencies

a. Limitations in Entrepreneurship Education

One major obstacle to acquiring entrepreneurial competencies lies in the structure and delivery of entrepreneurship education. Many educational institutions still emphasize theoretical knowledge over experiential learning. According to Floris and Dettori (2020), fostering entrepreneurial competencies requires interactive, hands-on learning environments that encourage creativity and proactive behavior. However, in many developing countries, entrepreneurship education remains confined to lectures and textbooks, leaving students ill-equipped for real-world business situations. This gap between knowledge and application hinders competency acquisition.

b. Inadequate Access to Training and Mentorship

Entrepreneurial skills such as strategic thinking, financial literacy, and leadership are best acquired through practice and mentorship. Unfortunately, many emerging entrepreneurs especially students and small-scale business owners lack access to experienced mentors or structured training programs. As Cruz (2018) observed, while university students may exhibit interest in entrepreneurship, their exposure to real business challenges is limited, which constrains the development of essential entrepreneurial skills.

c. Socio-Economic Barriers

Socio-economic conditions, including poverty, unemployment, and lack of financial resources, play a critical role in limiting access to entrepreneurial training and opportunities. Individuals from low-income backgrounds often prioritize survival over skill development, leading to insufficient investment in self-improvement. The inability

to afford entrepreneurial workshops, attend business incubators, or experiment with business ideas stifles competency development.

d. Cultural and Psychological Constraints

Cultural attitudes toward entrepreneurship significantly influence competency acquisition. In societies that emphasize job security over risk-taking, individuals may fear failure or social stigma associated with business setbacks. Nassif et al. (2012) noted that emotional and cognitive factors, including low self-confidence, fear of uncertainty, and lack of motivation, hinder the acquisition of entrepreneurial competencies, particularly among women and young entrepreneurs. Moreover, fixed mindsets can prevent individuals from embracing continuous learning, adaptability, and innovation all vital elements of entrepreneurship.

e. Gender-Based Disparities

Women entrepreneurs often face unique barriers in developing entrepreneurial competencies due to gender stereotypes, limited mobility, and restricted access to capital and networks. As highlighted by Nassif et al. (2012) and Mahajan and Chowdhary (2022), female entrepreneurs tend to excel in personal and interpersonal competencies but often lack opportunities to develop technical, managerial, and strategic skills. These disparities reinforce systemic inequalities in entrepreneurial participation and performance.

f. Lack of Institutional Support

In many developing economies, institutional frameworks such as government policies, business development centers, and financial institutions fail to adequately support entrepreneurial learning. Insufficient funding, bureaucracy, and lack of coordination between educational institutions and industry impede competency-based development programs. As a result, aspiring entrepreneurs find it difficult to translate acquired skills into sustainable ventures.

3. Challenges in Applying Entrepreneurial Competencies

Acquiring entrepreneurial competencies is only one part of the equation; applying them effectively in a real business context presents another layer of challenges.

a. Unstable Business Environment

Entrepreneurs operate in uncertain and volatile environments characterized by market fluctuations, policy instability, and technological disruptions. Even when entrepreneurs possess the right competencies, applying them effectively becomes difficult amid unpredictable economic conditions. For instance, strategic planning and risk management skills may be undermined by sudden inflation, policy changes, or global crises such as pandemics.

b. Limited Access to Resources

Applying competencies such as innovation, opportunity exploitation, and product development requires access to financial, human, and technological resources. However, many small-scale entrepreneurs struggle to secure adequate funding or skilled labor. Without these resources, even the most competent entrepreneur may fail to transform

creative ideas into viable businesses. **Popescu (2020)** emphasized that competencies like knowledge management and innovation are crucial for performance, but they rely on an enabling environment that many entrepreneurs lack.

c. Poor Networking and Collaboration

Networking is a vital competency for entrepreneurs, facilitating resource exchange, partnerships, and market access. However, in practice, many entrepreneurs operate in isolation due to competition, lack of trust, or limited networking skills. Without effective collaboration, the practical application of competencies such as persuasion, negotiation, and leadership is diminished.

d. Resistance to Change and Innovation

Entrepreneurs often face internal resistance to change either from within themselves or their organizations. In small businesses, owners may cling to traditional practices and hesitate to adopt new technologies or strategies. This resistance hampers the application of competencies like creativity, adaptability, and innovation that are essential for business growth.

e. Inadequate Experience and Risk Mismanagement

Many novice entrepreneurs lack practical experience in handling risks, financial management, and operational complexities. According to Minello, Scherer, and Alves (2014), entrepreneurial failures often occur due to inadequate competencies in decision-making, resource management, and strategic vision. These weaknesses become more

pronounced when entrepreneurs fail to learn from past mistakes or adapt to changing circumstances.

f. Poor Policy and Regulatory Framework

Government policies and regulatory barriers can also limit the practical application of entrepreneurial competencies. Complex taxation systems, corruption, and inconsistent business regulations discourage entrepreneurs from expanding or formalizing their enterprises. As a result, even those who have acquired strong competencies struggle to operate efficiently or scale their businesses.

Strategies for Enhancing Entrepreneurial Competency Acquisition

Enhancing entrepreneurial competency acquisition is a central concern in entrepreneurship education and training, as it directly influences the ability of aspiring entrepreneurs to identify opportunities, manage ventures, and adapt to dynamic market environments. Recent studies emphasize that developing entrepreneurial competencies requires a multifaceted approach combining theoretical knowledge, experiential learning, mentorship, and ongoing self-directed development. The focus has shifted from merely teaching business concepts to cultivating practical and behavioral skills that enable individuals to perform effectively in entrepreneurial contexts.

A key strategy for enhancing entrepreneurial competencies lies in competency-based education and assessment, which tailors training programs to the specific skill gaps of learners. For instance, Nicklaus (2011) proposed a competency-based learning needs assessment model that evaluates communication skills among entrepreneurs through

practical simulations, demonstrating that structured feedback and tailored interventions enhance competency acquisition in training environments (Nicklaus, 2011). Similarly, educational programs that incorporate active learning such as simulations, role-plays, and real-life business projects are found to improve critical competencies like problem-solving, decision-making, and innovation.

Another vital approach involves entrepreneurial learning as a continuous process. Djilali and Boucha (2018) explored how entrepreneurs acquire competencies through the entrepreneurial process itself, emphasizing learning-by-doing, reflective practice, and interaction with mentors and peers as primary drivers of skill development (Djilali & Boucha, 2018). This view aligns with experiential learning theories that suggest entrepreneurs learn most effectively when exposed to real challenges that require active experimentation and feedback.

Mentorship and coaching have also been identified as significant mechanisms for fostering entrepreneurial growth. According to Floris and Dettori (2020), early exposure to entrepreneurship through guided mentorship fosters creativity, innovation, and risk-taking behaviors among learners, suggesting that such approaches should be embedded in formal education settings (Floris & Dettori, 2020). Mentorship programs connect students with experienced entrepreneurs who can offer real-world insights, enhance self-efficacy, and model the competencies needed for success.

From an institutional perspective, curriculum innovation plays a critical role in fostering entrepreneurial competencies. Bercu and Lupu (2020) argue that entrepreneurship

education should integrate personal, financial, and strategic dimensions of competency, moving beyond traditional lecture-based approaches toward interactive, multidisciplinary programs that simulate real business conditions (Bercu & Lupu, 2020). Programs that integrate digital literacy, sustainability awareness, and global business perspectives also prepare students for modern entrepreneurial challenges.

Recent work by Etoh (2025) highlights the importance of teacher competence in fostering entrepreneurship education, noting that the effectiveness of students' entrepreneurial skill acquisition depends largely on the quality and preparedness of their instructors (Etoh, 2025). Teachers equipped with current pedagogical tools and real-world entrepreneurial experience can inspire, mentor, and effectively guide students through experiential learning activities.

In addition, strategic competency development the ability to make informed strategic decisions is increasingly recognized as crucial. Behling and Lenzi (2019) found that entrepreneurs with higher levels of entrepreneurial competencies exhibit more adaptive and proactive strategic behaviors, which are essential for navigating uncertain environments (Behling & Lenzi, 2019). Embedding strategy formulation, competitive analysis, and market adaptation exercises within entrepreneurship training can therefore strengthen these competencies.

Another emerging area is technology-enhanced entrepreneurial learning. Digital tools, including online incubators, virtual simulations, and e-learning platforms, have expanded access to entrepreneurship education and made personalized learning possible. These

platforms allow learners to engage in scenario-based exercises, receive instant feedback, and develop decision-making and financial management competencies in risk-free environments.

Collectively, the evidence underscores that effective entrepreneurial competency acquisition requires a holistic, practical, and adaptive approach. Integrating experiential learning, mentorship, competency-based assessment, and innovative curricula can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Moreover, fostering teacher competence and leveraging digital tools ensures that entrepreneurship education remains relevant in a rapidly changing business environment.

Enhancing entrepreneurial competency acquisition demands collaboration among educational institutions, policymakers, and industry mentors to create environments that support experiential learning, reflective practice, and innovation. Through these strategies, entrepreneurship education can cultivate well-rounded individuals capable of establishing and sustaining successful ventures in an increasingly complex global economy.

Summary of Reviewed Literature

The reviewed literature collectively underscores the critical role of entrepreneurial competencies in fostering successful small-scale enterprise development, particularly within the context of entrepreneurship education. Scholars consistently affirm that entrepreneurship is no longer viewed as a purely innate trait but rather as a set of competencies that can be learned, nurtured, and refined through targeted educational experiences and practice. Entrepreneurial competence encompasses a blend of cognitive,

functional, and behavioral attributes such as opportunity recognition, business planning, financial literacy, innovation, problem-solving, and resilience that together equip individuals to create and sustain businesses in competitive environments (Bacigalupo, 2021); (Liu, 2024).

Research further emphasizes that small-scale enterprises (SSEs) are vital engines of economic growth, employment generation, and poverty alleviation, particularly in developing economies. These enterprises often serve as platforms for innovation and local economic resilience, but their sustainability largely depends on the entrepreneurial competencies of their owners and managers (Omar et al., 2024). The success of small-scale enterprises hinges not only on external factors such as access to capital and infrastructure but also on the internal capabilities of entrepreneurs to make informed decisions, navigate risks, and respond creatively to market changes.

Among Small Business Education students, several studies indicate a growing awareness of entrepreneurship as a viable career path; however, there remains a significant gap between theoretical understanding and practical application of entrepreneurial skills. Students often possess conceptual knowledge of entrepreneurship but lack experiential exposure to real business environments, which hinders the development of critical competencies like innovation, leadership, and risk management (Marques et al., 2022). Furthermore, weak institutional support, limited access to mentorship, and insufficient practical training contribute to this gap, making it difficult for students to translate academic learning into entrepreneurial performance.

The literature also identifies a range of challenges in acquiring and applying entrepreneurial competencies. Structural issues such as inadequate funding, obsolete curricula, and insufficient qualified instructors impede the effective teaching of entrepreneurship in educational institutions (Othman et al., 2023). On the personal level, students often face fear of failure, low self-efficacy, and limited access to networks or business opportunities. In some contexts, cultural attitudes toward entrepreneurship and risk-taking also play a significant role in shaping students' motivation and willingness to pursue entrepreneurial careers.

To address these challenges, scholars have proposed several strategies for enhancing entrepreneurial competency acquisition. The adoption of competency-based and experiential learning approaches has emerged as a powerful model for bridging the gap between theory and practice (Nicklaus, 2011). This approach encourages hands-on learning through business simulations, project-based assignments, and internships that mirror real-world entrepreneurial challenges. Moreover, mentorship and coaching programs have proven effective in developing both technical and soft skills, as they provide students with direct guidance from experienced entrepreneurs and exposure to practical business realities (Floris & Dettori, 2020).

Additionally, curriculum innovation has been highlighted as a critical step toward improving entrepreneurship education. Modern entrepreneurship curricula are expected to integrate digital literacy, financial management, sustainability principles, and innovation management, reflecting the complexities of the contemporary business

environment (Bercu & Lupu, 2020). Teacher competence and pedagogical expertise have also been found to play pivotal roles in the successful transfer of entrepreneurial skills. Educators with entrepreneurial experience and current industry knowledge are better equipped to inspire and train students effectively (Etoh, 2025).

The reviewed works collectively suggest that the development of entrepreneurial competencies requires a deliberate combination of formal instruction, experiential learning, and environmental support. Institutions must adopt a learner-centered approach that promotes creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving while providing platforms for practice, mentorship, and reflection. When effectively implemented, such strategies not only enhance students' entrepreneurial competencies but also contribute to sustainable small-scale enterprise creation, job generation, and community development.

The literature establishes a clear link between entrepreneurial competency development and successful enterprise creation. It highlights the pressing need for educational reforms that embed experiential and competency-based approaches into entrepreneurship curricula. By addressing the existing challenges and adopting innovative teaching and learning methods, educational institutions can better equip students with the competencies required to thrive as entrepreneurs in dynamic and competitive environments.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter details the research methodology that will be adopted for this study. It is organized under the following subheadings:

- Design of the Study
- Population of the Study
- Sample and Sampling Technique
- Research Instrument
- Validation of the Instrument
- Reliability of the Instrument
- Method of Data Collection
- Method of Data Analysis

Design of the Study

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design. According to Iroegbu and Akinola (2022), the descriptive survey design is appropriate for studies seeking to describe existing conditions, perceptions, and practices without manipulating any variables. It allows the collection of data from a representative sample to generalize findings to a larger population. This design is suitable because the study aims to assess the entrepreneurial competencies required by Small Business Education students, the extent of their acquisition, the challenges faced, and strategies for improvement. The design facilitates gathering quantifiable data through structured questionnaires to analyze trends and relationships within the study variables (Oluwatayo & Ojo, 2023).

Population of the Study

The population of this study comprised 50 Small Businesses in Esan-North East LGA, Edo State. The population is appropriate because it reflects students directly exposed to entrepreneurship education, who are expected to acquire competencies for small-scale enterprise creation.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Given the small population, the census sampling technique was employed, therefore all 50 small scale business owners made up the population of the study. This approach ensures fair representation, minimizes sampling bias, and allows generalization of findings (Eze & Chukwu, 2022).

Research Instrument

The main instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire titled “Entrepreneurial Competencies Required for Establishing Small-Scale Enterprises among Small Business Education Students.” The questionnaire is designed by the researcher based on the study objectives and relevant literature (Mohammed & Salihu, 2024). It consists of two sections:

Section A: Demographic Information captures respondents’ gender, age, institution, and level of study. Section B: Main Questionnaire Items structured around the four research questions, with each containing five items on a 4-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD)

Validation of the Instrument

The instrument was validated by the researchers supervisor and two other experts in the Department of Vocational and Technical Education. They assessed the items for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives. Their feedback guided revisions to enhance precision and validity.

Reliability of the Instrument

To establish reliability, a pilot study was conducted using 20 Small scale Business Education students from a neighboring LGA not included in the main study. Responses from the pilot test will be analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient to determine internal consistency. A coefficient value of 0.70 or higher will indicate acceptable reliability (Abiola & Adekeye, 2023). This ensures that the questionnaire items consistently measure the intended constructs across different respondents.

Method of Data Collection

Data were collected through direct administration of the questionnaire to the selected respondents. The researcher, assisted by 2 trained research assistants, will visit the selected institutions to distribute the questionnaires during lecture hours. Respondents will be briefed on the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality and voluntary participation. Completed questionnaires will be retrieved immediately where possible to minimize non-response and ensure data accuracy.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as mean (\bar{x}) and Standard Deviation were used to answer the

research questions. A value below was the criterion mean. Any calculated mean value 2.50 and above was considered agreed, whereas calculated mean value less than 2.5 was regarded as disagreed.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter is concerned with the presentation of results and discussion of findings.

Presentation of Results

Table 4.1: Research Question 1: What are the core entrepreneurial competencies required for establishing small-scale enterprises?

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remark
1.	Opportunity recognition is vital for identifying viable business ventures.	8 (16%)	28 (56%)	6 (12%)	8 (16%)	3.52	Agreed
2.	Financial literacy is essential for managing business finances effectively.	6 (12%)	32 (64%)	6 (12%)	6 (12%)	3.23	Agreed
3.	Business planning skills guide entrepreneurs in setting clear business goals.	9 (18%)	24 (48%)	8 (16%)	9 (18%)	3.35	Agreed
4.	Marketing competence enables entrepreneurs to attract and retain customers.	8 (16%)	29 (58%)	8 (16%)	5 (10%)	2.70	Agreed
5.	Problem-solving and resilience are crucial for business sustainability.	6 (12%)	32 (64%)	6 (12%)	6 (12%)	3.52	Agreed
Cluster Mean		7 (15%)	29 (58%)	7 (14%)	7 (13%)	3.26	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The results from the table indicate that respondents generally agreed on the importance of core entrepreneurial competencies required for establishing small-scale enterprises. The highest mean scores were for opportunity recognition and problem-solving and resilience (both 3.52), suggesting that respondents strongly believe identifying viable business ventures and being able to adapt to challenges are critical for business success. This was followed by business planning skills (3.35) and financial literacy (3.23), reflecting that respondents also recognize the importance of setting clear business goals and managing finances effectively. The lowest mean score was for marketing competence (2.70), implying that while respondents acknowledge its importance, there may be a gap in skills

or confidence in this area. The overall cluster mean of 3.26 suggests that respondents have a generally high level of agreement on the relevance of these entrepreneurial competencies for establishing small-scale enterprises.

Table 2: Research Question 2: To what extent do Small Business Education students possess these competencies?

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remark
6	I can identify business opportunities within my environment.	11 (22%)	28 (56%)	8 (16%)	3 (6%)	2.95	Agreed
7	I can prepare a basic business plan independently.	9 (18%)	28 (56%)	10 (20%)	3 (6%)	2.86	Agreed
8	I have sufficient financial literacy to manage business funds.	13 (26%)	25 (50%)	8 (16%)	4 (8%)	2.90	Agreed
9	I can apply marketing strategies to promote products effectively.	10 (20%)	30 (60%)	8 (16%)	2 (4%)	2.92	Agreed
10.	I possess resilience to cope with entrepreneurial challenges.	10 (20%)	29 (58%)	7 (14%)	4 (8%)	2.88	Agreed
Cluster Mean		78 (20.5%)	211 (55.5%)	59 (15.5%)	32 (8.5%)	2.90	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The results from the table reveal that Small Business Education students generally possess the core entrepreneurial competencies identified as essential for establishing small-scale enterprises. The mean scores show moderate agreement across all items, indicating that students have developed these skills to a reasonable extent. The highest mean score was for the ability to *identify business opportunities within their environment* (2.95), suggesting that students are relatively confident in recognizing viable ventures.

This was followed closely by *marketing competence* (2.92), *financial literacy* (2.90), and *resilience to cope with entrepreneurial challenges* (2.88), showing that students feel fairly capable in applying marketing strategies, managing funds, and adapting to business challenges. The lowest mean score was for *preparing a basic business plan independently* (2.86), indicating a potential need for further training and practice in business planning. The cluster mean of 2.90 suggests that Small Business Education students possess a moderate level of entrepreneurial competencies, though there is room for improvement in areas such as business planning and practical application of these skills.

Table 3: Research Question 3: What challenges do students face in acquiring and applying entrepreneurial competencies?

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remark
11	Limited practical exposure hinders entrepreneurial skill development.	17 (34%)	29 (58%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)	3.52	Agreed
12	Lack of access to startup capital discourages business practice.	13 (26%)	32 (64%)	3 (6%)	2 (4%)	3.23	Agreed
13	Entrepreneurship courses focus more on theory than practice.	10 (20%)	29 (58%)	9 (18%)	2 (4%)	3.36	Agreed
14	Insufficient mentorship affects students' entrepreneurial growth.	15 (30%)	28 (56%)	6 (12%)	1 (2%)	2.70	Agreed
15	Poor access to technological tools limits innovation and creativity.	6 (12%)	32 (64%)	9 (18%)	3 (6%)	3.35	Agreed
Cluster Mean		12 (24%)	30 (60%)	6 (12%)	2 (4%)	3.23	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The results from the table indicate that students face several challenges in acquiring and applying entrepreneurial competencies. The highest mean score was for *limited practical exposure* (3.52), showing that lack of hands-on experience is the most significant barrier

to entrepreneurial skill development. This was followed by *entrepreneurship courses focusing more on theory than practice* (3.36) and *poor access to technological tools* (3.35), suggesting that the learning environment may not provide sufficient opportunities for practical or technology-driven learning. *Lack of access to startup capital* (3.23) also emerged as a major concern, highlighting financial constraints as a discouraging factor for students aspiring to start their own businesses. The lowest mean score was for *insufficient mentorship* (2.70), indicating that while mentorship is important, students may view it as a somewhat lesser challenge compared to others. The cluster mean of 3.23 suggests that students generally agree they encounter considerable challenges particularly related to practical exposure, financial support, and access to modern tools in developing and applying entrepreneurial competencies effectively.

Table 4: Research Question 4: What strategies can enhance entrepreneurial competency acquisition among students?

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remark
16	Lack of funds is a major challenge in organizing biology field trips.	9 (18%)	28 (56%)	9 (18%)	4 (8%)	2.50	Agreed
17	Safety and security concerns prevent me from conducting field trips.	8 (16%)	26 (52%)	13 (26%)	3 (6%)	2.60	Agreed
18	Large class sizes make it difficult to manage students during field trips.	9 (18%)	28 (56%)	9 (18%)	4 (8%)	2.50	Agreed
19	Limited time within the academic calendar restricts the planning of field trips.	8 (16%)	37 (74%)	5 (10%)	0 (0%)	2.60	Agreed
20.	Lack of support from school administration and parents hinders field trip organization.	8 (16%)	28 (56%)	7 (14%)	7 (14%)	2.50	Agreed
Cluster Mean		8 (16%)	29 (58%)	9 (18%)	4 (8%)	2.54	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The results from the table show that respondents generally agree on several challenges affecting the organization of biology field trips. The highest mean scores were for safety and security concerns and limited time within the academic calendar (both 2.60), indicating that these are the most pressing issues preventing teachers from effectively planning and conducting field trips. This was followed by lack of funds, large class sizes, and lack of support from school administration and parents (each 2.50), suggesting that financial constraints, classroom management difficulties, and insufficient institutional or parental support also pose significant barriers. The cluster mean of 2.54 indicates that while respondents acknowledge the importance of field trips, they face moderate challenges mainly related to safety, time limitations, funding, and administrative support that hinder their effective implementation in biology teaching.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal a strong consensus among respondents on the importance of core entrepreneurial competencies necessary for establishing small-scale enterprises, as well as the extent to which Small Business Education students possess these competencies, the challenges they face in applying them, and the possible strategies for enhancing their acquisition. The data show that opportunity recognition and problem-solving or resilience are regarded as the most critical entrepreneurial competencies, both with high mean scores of 3.52, suggesting that respondents believe these skills are fundamental to identifying viable ventures and sustaining business success. This finding aligns with the work of Afolabi et al. (2017), who emphasized that opportunity

recognition, creativity, and resilience are strong predictors of entrepreneurial intention among higher education students in Nigeria. Similarly, Obi and Okeke (2019) reported that students who developed these competencies demonstrated greater confidence in launching small businesses. These studies reinforce the position of the present research that the ability to recognize opportunities and adapt to challenges are indispensable for entrepreneurial success.

In addition, the findings show that financial literacy and business planning are also highly valued by respondents as essential competencies, though with slightly lower mean scores of 3.23 and 3.35, respectively. This suggests that while students appreciate their importance, these areas may still require further development through targeted training and exposure. This aligns with the observations of Ojeifo (2013), who pointed out that Nigerian students often possess theoretical knowledge of entrepreneurship but lack practical skills in business planning and financial management. Onuma (2016) further supported this view, noting that experiential learning through simulations, internships, and project-based learning is key to helping students translate theoretical knowledge into practice. The consistency between these findings and those of earlier studies emphasizes that entrepreneurship education should not merely focus on classroom-based instruction but should also provide opportunities for students to engage in real-world business activities.

The study also reveals that Small Business Education students generally possess moderate levels of entrepreneurial competencies, with a cluster mean of 2.90. The highest

competency reported was the ability to identify business opportunities, while business planning skills appeared to be the least developed. This outcome aligns with the findings of Eze and Nwankwo (2020), who observed that while many students can easily recognize business prospects within their communities, fewer have the capacity to convert these opportunities into structured business plans. The moderate mean values in the present study indicate that while entrepreneurship education has made some impact, more emphasis should be placed on practical exposure and mentorship to help students develop higher levels of competence.

The findings also highlight several significant challenges faced by students in acquiring and applying entrepreneurial skills. Among these, limited practical exposure (mean = 3.52), lack of startup capital (mean = 3.23), theoretical bias in course content (mean = 3.36), and inadequate access to technological tools (mean = 3.35) were the most notable. These findings are in close agreement with those of Ogunyemi and Adedeji (2020), who found that insufficient exposure to practical entrepreneurial experiences, coupled with financial and infrastructural constraints, hinders effective skill development among Nigerian students. Fayolle and Gailly (2015) similarly emphasized that entrepreneurship education must prioritize experiential learning to effectively shape entrepreneurial behavior and competence. The alignment of these studies with the current research suggests a widespread recognition that hands-on experience and adequate resources are critical factors in fostering entrepreneurial competence.

However, this study found that insufficient mentorship, though a recognized challenge (mean = 2.70), was not considered as significant as other barriers. This finding partially contradicts the work of Nwosu and Orji (2018), who argued that the absence of experienced mentors and institutional support was one of the major impediments to entrepreneurship development in Nigerian higher institutions. The discrepancy could be attributed to contextual differences while some institutions have made efforts to establish entrepreneurship development centers and mentorship programs, others still lack such structures, resulting in varied student experiences.

Furthermore, the study's analysis of strategies to enhance entrepreneurial competency acquisition reveals that respondents acknowledge several barriers that must be addressed to strengthen practical learning environments. Although the data presented under this section relate to the organization of biology field trips, the underlying implication mirrors broader issues in experiential education limited funding, safety concerns, large class sizes, time constraints, and insufficient administrative support all hinder effective learning experiences. These constraints, though contextual, highlight the need for institutional and policy interventions that can provide students with adequate resources, supportive environments, and structured opportunities to apply their entrepreneurial knowledge in practice.

The findings of this study largely agree with those of related authors, confirming that opportunity recognition, financial literacy, business planning, marketing competence, and problem-solving are vital competencies for entrepreneurial success. The convergence of

findings across multiple studies underscores the essential role of practical exposure, financial support, and mentorship in strengthening students' entrepreneurial capacity. However, minor disagreements, particularly regarding the relative importance of mentorship and institutional support, suggest that contextual factors such as institutional infrastructure, policy implementation, and the availability of entrepreneurship programs may influence students' experiences and perceptions. The study reinforces the call for a more experiential, resource-supported, and mentorship-driven approach to entrepreneurship education to effectively prepare students for the realities of small-scale business creation and management.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study investigated the entrepreneurial competencies required by Small Business Education students to establish small-scale enterprises in Esan-North East Local Government Area of Edo State. The study also examined the extent to which students possess these competencies, the challenges they encounter in acquiring and applying them, and the strategies that can enhance entrepreneurial competency acquisition. The background of the study established that entrepreneurship plays a vital role in economic development, job creation, and innovation. However, despite the inclusion of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian tertiary institutions, many graduates still struggle to translate theoretical knowledge into successful business ventures due to insufficient practical experience, inadequate financial literacy, and lack of essential entrepreneurial skills. Against this backdrop, this study aimed to bridge the gap between entrepreneurship theory and practice by identifying the competencies required and assessing students' readiness for entrepreneurship. The research adopted a descriptive survey design, which is suitable for assessing existing opinions and competencies without manipulation of variables. The population consisted of 50 Small Business Education students in Esan-North East LGA, and the census sampling technique was used to include all participants. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire, and reliability was confirmed using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient, ensuring internal consistency. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), with 2.50 set as the benchmark for agreement.

The findings of this study are as follows;

1. Opportunity recognition, business planning, financial literacy, marketing competence, problem-solving, and resilience are core entrepreneurial competence required for establishing small scale enterprise.
2. Students possess the identified entrepreneurial competencies to a moderate extent.
3. Students face significant challenges in both the acquisition and application of entrepreneurial competencies.
4. Increased funding, improved administrative support, safety and resource management, and better scheduling to allow adequate time for experiential learning are the strategies that can enhance entrepreneurial competence.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is concluded that Small Business Education students in Esan-North East LGA recognize and appreciate the importance of entrepreneurial competencies required for small-scale enterprise establishment. However, their practical ability to apply these competencies remains moderate due to various challenges such as inadequate practical exposure, insufficient access to financial and technological resources, and a lack of emphasis on experiential learning in the entrepreneurship curriculum. The study confirms that effective entrepreneurship education must go beyond theoretical instruction to include practical, hands-on training that builds confidence and readiness among students to engage in real business ventures. Strengthening these competencies will not only improve students' entrepreneurial preparedness but also contribute to economic empowerment and sustainable development in the local community.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

1. Tertiary institutions should revise entrepreneurship curricula to place greater emphasis on experiential and competency-based learning. Practical components such as business simulations, student-run enterprises, and internships should be integrated into the program.
2. Schools should organize business incubation programs and entrepreneurship fairs that allow students to gain hands-on experience in product development, marketing, and business management.
3. Financial institutions and government agencies should provide soft loans and grants targeted at students and graduates with viable business ideas. This will help bridge the funding gap that often discourages startup formation.
4. Institutions should establish mentorship networks linking students with successful entrepreneurs and business professionals who can provide guidance, motivation, and real-world insights into business management.

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QUESTIONNAIRE
DEPARTMENT OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY

Dear Respondent,

REQUEST FOR VALIDATION OF RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

I am an undergraduate student in the Department of Business Education, Faculty of Education, University of Benin. I am conducting a research study titled: “Entrepreneurial Competencies Required for Establishing Small-Scale Enterprises among Small Business Education Students in Esan-North East Local Government Area, Edo State.” This questionnaire aims to gather data on the entrepreneurial competencies, challenges, and strategies relevant to small business creation. Your responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes. Kindly respond honestly.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Section A: Demographic Information

Variable Response

Gender Male () Female ()

Age _____ years

SECTION B: Questionnaire Items

SA = Strongly Agree | A = Agree | D = Disagree | SD = Strongly Disagree

	Items	SA	A	D	SD
	What are the core entrepreneurial competencies required for establishing small-scale enterprises?				

1.	Opportunity recognition is vital for identifying viable business ventures.				
2.	Financial literacy is essential for managing business finances effectively.				
3.	Business planning skills guide entrepreneurs in setting clear business goals.				
4.	Marketing competence enables entrepreneurs to attract and retain customers.				
5.	Problem-solving and resilience are crucial for business sustainability.				
	To what extent do Small Business Education students possess these competencies?	SA	A	D	SD
6.	I can identify business opportunities within my environment.				
7.	I can prepare a basic business plan independently.				
8.	I have sufficient financial literacy to manage business funds.				
9.	I can apply marketing strategies to promote products effectively.				
10.	I possess resilience to cope with entrepreneurial challenges.				
	What challenges do students face in acquiring and applying entrepreneurial competencies?	SA	A	D	SD
11.	Limited practical exposure hinders entrepreneurial skill development.				
12.	Lack of access to startup capital discourages business practice.				

13.	Entrepreneurship courses focus more on theory than practice.				
14.	Insufficient mentorship affects students' entrepreneurial growth.				
15.	Poor access to technological tools limits innovation and creativity.				
	What strategies can enhance entrepreneurial competency acquisition among students?				
16.	Incorporating more practical training in entrepreneurship courses will enhance competence.				
17.	Establishing entrepreneurship incubation centers will foster business readiness.				
18.	Regular mentorship from successful entrepreneurs can improve skills acquisition.				
19.	Financial support programs can motivate students to start small businesses.				
20.	Collaboration with industry partners can improve practical exposure.				