



## ALLEVIATING UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG BUSINESS EDUCATION GRADUATES: NEEDS FOR INTEGRATING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE INTO THE PROGRAMME CURRICULUM

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### Abstract

*This study focused on evading unemployment among business education graduates and the need to integrate artificial intelligence into the programme curriculum. Three research questions guided the study. A descriptive research design was adopted for this study. The population for the study was 20 master's degree students in the Department of Business Education. The census method was adopted because there was no sampling. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled: Questionnaire on Alleviating Unemployment among Business Education Graduate: Needs for Integrating Artificial Intelligence in the Programme Curriculum. (QAUABEGNFIAIPC). The respondents used the following criteria: Strongly Agree (SA) = 5, Agree (A) = 4, Neutral (N) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 to respond to the questionnaire. Arithmetic Mean and Standard deviation were used while data collected were analyzed with Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21, a software programme.. The decision rule for the Mean was that any Mean value less than 3.0 was not accepted, while values within the range of 3.0 and above were rejected, hence the benchmark 3.0 were established. The finding revealed among others that integration of AI into business education will equip students with crucial skills like automation, machine learning, operational efficiency, decision-making, and data analytics, preparing them for a changing labour market. The researchers concluded by recommending among others that to bridge skills gaps and prepare students for a developing labour market, the business education department should incorporate AI principles into business education courses that provide students with crucial skills like automation, machine learning, and data analytics*

**Keywords:** Artificial intelligence, business education

### Introduction

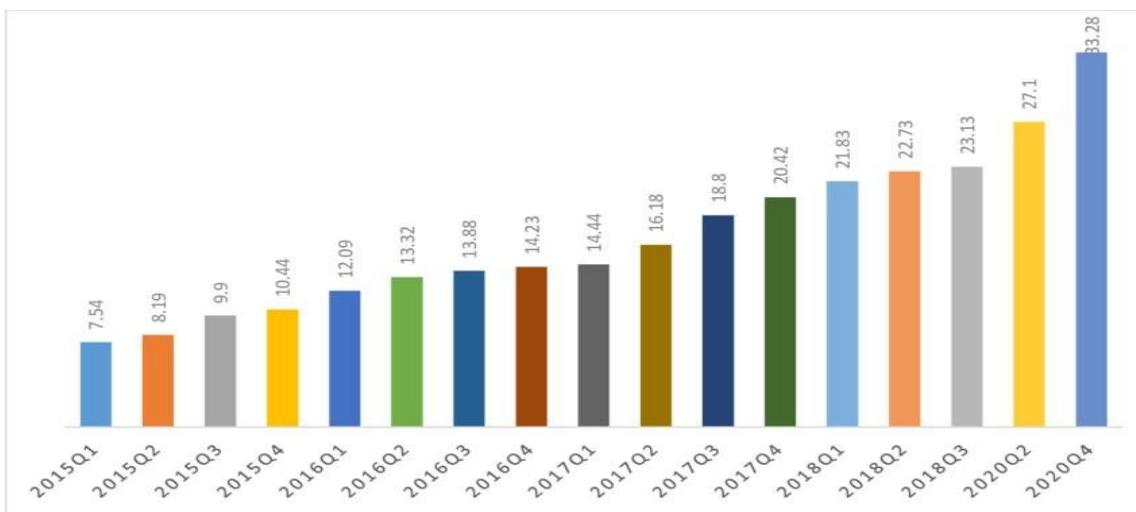
The 21<sup>st</sup> century has witnessed appreciable growth in disruptive technological innovations, impacting various aspects of human society and relations, including how communication is made,



business transactions are performed and how people learn. Artificial intelligence is undoubtedly at the forefront of this technological revolution and has become an integral feature of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Artificial intelligence (AI) is an aspect of computer science interested in developing smart computer systems that can analyze, perceive, and respond appropriately to information (Kamble & Shah, 2018). AI is rapidly revolutionizing the technical scene and becoming an integral part of the daily management and decision-making process in many lives (Xu & Babaian, 2021).

In response to these changes in human society, organizations are constantly modifying their modus operandi to align themselves with the realities in their business environment. Implications are reflected in the growing demand for a knowledgeable workforce in artificial intelligence (Ransbotham, Kiron, & Gerbert, 2017). AI is already transforming the scope of earlier computing technologies designated for general purposes in the corporate sector. This change arguably is likely to be sustained and continue for many years to come, as various sectors such as retailing, healthcare, education, manufacturing, finance, and transportation have witnessed a significant change in their score processes and their resulting business models to maximize the advantages inherent in artificial intelligence (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2017). This development has brought to bear the vital need for educational programs, specifically Business Education, to revamp its curriculum to reflect the current skillset needed by today's corporate environment. As rightly observed by Sollosy and McInerney (2022), there is a crucial need for the business education program to undergo constant assessment and evaluation with a focus on identifying the areas of strength and weakness to ensure that the program curriculum can meet the labour needs in the global business environment.

In many regions, including Nigeria, graduate unemployment is becoming increasingly acknowledged as one of the major socioeconomic issues currently ravaging its youth population. Due to the entrepreneurial nature of business education programs, it is safe to assume that business education graduates are already equipped with skills that will allow them to be self-employed. However, this is far from the reality, as business education graduates are also caught up in the web of unemployment in Nigeria (Egbri & Nwadiani, 2011; Azubuike & Oguguo, 2024). Unemployment is a phenomenon which is characterised by the inability of an individual who is physically and mentally fit and possesses the motivation and readiness to work cum required credentials to work, yet unable to secure a job (Azubuike & Oguguo, 2024). In agreement, Olori et al. (2020) defined unemployment as a state of an individual's joblessness which is influenced not by the lack of willingness nor capacity to work on the part of the individual but rather by their inability to secure an appropriate job. Graduate unemployment is pervasive in Nigeria; data from 2017 showed that about 18.89 per cent of the Nigerian population were unemployed (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018).



**Figure 1.** Historical Trend of Unemployment in Nigeria

**Source:** Effiong, Ekpe and Udofia (2022).

Unemployment data in Nigeria for the year ending 2023 showed a significant decline from the highs of 33.33 per cent in 2020 to 5 per cent in 2023 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). However, it is important to acknowledge that a change influences this decline in unemployment data in the methodology adopted by the National Bureau of Statistics. As such, the reality remains that the pervasiveness of unemployment in the country has remained untamed.

The issue of unemployment among Business Education graduates in Nigeria may even become more critical because the Business Education curriculum in Nigeria's higher institutions is designed to prepare graduates to take up roles as entrepreneurs, managers and administrative roles with very little emphasis on technology. Scholars have argued that integrating artificial intelligence into the business education programme curriculum can improve entrepreneurial skills and stimulate innovation among business education graduates (Nuseir, Basheer and Aljumah, 2020). AI use in the teaching of business education seen to have been found to help teachers in administrative activities, promote effective time management by reducing the time spent on the execution of tasks, and empower teachers to create individually tailored lesson plans (Surugiu, Grădinaru, & Surugiu, 2024). The potential benefits of integrating AI into the business education programme, several challenges abound. At the forefront of these challenges are the difficulties associated with developing a business education curriculum that incorporates artificial intelligence. This is exacerbated by the paucity of pedagogical tools like model curricula and textbooks (Stine et al., 2019). Xu and Babaian (2021) have noted that many AI-related textbooks provided by big textbook companies were intended for technical audiences. The handful that targeted business audiences usually conveys only a broad overview of AI technology. The researchers noted further that the main difficulty is locating AI textbooks that would show a high-level perspective supplemented with sufficient technical detail for readers who are not technically inclined, as is the case with business education students (Xu and Babaian, 2021)

Given the rapid penetration of artificial intelligence into the labour market, these graduates now find themselves in a corporate environment where proficiency in synthetic intelligence techniques and tools are a core skill set required for optimal performance in each role. Azubuike (2023) thus confirmed that the present Nigerian business education program is theoretical and



rhetorical. The consequence, therefore, is that it produces graduates of business education who lack the requisite skills and competency required for real office functioning. In concordance, Azubuike & Oguguo (2024) submitted that Nigeria's existing business education program curriculum must be changed to meet the skillset required for optimal functioning in the contemporary work environment. Integrating in-demand skills such as artificial intelligence into the business education curriculum is crucial to ensure that business education graduates in Nigeria are groomed with the necessary knowledge and skills to meet current industry demands.

### **Statement of the Problem**

According to Chamorro-Premuzic and Frankiewicz (2019), when it comes to matching what graduates of business education has been taught in school with the actual skills required in the labour market, there is a prevailing disparity between the employment sought, the necessary skills needed, the actual training given, and the real jobs. In line with this, Sollosy & McNerney (2022) added that the onset of the COVID-19 virus disrupted the corporate environment, giving way to new industry demands which have shaped the post-pandemic economy. These new needs further aggravate this mismatch between what business education graduates are taught in school and what is required in the world of work.

Though there is still uncertainty and debate about which part of artificial intelligence should be taught in a business curriculum, the field of artificial intelligence has remained one of growing necessity and attention, invading more spheres of business and daily life. In fact, by the year 2030, it is believed that no fewer than 70 per cent of companies across the globe will include some form of artificial intelligence technology in their business operations, while 60 per cent of the jobs currently done manually could become automated (Bughin et al. 2018). In light of this, it becomes even clearer that organizations may focus their recruitment efforts on potential employees who not only possess a good level of knowledge on the methods and concepts of AI but are also able to effectively apply this knowledge and skillset in the discharge of their roles and duties as the need arises within the organization (Ransbotham et al. 2017). Therefore, it becomes crucial for institutions offering business education to re-evaluate their role towards grooming a capable workforce suitable for the 21<sup>st</sup>-century industry demand. Equally, important is the evaluation of the views of business education students on the usefulness of AI integration into the program curriculum, which can be a major influence on the development of a curriculum. The current study is needed since little research has been published on the perception of business education students in Nigeria on the usefulness of artificial intelligence integration into the programme for their future professions.

### **Research Questions**

In addressing the problems of this study, the following questions were raised

1. What are the perceptions of students running master's degree programme concerning integrating artificial intelligence into the business education curriculum?
2. What are the problems of integrating artificial intelligence into business education curricula?
3. What are the possible strategies for integrating artificial intelligence into the business education curriculum?

### **Methods**

A descriptive research design was adopted for this study because it is a kind of research design that aims to discover the attributes and characteristics of a population or some phenomenon. Descriptive research defines a particular event, population or situation in exact



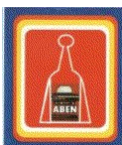
terms, according to McCombes (2019). It emphasizes finding answers about what, when and where, not why. The reason for choosing descriptive research design as the most appropriate for this study was that it uses questionnaires to collect data from participants. The population for the study was 20 master's degree students in the Department of Business Education. There was no sampling because the target population was small, therefore a census method was adopted for the study because there were no samples. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled: Questionnaire on Alleviating Unemployment among Business Education Graduate: Needs for Integrating Artificial Intelligence in the Programme Curriculum (QAUABEGNFIAIPC). The instrument was validated by three experts. The reliability test was carried out using Cronbach Alpha which yielded a co-efficient of 0.85, 0.83 and 0.89 for the three research questions respectively. This was considered adequate for the study. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents by the researchers. The instrument was retrieved from the respondent within an interval of two weeks with 100% return rate. Arithmetic Mean and Standard deviation were used while data collected were analyzed with Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21, a software programme. *The respondents used the following criteria:* Strongly Agree (SA) = 5, Agree (A) = 4, Neutral (N) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 to respond to the questionnaire. The decision rule for the mean was that any mean value less than 3.0 was not accepted, while values within the range of 3.0 and above were received. The benchmark of 3.0 was obtained.

## Results

**Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of students running master's degree programmes concerning integrating artificial intelligence into the business education curriculum?**

**Table 1: Perceptions of students running master's degree programme concerning the integration of artificial intelligence into the business education curriculum**

S/ N	Perceptions of students running master's degree programme concerning the integration of AI into business education curriculum	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Artificial Intelligence (AI) integration could help to improve students' comprehension of operational efficiency, decision-making procedures, and data analytics	20	4.40	0.50	Accepted
2	AI integration could help students acquire marketable talents that are in high demand, such as tools like automation, data mining, and machine learning, which are increasingly essential to many company operations	20	4.40	0.50	Accepted
3	AI integration in business education could enable students to know how to use computers with guarantees to protect their privacy in business	20	4.30	0.65	Accepted
4	Obtaining knowledge about artificial intelligence (AI) might help students close the knowledge gap between the classroom and real-world applications, which will increase my employability	20	4.35	0.67	Accepted



5	The integration of AI into business education curriculum could give students the chance to acquire vital skills that are highly sought after in the commercial world	20	4.35	0.51	Accepted
6	Integrating AI into business education curricula can result in new career prospects and jobs within the business sector if the educational curriculum is aligned with industry needs.	20	4.45	0.68	Accepted
7	Artificial intelligence (AI) integration into business education curriculum can replicate intricate business scenarios, provide students immediate feedback, and equal the level of involvement of traditional teaching approaches	20	4.40	0.67	Accepted
8	The integration of AI in the business education curriculum has the chance to completely transform the way future corporate leaders are educated, think, and make choices that will bring out self-employment and growth in business	20	4.35	0.51	Accepted
9	Understanding AI can help students better prepare for the changing demands of the labour market, where companies greatly value AI skills.	20	4.45	0.60	Accepted
10	Students who understand that AI leverage could help analyze data and predict consumer behaviour can help create customized consumer experiences and target marketing campaigns.	20	4.40	0.59	Accepted
11	AI aids students in developing competitive advantages by analyzing market data, predicting consumer behaviour, identifying opportunities, and optimizing business plans through advanced data analytics and predictive modelling	20	4.35	0.67	Accepted
12	By providing information and tools to find market opportunities, construct company plans, and manage financial issues, AI-driven platforms can assist business education students in developing entrepreneurial abilities.	20	4.25	0.63	Accepted
<b>Grand Mean/SD</b>			<b>4.37</b>	<b>0.59</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

Table 1 above shows that items 1-12 were all accepted by the respondents because the mean (4.37) is within the range of acceptance, implying that AI integration in business education equips students with essential skills like automation, machine learning, operational efficiency, decision-making, and data analytics, bridging knowledge gaps and preparing them for a changing labour market.

### **Research Question 2: What are the problems of integrating artificial intelligence into business education curricula?**



**Table 2: Problems related to the integration of artificial intelligence into the business education curriculum**

S/N	Problems related to the integration of artificial intelligence into the business education curriculum	N	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	SD	Decision
13	Adapting to AI is provocative, and it involves both human and financial efforts because lecturers will be required to adjust to the new methods	20	4.35	0.75	Accepted
14	Some lecturers lack the necessary training to perform their tasks successfully as the resources to train them are scarce and have not been previously budgeted	20	3.65	1.03	Accepted
15	Mastering technology involves hours of training and practice, independent of their lecture timetable, raising issues of time management, availability, and double tasking	20	4.00	0.92	Accepted
16	As AI systems become more integrated into educational programs, participants may face unforeseen dangers, including potential unauthorized access to their private lives	20	3.65	1.14	Accepted
17	Balancing AI concepts with traditional business education principles requires careful planning and expertise to create a comprehensive curriculum that effectively incorporates AI.	20	4.50	0.51	Accepted
18	AI integration into curricula necessitates a significant financial outlay for supplies, including hardware, software, and instructional materials, which may be challenging for academic institutions to secure.	20	4.40	0.59	Accepted
19	Integrating AI into business education requires a careful balance between teaching AI and traditional disciplines like finance, marketing, and management, despite potential interference with other essential elements	20	4.10	0.55	Accepted
20	Students' diverse educational and AI experiences can make it challenging to ensure they have the necessary fundamental understanding to interact with AI concepts effectively	20	3.70	0.98	Accepted
21	Developing effective assessment methods for students' understanding and application of AI concepts will be very complex for educators to measure their proficiency and practical application of AI skills accurately	20	3.75	1.29	Accepted
<b>Grand Mean/SD</b>			<b>4.01</b>	<b>0.86</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

Table 2 above shows that items 13-21 were all accepted by the respondents because the mean (4.01) is within the acceptance range, implying that adapting AI in education requires significant



human and financial effort. Many teachers lack adequate training and resources. Integrating AI into education comes with challenges such as timelines, balancing traditional AI theories, potential privacy issues, and high technology and logistical costs.

**Research Question 3: What are the possible strategies for integrating artificial intelligence into the business education curriculum?**

**Table 3: Possible strategies for the integration of artificial intelligence into the business education curriculum**

S/N	Possible strategies for the integration of artificial intelligence Into the business education curriculum	N	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	SD	Decision
22	There should be an initiative aimed at offering faculty training and professional development opportunities in AI and data science through workshops, online courses, and collaborations with industry experts	20	4.60	0.60	Accepted
23	There should be cooperation between business professors and AI experts in teaching AI courses related to business education, which can help close the knowledge gap between AI and business.	20	4.40	0.82	Accepted
24	There should be set aside for artificial intelligence (AI) tools and technology, including cloud computing services, machine learning platforms, and data analytics software, and such resources should be available to students for experiential education	20	4.30	0.66	Accepted
25	Students should be encouraged to participate in AI-focused hackathons, clubs, and competitions to foster creativity and enhance learning opportunities.	20	4.25	0.79	Accepted
26	The Business Education department should connect students with AI industry professionals and mentors for networking opportunities, providing career guidance, career counseling, and insight into market trends.	20	4.45	0.51	Accepted
27	Business education department should integrate AI principles into business courses in operations, finance, and marketing, incorporating automation in operations management and AI-driven analytics in marketing	20	4.40	0.60	Accepted
28	Business Education Department should use ongoing evaluation techniques to gauge how well students comprehend and apply AI principles to determine proficiency, use projects, tests, and presentations	20	4.40	0.50	Accepted
29	The integration of AI in business education curriculum should be continuously improved by gathering feedback from industry partners and students, and changes will be made accordingly to enhance its relevance	20	4.70	0.47	Accepted
<b>Grand Mean/SD</b>			<b>4.44</b>	<b>0.61</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

Table 3 above shows that items 22- 29 were all accepted by the respondents because the mean (4.44) is within the range of acceptance, implying that to improve business education,





business professors and AI experts must collaborate, invest in AI tools, and provide faculty training in AI and data science. Furthermore, promoting student involvement in AI-related activities and incorporating AI concepts into different business courses can enhance learning objectives and prepare students for the workforce.

### **Discussions**

The findings on research question one revealed that AI integration in business education equips students with essential skills like automation, machine learning, operational efficiency, decision-making, and data analytics, bridging knowledge gaps and preparing them for a changing labour market. George (2023) supported this finding by asserting that AI can help provide tools to analyze, simulate, and predict the success of business processes. Integrating these tools into the curriculum allows students to explore and compare the implications of traditional and emerging business models. This finding aligns with Surugiu, Gradinaru and Surugiu (2024), who state that students appreciate AI for assisting teachers with administrative tasks, streamlining lesson planning, and saving time. The finding also corroborated that of Nuseir, Basheer and Aljumah (2020) and Tan (2020), that AI is a partner in education, improving material and competencies and enhancing human workplace abilities. In the same direction, Elhajjar, Karam, and Borna (2021) support the findings of this study, noting that incorporating AI into education curricula gives students the creativity, innovation, and design thinking skills that employers will need in the digital age. The finding is also in line with McGrath et al. (2023) that AI in education uses various tools, strategies, and systems in its instructional activities, which is vital in students' development. Despite general mistrust and misunderstandings over AI's involvement in human activities, particularly in education, investing in human capital to use AI tools in education is essential for society's growth (Antonenko & Abramowitz, 2023). Concerning all these, it implies that the integration of AI in the business education curriculum will be important to students because it will enhance their learning experience by simplifying routine tasks, optimizing instructional materials and time management, and allowing teachers to be able to focus more on delivering customized and effective instruction.

The findings in research question two revealed that adapting AI in business education requires a significant human and financial effort, and many teachers lack adequate training and resources. Integrating AI into business education comes with challenges such as timelines, balancing traditional AI theories, potential privacy issues, and high technology and logistical costs. This finding is in line with George (2023) that over-reliance on traditional entrepreneurship models can hinder the integration of AI into entrepreneurship education by adopting new technologies and methods, which are crucial for preparing students for the demands of today's business environment, limiting the flow. Adlawan (2024) also agreed with the finding of this study that the high cost of implementing AI in education can be a barrier, as many schools do not have the budget for AI tools and technologies. Expecting teachers to pay these costs themselves is financially challenging and could hinder the integration of AI into professional education curricula. Holmes et al. (2021) and Garrett, Beard and Fiesler (2020) corroborated the finding of objective two (research question two), noting that AI in professional education faces challenges of bias, automation, ethics, confidentiality, fairness and transparency, which require careful consideration of ethical and legal implications. Schiff (2021) also agreed with the findings of this study that the high expenses associated with using AI in education, the absence of programs designed to prepare professionals and teachers for AI competencies, and the lethargy with which curricula and structural levels of education are changing to reflect the advancement of AI are some of the barriers to this trend. Raji, Scheurman and Amironesei (2021) agreed with the findings of this study that creating educational ideas that align with truth and the good, individual and communal responsibility, ethics, and epistemology presents obstacles when integrating AI into the curriculum.



The findings on research question three revealed that to improve business education, business professors and AI experts must collaborate, invest in AI tools, and provide faculty training in AI and data science. Furthermore, promoting student involvement in AI-related activities and incorporating AI concepts into different business courses can enhance learning objectives and prepare students for the workforce. This is supported by George (2023) that building strong AI networks with experts and industry partners will help business schools stay updated on emerging trends, facilitate knowledge exchange, provide collaborative research, training, and employment opportunities, and prepare students for an AI-driven future. More so, Holmes et al. (2021), Dignum (2021) and Talan (2021) concurred with the finding of this study that comprehensive public policy and educational strategies could be put in place to address these issues, ensuring that AI integration is consistent with basic human principles, legal standards, and promoting inclusion and equity in education. Chauke et al. (2024) supported the finding of this study that encouraging student participation in AI-related activities and integrating AI concepts into business education courses will help enhance learning objectives and better prepare students for the workforce. Encouraging graduate students to use AI tools promotes critical thinking and helps them better integrate AI into their academic and professional development.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made concerning the findings of this study:

1. To bridge skills gaps and prepare students for a developing labour market, the business education department should incorporate AI principles into business education courses that provide students with crucial skills like automation, machine learning, and data analytics.
2. The business education department should devote resources to AI technologies and engage in extensive faculty training to handle the enormous human and financial efforts necessary for successful AI integration. They should also manage related obstacles, such as timeframes and privacy concerns.
3. To improve learning and job preparedness, the business education department should invest in AI technologies, train lecturers, and make it easier for students to collaborate with AI specialists. They should also integrate AI concepts into multiple courses and encourage student engagement in AI-related activities.

### **Conclusion**

Integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into business education curricula can address skills gaps and make graduates more employable. By equipping students with AI-related skills and knowledge, education programs can better align with industry needs, improve graduates' employment prospects, and help reduce unemployment in the labour market, which is growing rapidly. By integrating AI into business education, students may gain knowledge of automation, machine learning, and data analytics, which will help them in the ever-evolving job market. On the other hand, delays, privacy concerns, and expensive expenses are obstacles. Important factors include student participation, investment in AI technologies, and collaboration between academics and AI professionals.



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