

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AS A CATALYST FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*Unemployment, insecurity and severe poverty among young people are of great concern to policymakers and researchers around the world. Therefore, this study examined the influence of entrepreneurship education on youth empowerment through entrepreneurial skills and attitudes towards entrepreneurial venture creation. The target audience of this survey are 660 corps members serving in thirty-three (33) local governments in Oyo State, Nigeria. Data were collected through the use of a structured questionnaire, and were analysed using the simple percentage, mean, chi-square, correlation, and ordinary least square method of estimation. Young Nigerian college graduates' entrepreneurial prowess and enthusiasm for starting new businesses are positively and significantly correlated with the amount of entrepreneurship education they receive, according to the findings. Subsequently, the study recommended that regulatory bodies such as the Nigerian University Commission (NUC) and the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) should mandate all tertiary institutions to mandate entrepreneurship education as a core course rather than an elective in all faculties and departments, while the government should ensure that tertiary institutions are equipped with the necessary educational infrastructure and facilities that will contribute to the teaching and learning of entrepreneurship education very effectively. This will go a long way to empower young graduates towards open up many opportunities for better career development prospects.*

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Education, venture creation, Empowerment, Skills, Youth.

### INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is known as the 'African Giant' due to its large population and economy. Nigeria's population exceeds 200 million, making it the most populous country in Africa and the seventh most populous country in the world. It is the 6th largest producer of oil and agricultural products in the world, including cocoa, peanuts, natural rubber and palm oil, and the 1st in Africa. Despite these favorable indicators, the country still suffers from severe poverty, anxieties, high unemployment and insecurity. In support of this claim, the World Bank (2022) found that Nigeria's poverty rate has increased since 2015 and that the unemployment rate has increased from 8% to 33% in 2022, pushing citizens into poverty. Sajuyigbe, et al., (2021) also laments that COVID-19 plague has worsened the economic by subjecting over 10 million Nigerians into abject poverty in the year 2020. Evidently, data from the National Bureau of Statistics show that the unemployment rate in Nigeria was 27.1% in the second quarter of 2020, with approximately 21.7 million Nigerians remaining unemployed (Sajuyigbe, et al., 2021). Entrepreneurship education is recognized as a remedy for youth unemployment and poverty in

both developed and developing countries. According to Adeyemo, Ogunleye, Adeyemi, and Kareem (2021), the role of entrepreneurial education in driving sustainable economic and social development around the world cannot be underestimated. Sajuyigbe et al. (2016) argue that entrepreneurial education is the engine of small business growth, job creation, wealth creation, income generation, and good standards of living. Kuratko (2013) shows that entrepreneurial education has helped transform the economies of developed countries such as the US, UK and Canada. Sajuyigbe et al. (2016) describe entrepreneurial education as an individual's willingness and ability to pursue entrepreneurial skills and use scarce resources to take advantage of opportunities.

In an effort to hasten the country's economic development, Nigeria has instituted a new curriculum that emphasises entrepreneurship education. That education is the key to making positive change is reflected in Nigeria's National Education Policy. The only way for society to undergo dramatic transformation is through a sea change in education that has an impact on people's IQs (Sajuyigbe, Eniola, Oyedele & Adeyeye, 2021). In support of this claim, the Federal Government of

Nigeria, through its institutions, has directed all Nigerian universities to develop minimum academic standards for entrepreneurship education and to make entrepreneurship studies a compulsory subject. But more than a decade of the Directive and its actual implementation still suffer setbacks. Sajuyigbe, Eniola, Oyedele & Adeyeye (2021) lamented that the system fails to proactively address the problem of dysfunctional knowledge and consequently overemphasizes exams and paper qualifications. In other words, Nigerian educational institutions still teach young people at master's level in various subjects, but fail to relate these subjects to the needs of Nigeria. As a result, they lack the ability to solve life's fundamental problems (Sajuyigbe, Eniola, Oyedele & Adeyeye, 2021).

Related questions that arise from this situation are: To what extent does entrepreneurship education instill entrepreneurial skills and attitudes in young Nigerian graduates towards entrepreneurial venture creation? In addition, an assessment of the role of entrepreneurial education in youth empowerment in Nigeria should be made. This study was therefore designed to provide empirical evidence on the impact of entrepreneurship education on the entrepreneurial skills and attitudes of young Nigerian graduate students towards entrepreneurial venture creation. The study shows that countries need to pay close attention to this area if the country is to eradicate poverty, unemployment, insurgency and militancy among the youth. The results of this study will be eye-opening about the importance of entrepreneurial education for young graduates, policy makers and managers of higher education institutions.

### CONCEPT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

Research traces the idea of entrepreneurship to the work of Schumpeter (1934), who provided one of the most compelling and comprehensive ideas and definitions of entrepreneurship. In his 1934 book, Schumpeter argued that not large firms with market currents, but small "new firms" operating in aggressive markets turned their thinking and understanding into improvements and initiated a financial hobby. In addition, he extended the concept by detailing his five responsibilities in his subsequent work (1942). By performing these roles, he suggested, entrepreneurs contribute to the "creative destruction" system. The five new combinations and obligations are brand new exact

ones (which buyers are not yet familiar with) or brand new best fit creations. The introduction of new production techniques, i.e. techniques that have not been studied by indulging in related manufacturing sectors, are in no way intended to be based on new scientific discoveries, and may exist in entirely new ways of management (Longva, 2019). Entrepreneurship education aims to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to stimulate entrepreneurial achievement in a dissemination environment. Variations in entrepreneurial education are offered at all school levels, from first degree, second degree to PhD level (Penaluna and Penaluna, 2019). Ayatse (2013) states that entrepreneurial education is a key driver of the financial system, with wealth and the vast majority of employment generated by small businesses founded by entrepreneurs, many of whom congregate directly to form larger organizations. According to Ayatse (2013), those interested in entrepreneurial education will be given more freedom to innovate. Uzoma and Onere (2013) also point out that entrepreneurship education is not just about acquiring skills for learning. It is the acquisition of skills and thoughts to find work for oneself and others. Entrepreneurship education, also called professional information, instills learners with propensities for risk-taking, innovation, arbitrage, and product coordination, to develop new products or services for new and existing users within community. (Kabongo & Okpara, 2010). According to Ekwubara (2010), entrepreneurial education is considered important for the financial development of the country. Entrepreneurship education should increase entrepreneurial self-efficacy, independence and willingness to take risks.

### THEORETICAL REVIEW

Human capital theory is the theoretical foundation for this investigation. The original author of this theory was Becker (1962), who hoped to persuade readers that a focus on entrepreneurship in school would improve human capital, boost labour productivity, and advance global technology. According to the human capital theory, students already have a wide range of skills and abilities that can be developed further or acquired entirely through exposure to entrepreneurial education. Human capital theory is concerned with fostering creative and productive people, as stated by Okojie (1995). Large investments in human capital

development increase productivity, efficiency in the workplace, and the nation's standard of living, as argued by Oluwatobi and Ogunrinola (2011). Just like investing in a country's physical assets, Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008) found that investing in its people yields positive results. Africa's economies will benefit greatly from increased human capital gained through exposure to high-caliber entrepreneurship education (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008). The theory suggests that the Nigerian government should fund entrepreneurial education from kindergarten through college so that its graduates will be well-equipped to start their own businesses and employ others. This means that once Nigerian youth have access to practical entrepreneurship training, the country's current unemployment rate, insecurity, robberies, kidnappings, and Yahoo Boys Syndrome will disappear.

### EMPIRICAL REVIEW

The importance of entrepreneurial education in fostering youth agency has been established by a number of previous studies. For instance, Adeyemo, Ogunleye, Adeyemi, and Kareem (2021) conducted research in Osun State, Nigeria, and found that entrepreneurial education affects technical college students' entrepreneurial competence and intentions. Entrepreneurs' attitudes toward behaviour, subjective social norms, and perceived behavioural control positively influenced youth empowerment, according to a study by Jepchirchir, Korir, and Lagat (2019) conducted in Kenya. Entrepreneurial education was also linked to increased youth empowerment in a study conducted in Zimbabwe by Ndofirepi (2020). Mahendra, Djatmika, and Hermawan's (2017) research in Indonesia further verifies the direct correlation between entrepreneurial education and youth empowerment. Oguntimehin and Olaniran (2017) also did research in Nigeria's Ogun State. Researchers found that teaching students about starting their own businesses was one of the most effective ways to foster an entrepreneurial mindset. Comparable research was conducted in Italy by Israr and Saleem (2018), who looked at the factors that prevent college students from starting their own businesses despite their entrepreneurial aspirations and zeal. He discovered that factors including entrepreneurial literacy, extroversion, collaborative spirit, and openness to experience all contributed to an entrepreneur's sense of agency

when it came to starting businesses. College student startups are the focus of Lavelle's (2018) research, in which she also analyses the role that entrepreneurial learning experience activities and entrepreneurial factors play. The results showed that students who were interested in pursuing entrepreneurial careers tended to have a higher level of entrepreneurial spirit the more entrepreneurial activities they participated in. Ola, Aremu, and Lawa (2015) confirm that students' entrepreneurial abilities and mindsets benefit greatly from exposure to entrepreneurial education. Independent thinking is a skill that can be taught, as Ojeifo (2012) demonstrates. The extent to which entrepreneurship education and training is being used as a strategic tool for reducing poverty in Nigeria was also studied by Ogundele, Akingbade, and Akinlabi (2012). They found that entrepreneurship education and training is highly relevant to youth empowerment and social service. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant association between entrepreneurship education and the entrepreneurial skills and attitudes of young Nigerian graduate students towards entrepreneurial venture creation

### METHODOLOGY

Members of the Youth League in each of Oyo State's 33 municipalities are participating in the survey. A descriptive survey format was used for this inquiry. Descriptive research, as outlined by Ezeani (1998), seeks to gather factual data that can be used to explain the world as it currently stands. The respondents to this survey will be the 33 local governments in Oyo State where a Corps member is serving. Totalling 660 respondents, 20 representatives from each municipality will make up the survey's sample. A structured questionnaire was filled out by the researcher, with responses ranging from (5) strongly agree to (1) strongly disagree on a five-point Likert scale. There was a complete recovery of all 660 questionnaires sent out. We may have been able to achieve such a remarkable level of response by communicating with Corps members and the NYSC state Director about the significance of the study and gaining their acceptance before distributing copies of the questionnaire. The use of research assistants to clarify questions from respondents also helps boost response rates. The researchers in this study sought validation of the study's instrument from a panel of experts. Each questionnaire underwent a content

analysis, and answers deemed unrelated to the survey question were eliminated. Once the necessary adjustments were made, a panel of experts advised using the instrument for study. Additional item analysis was performed on the

scales to establish their psychometric validity (see Table 1). SPSS version 21 was used for descriptive statistics, chi-square testing, correlation analysis, and linear regression.

**Table 1: Summary of Results of the Measurement Instruments Validation**

Scale	No of Items	Meaning Bartlett	KMO	Eigenvalue of the principal Component	% of the variance	$\alpha$ of Cronbach
Entrepreneurship Education Questionnaire	10	p = .000 (significant)	0.879	3.608	72.13%	0.82
Entrepreneurial Skills and Attitudes Questionnaire	12	p = .000 (significant)	0.755	2.555	85.16%	0.78

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Description of demographic characteristics of the respondents

Questions on age, gender, and area of expertise were included in the survey to capture the basic demographic data of the respondents. As a result, 60.5% of the respondents were 20-25 years old, 31.8% were 26-29 years old, 6.1% were 30-35 years old, and only 1.6% were over 36 years old. The mean age of most respondents are 25 years old. This means that most corps members are still very young, energetic and willing to enter the enterprise after the clarion call. This development suggests that they can make a significant contribution to Nigeria's economic growth through job creation and poverty reduction. By gender, about 55.2% of the respondents were male and 44.8% were female.

This suggests that there are more male members than female members. This may be due to the lack of education among women in developing countries like Nigeria, although 44.8% recorded indicates that the tertiary institutions are gender-sensitive in their admission policies. The implication of this finding is that females are now coming up into the limelight of entrepreneurship development in Nigeria. The results also show that over 21.4% of respondents are in social sciences, 15.6% in humanities, 18.4% in applied sciences, 14.5% in agriculture, 7.5% in engineering, and only 5.4% in health science. This means that the majority of participants are from the social sciences. This means that the vast majority of them must have acquired a range of entrepreneurial skills, as all Nigerian students are required to undergo education in entrepreneurship before graduating.

**Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Entrepreneurship Education**

Statement	Obs	Mean	Chi-Square	Remark
With the introduction of entrepreneurship education in tertiary institution, I have acquired more skills and knowledge.	660	3.85	124.993 (P<.05)	Accepted
I discovered my skills and attitude as an entrepreneur as a result of entrepreneurship education	660	4.01	157.980 (P<.05)	Accepted
As a result of studying entrepreneurship education, I decided to start a business.	660	3.97	175.780 (P<.05)	Accepted
Entrepreneurship education has improved my ability to think about investment versus reward.	660	3.79	121.210 (P<.05)	Accepted
Entrepreneurship training had a positive impact on my intellectual development.	660	3.67	119.779 (P<.05)	Accepted
My institution adequately incorporates entrepreneurship subjects into its course structure.	660	4.05	159.804 (P<.05)	Accepted
My institution has staff with appropriate skills for entrepreneurship training.	660	3.21	109.235 (P<.05)	Accepted
My institution has facilities and other requirements for entrepreneurship education.	660	3.51	117.419 (P<.05)	Accepted
<b>Grand mean</b>		<b>3.626</b>		

Table 2 above shows the perceived contributions of entrepreneurship education to youth empowerment through entrepreneurial skills and attitudes towards entrepreneurship, as shown in points 1- 8, is within the agreed practical limit. This indicates that entrepreneurship education has a strong impact on empowering young people through acquiring different entrepreneurial skills and attitudes to create entrepreneurial businesses. Therefore, an overall mean of 3,626 and a chi-squared p-value of 0.000 indicate a high degree of acceptance that entrepreneurship education can contribute to sustainable economic growth and development in Nigeria. The above findings are consistent with the

views of Ndofirepi (2020), Ahmed (2020), and Jepchirchir, Korir, and Lagat (2019) that investment in entrepreneurship education has a significant positive impact on youth empowerment through acquiring different business skills and attitudes to create start-up businesses that will lead to economic growth and sustainable development. This effort accelerates the development of human consciousness people and the appearance of spiritually conscious individuals. This finding implies that investing in entrepreneurship education is the driving force behind youth empowerment through entrepreneurship, economic growth and sustainable development.

**Table 3: Relationship between variables**

Model	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value	Remark
Entrepreneurship Education	4.3065	.6320	0.576	***	S

Note: S= Significant; \*\*\*= significant at 5% level  
 Members of the Youth League in each of Oyo State's 33 municipalities are participating in the survey. A descriptive survey format was used for this inquiry. Descriptive research, as outlined by Ezeani (1998), seeks to gather factual data that can be used to explain the world as it currently stands. The respondents to this survey will be the 33 local governments in Oyo State where a Corps member is serving. Totalling 660 respondents, 20 representatives from each municipality will make up the survey's sample. A structured questionnaire was filled out by the researcher, with responses ranging from (5) strongly agree to (1)strongly disagree on a five-point Likert scale. There was a complete recovery of all 660 questionnaires sent out. We may have been able to achieve such a remarkable level of response by communicating with Corps members and the NYSC state Director about the significance of the study and gaining their acceptance before distributing copies of the

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**Testing of Hypothesis**

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant association between entrepreneurship education and the entrepreneurial skills and attitudes of young Nigerian graduate students towards entrepreneurial venture creation

**Table 4 Results of Regression Analysis**

Variable	Constant	Entrepreneurship Education (Model 1)
Coefficient	1.412	9.15
t-value	0.646	16.108**
p-value	0.000	0.000
F-value	259.453	
R	0.629	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.396	
Adj.R <sup>2</sup>	0.394	
D-W	1.985	

\*\*P<0.05 Source: Author’s computation (2022)

The impact of entrepreneurship education on the knowledge, confidence, and motivation of recent Nigerian college grads to launch their own

businesses is summarised in Table 4. Young Nigerian college graduates' entrepreneurial prowess and enthusiasm for starting their own businesses are

positively correlated with their exposure to entrepreneurship education, as indicated by a t-value of 16.108\* and a significance level of 0.000. The f-value of 110.270 supports the idea that young Nigerian college grads can benefit significantly from learning about starting their own businesses thanks to the training they received in entrepreneurship classes. In addition, the R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.396 suggests that entrepreneurship education contributes 39.6% to young Nigerian graduate students' entrepreneurial skills and attitudes toward the creation of entrepreneurial ventures. That model is typical because it has a Durbin-Watson value of 1.985. This indicates that entrepreneurship education is responsible for 39.6% of the increase in the entrepreneurial skills and attitudes of young Nigerian graduate students with a view toward the creation of entrepreneurial ventures. This suggests that educating future business owners is a viable alternative paradigm to empowering young people by providing them with gainful employment, financial stability, and reduced levels of poverty. Consistent with previous research, this study finds that entrepreneurship classes positively affect students' confidence and ability to start their own businesses (Ndofirepi, 2020; Jepchirchir, Korir, & Lagat, 2019; Israr & Saleem, 2018; Oguntimehin & Olaniran, 2017). It has been shown in another study (Mahendra, Djatmika, & Hermawan, 2017) that training young people in entrepreneurship has a significant impact on youth empowerment. Ohhanu and Ogbuanya (2018) confirm that the more students participate in entrepreneurial activity, the less impact entrepreneurial factors have on entrepreneurial spirit, and the more entrepreneurial spirit there is among students who prefer entrepreneurial career paths. Entrepreneurial education is linked to young people's agency, according to another study by Ahmed (2020). Therefore, H1 is accepted. This finding has important implications for the future of Nigeria because it suggests that entrepreneurship education has inspired recent graduates to launch their own businesses.

### CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of entrepreneurship education on youth empowerment through entrepreneurial skills and attitudes towards entrepreneurial venture creation. The target audience of this survey are corps members serving in thirty-three (33) local governments in Oyo State,

Nigeria. Based on the research results, it is concluded that entrepreneurship education has a positive and significant relationship with the entrepreneurial skills and attitudes of young Nigerian graduate students towards the creation of ventures. This means that entrepreneurship education is the antidote to the poverty, insecurity, unemployment and hunger that are on the agenda in Nigeria. The implication of this finding is that entrepreneurship education has ignited the entrepreneurial spirit of Nigerian graduates to start a business, suggesting that the future of this country is very bright. The inference to be drawn from these results is that entrepreneurship education tends to be a very important tool used to reduce high unemployment, high levels of poverty, "yahoo++" syndrome, kidnapping and ritual murder among Nigerian youth. The knowledge gained through entrepreneurship education will open up many opportunities for better career development prospects.

### Prctical Implications

The study has significant practical contributions to the policymakers, stakeholders, regulatory authorities and Nigerian graduates in particular. The study established a positive relationship entrepreneurship education with the entrepreneurial skills and attitudes of young Nigerian graduate students towards the creation of ventures. Based on the findings of the study, regulatory bodies such as the Nigerian University Commission (NUC) and the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) are expected to mandate entrepreneurship education as a core course rather than an elective in all faculties and departments, while the government should ensure that tertiary institutions are equipped with the necessary educational infrastructure and facilities that will contribute to the teaching and learning of entrepreneurship education very effectively. Research also shows that entrepreneurship education has a positive impact on intellectual development. Therefore, various financial institutions should be encouraged by the Central Bank of Nigeria to provide financial support and consulting services to graduates who are training in entrepreneurship and those with feasibility studies and zeal for establishing innovative small-scale businesses.

### Limitation and Recommendation for Further Studies

This study has limitations that may stimulate further studies. This study focused on corps members serving in Oyo State, so future studies may include more than 35 other remaining states. This will provide insight, thus contributing to the generality of the results. The study examined a theory to determine the influence of

entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial skills and attitudes of young Nigerian graduates towards entrepreneurship. Therefore, there is a need to further test excluded theories (planned behavior theory; experiential learning theory; and socio-cognitive occupational theory) to add to the knowledge frontiers.

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