

**AN OVERVIEW OF NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION  
HISTORY STARTING IN 2006**

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**Abstracts**

The study explores the beginning and development of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria universities. Emphasizing the historical background, significant turning points and influencing elements that has influenced the field's growth. The study employs a qualitative methodology with the goal of offering insightful information to academics, educators, historian and policy makers who are working to improve entrepreneurship education and foster regional economic growth.

**Keywords:** Nigeria, University, Entrepreneurship and Education.

**Introduction**

In the early 2000s Nigeria face significant economic challenges, including high unemployment, poverty and a reliance on oil exports to address these issues the governments recognised the need to promote entrepreneurship (NUC 2006). During the presidency of Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2007), Nigeria witnessed significant economy reforms and initiatives aimed at promoting entrepreneurship development. One such initiatives was introducing of entrepreneurship education (EEed) in Nigeria universities

In 2006, the Nigeria government in collaboration with the National University Commission (NUC), launched the entrepreneurship education program as part of the skills, knowledge and mind set necessary to become entrepreneurs and create jobs. The programme was instantly piloted in 10 universities with the goals of expanding it to all universities in the country. The introduction of EEed during the Obasanjo era marked a significant shift in Nigeria 's education policy, recognising the relevance of entrepreneurship in driving economic growth and

improvement. National policy on entrepreneurship education under the auspices of the NUC this policy aimed to:

1. To promotes entrepreneurship education in universities
2. To foster a culture of entrepreneurship among students
3. To develop skills and knowledge necessary for entrepreneurial success
4. Encouraging innovations and job creations

The entrepreneurship education program was initially piloted in 10 universities which includes: University of Lagos; University of Ibadan; University of Benin; University of Nigeria Nsukka; University of Ilorin; University of Port Harcourt; Ahmadu Bello university Zaria; University of Calabar; University of Uyo and Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka.

In 2006, Nigerian government arranged the introduction of EEd as entrepreneurship studies to be integrated in the Curriculum of University as a mandatory course for learners in all areas of specialisation (Okojie 2009). Effectively, the execution began in the 2007/2008 academic session. In quest of the full execution of EEd, many universities established a coordinating centre for EEd to assist learners training. The NUC was given presidential directive by the ministry of education to supervise and coordinate the programme of Introducing EEd in Nigeria Institute of high learning (Okojie, 2009).

To make the delivery effective, the NUC prescribed the following ten areas in the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standard (BMAS) guide for the teaching of EEd in Nigerian Universities.

- (1) Introduction to entrepreneurship
- (2) Entrepreneurship in theory and practice
- (3) Type of business starting and marketing
- (4) Capital requirement and raising capital
- (5) Financial planning and management
- (6) Feasibility studies and reports
- (7) Innovations
- (8) Legal issues in business
- (9) Insurance and environmental consideration and
- (10) Possible business opportunity in Nigeria. (Agbonlahor, 2016).

### **University of Education and Entrepreneurship Development in Nigeria**

Universities are becoming increasingly recognized as key catalysts for fostering innovation and driving entrepreneurial endeavours within knowledge-based economies. This notion holds true even within the Nigerian context, where the interconnection between university education and the development of entrepreneurship has garnered significant attention from the academic community. Extensive studies have demonstrated that the incorporation of entrepreneurship into university curricula yields a multitude of positive outcomes, specifically in terms of enhancing students' entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, and intentions.

Adekiya and Ibrahim (2016) discovered that entrepreneurship education played a pivotal role in stimulating students' interest and readiness to embark upon business ventures across various Nigerian universities. Additionally, Bwisa and Ndago (2013) coursework in augmenting university students' proclivity and capabilities for engaging in entrepreneurial endeavors within the Nigerian context. Nonetheless, it is crucial to acknowledge the existence of certain structural limitations that impede the optimal integration of entrepreneurship into university curricula. Such limitations include outdated curriculum, insufficient faculty training, and an excessive reliance on theoretical frameworks. These issues have been underscored by previous studies conducted by Odia and Odia (2013) and Bello et al. (2018).

Scholars place significant emphasis on the importance of moving beyond traditional classroom instruction and embracing action-based learning as a means of fostering entrepreneurial mindsets among individuals. In their study, Owenvbiugie and Igbinoba (2018) provide quantitative evidence that supports the notion that experiential learning strategies, such as participating in industrial internships and receiving mentorship, have a supportive effect on strengthening entrepreneurial aim among Nigerian university students. Aniah and Aminu (2019) shed light on the various advantages associated with practical entrepreneurial training, including field trips to actual businesses and engaging in product development projects within the university setting.

The establishment of university-based business incubators, which offer support to student ventures through mentorship, seed funding, and access to necessary infrastructure, has been found to significantly enhance the entrepreneurial capacity of individuals. Research studies indicate that there has been a noticeable growth in the amount of incubation activities occurring within Nigerian universities, particularly in the fields of technology and ICT ventures (Femi, 2014). However, it is important to acknowledge the challenges that exist within these incubators,

such as inadequate facilities, an overreliance on grants, and a low level of commercialization, as identified by Odia (2019) and Saheed and Ayodele (2020).

Upon evaluating national policies, Onu (2013) and the British Council (2014) strongly recommend providing greater support for university entrepreneurship centers and improving access to finance for youth start-ups in order to drive the enterprise ecosystem. Bello et al. (2018) advocate for incorporation of compulsory entrepreneurial internships and the provision of faculty training to ensure the effectiveness of university entrepreneurship education.

It is worth noting that the geographic differences, specifically the availability of infrastructure and industrial clusters that facilitate learning networks, funding channels, and markets, play a crucial role in shaping the entrepreneurial outcomes of universities in Nigeria, as highlighted by Osalor (2016). This highlights the demand for localized policy involvement that consider the specific context in which universities operate. In conclusion, the existing body of literature affirms that Nigeria's university system has made notable progress in the field of entrepreneurial education. However, there is still untapped potential for further development through the adoption of experiential learning models, increased public and private investments in incubation Programmes, and the adaptation of strategies to suit regional contexts. Conducting more comparative research between universities can supply precious insights that can inform the development of context-specific policies.

### **An Overview of Entrepreneurship Education Policy in Nigeria**

The government has enforced several policies and initiatives to cultivate an entrepreneurial culture and equip the youth with the essential skills. This literature review critically examines and analyses the key components and characteristics of the national entrepreneurship education policies that have been implemented in Nigeria. Initially, the entrepreneurial development policies in Nigeria primarily focused on providing financial credit and training schemes for small businesses, with minimal emphasis on entrepreneurship education (Garba, 2010).

However, it is crucial to note that the National Policy on Education, as highlighted by Osalor (2016), recognized the importance of vocational training and job creation as early as 1977, which subsequently paved the way for the formulation of subsequent policies specifically targeting entrepreneurial education. In response to the escalating unemployment challenges, the Federal Government introduced the National Policy on Entrepreneurship Education in 2006, which

marked the first comprehensive strategy aimed at integrating entrepreneurial learning throughout all levels of education (British Council, 2014).

The main objectives outlined in this policy were centered on the development of entrepreneurial capacities among the youth, fostering a cultural shift to appreciate entrepreneurship, providing the necessary infrastructure to support entrepreneurial endeavors, and facilitating access to finance for aspiring entrepreneurs. In order to effectively achieve these objectives, a range of strategies were implemented, including curriculum review, faculty training, industry partnerships, mentoring platforms, and the incorporation of technology into the educational process (Onu, 2013). Furthermore, the National Universities Commission took a significant step towards making entrepreneurship education mandatory for all students in Nigerian colleges with the introduction of the Mandate for Entrepreneurial Education in 2007 (Ojeifo, 2013). This mandate serves as a testament to the commitment of the government in ensuring that all students are fortified with the essential entrepreneurial services and mindset to flourish in the ever-evolving world economy.

Key agencies play crucial roles in ensuring the successful execution of such policies. One of the initiatives undertaken by these agencies is the implementation of a model entrepreneurship education syllabus. This curriculum serves as a foundation for imparting entrepreneurial knowledge and skills to students. Additionally, the establishment of university entrepreneurship centers has been another significant initiative. These centers serve as hubs for fostering entrepreneurship and innovation among students. They provide resources, mentorship, and guidance to aspiring student entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the introduction of business plan competitions and seed funding schemes has been instrumental in nurturing and fostering entrepreneurial aspirations among Nigerian students (Onuoha, 2007).

However, despite these commendable initiatives, there are many problems that need to be solved. One of the major challenges highlighted by Osalor (2016) is the inadequate monitoring of entrepreneurial education Programmes. This lack of monitoring makes it challenging to appraise the effectiveness and influence of these agendas. Also, there is insufficiency of incentives for faculty members to actively engage in entrepreneurial education initiatives. This lack of incentives hampers the motivation and commitment of faculty members towards promoting entrepreneurship among students

Numerous studies have indicated positive outcomes resulting from the implementation of entrepreneurial education policies in Nigeria. For instance, Bello et al. (2018) and Owenvbiugie and Igbinoba (2018) found that these policies have led to a growing interest and enhanced capabilities for business ventures among Nigerian students. This demonstrates the potential of entrepreneurial education in cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset among the youth. However, despite these positive outcomes, there is a low impact on the actual establishment of youth enterprises. This can be attributed to financing hurdles and structural gaps that hinder the translation of entrepreneurial aspirations into tangible business ventures (British Council, 2014).

Scholars have identified several persistent gaps in Nigerian entrepreneurship education policies. One such gap is the presence of curriculum deficiencies. The existing curriculum does not adequately cover all aspects of entrepreneurship, limiting the holistic development of entrepreneurial skills among students. Additionally, there is a lack of qualified instructors who possess the necessary knowledge and experience in entrepreneurship. This further hampers the quality of entrepreneurial education delivered to students. Moreover, weak private sector linkages pose a challenge in providing students with real-world exposure and practical experiences. The reliance on theoretical teaching methods also limits the effectiveness of entrepreneurial education. Furthermore, the absence of impact assessment frameworks makes it difficult to measure the effectiveness and impact of these policies (Garba, 2010; Ojeifo, 2013).

Another constraint in the application of entrepreneurial education policies is the lack of regional differentiation. The policies are often implemented uniformly across different regions of Nigeria, disregarding the unique needs and characteristics of each region. This one-size-fits-all approach hampers the effectiveness and relevance of EEd. To enhance the effectiveness of EEd policies in Nigeria, experts recommend several strategies. Firstly, increased funding is essential to support the expansion and improvement of entrepreneurial education Programmes. Adequate funding will enable the development of comprehensive and context-specific curricula, the recruitment and training of qualified instructors, and the establishment of robust university-industry partnerships. Secondly, faculty training is crucial in ensuring the delivery of high-quality entrepreneurial education. Faculty members need to be armored with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively teach and mentor aspiring student entrepreneurs.



Thirdly, there should be an emphasis on experiential pedagogies that provide students with practical experiences and opportunities for hands-on learning. This will bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application. Fourthly, the establishment of strong university-industry partnerships will facilitate the transfer of knowledge and resources between academia and the business sector. This collaboration will expose students to real-life entrepreneurial experiences and create a supportive ecosystem for entrepreneurship. Lastly, the implementation of impact evaluation mechanisms is necessary to assess the effectiveness and impact of entrepreneurial education policies. This will enable policymakers to make informed decisions and identify areas for improvement (Onuoha, 2007; Garba, 2010).

In summary, while national policies have played a important role in expanding entrepreneurial education across Nigerian academic institutes, there are still fundamental problem that need to be solved. These problems are not lmted to inadequate monitoring, lack of incentives for faculty, financing hurdles, curriculum deficiencies, weak private sector linkages, reliance on theoretical teaching, and the absence of impact assessment frameworks. However, by implementing context-specific strategies such as increased funding, faculty training, emphasis on experiential pedagogies, robust university-industry partnerships, and impact evaluation mechanisms, the effectiveness of entrepreneurial education policies in Nigeria can be enhanced. It is imperative to address these limitations to maximize the influence of EEd in Nigeria.

### **Entrepreneurial Education Implementation Strategies for Youth Empowerment**

Nigeria encounters formidable challenges in terms of youth unemployment, which necessitates the implementation of entrepreneurial education as a primary strategy to empower young individuals towards achieving self-employment and contributing to socioeconomic growth. Nonetheless, it is imperative to underscore the significance of effective design and implementation of entrepreneurial Programmes in order to ensure their success. Scholars emphasize the need to develop content and instruction models that are not only locally relevant but also tailored to the unique Nigerian context, taking into consideration the existing state of youth skills and indigenous knowledge.

Adekiya and Ibrahim (2016) advocate for the integration of traditional apprenticeship models with classroom teaching, as this approach has proven to be conducive to the cultivation of entrepreneurial competencies that are suitable for the local context. Ojeaga et al. (2018), on the

other hand, emphasize the importance of incorporating cultural values and community perspectives in Programme design, recognising their impact on the efficacy of such initiatives. In a unanimous manner, studies highlight the significance of transitioning from theoretical to practical experiential entrepreneurial learning, as this approach proves to be more effective in building critical entrepreneurial skills for self-employment and empowerment.

Aniah and Aminu (2019) further recommend a "learning by doing" approach, which involves engaging in activities such as business plan drafting, product design, field visits to successful ventures, and simulations, all of which add to the improvement of essential entrepreneurial skills. Moreover, interaction with successful entrepreneurs serves as a source of inspiration for youth, while also providing them with valuable role models for their own entrepreneurial journeys. Nowinski et al. (2019) emphasize the importance of inviting entrepreneurs to share their experiences, struggles, and achievements, as this not only facilitates vicarious learning but also creates potential networking connections for aspiring entrepreneurs. Furthermore, collaboration between educational institutions, local industries, government entities, and non-governmental organisations can serve as a catalyst for resource leverage in order to ensure the provision of high-quality entrepreneurial education, which is geared towards empowering young individuals. Abdu et al. (2018) highlight the role of partnerships in facilitating market links, internships, funding opportunities, and the design of localized curricula that are trim to the particular skills development needs of youth.

Experts advocate incorporating digital skills, social media use, and ICT platforms into entrepreneurship Programmemes to make learning relevant for tech-savvy Nigerian youth populations. Wider outreach can be aided by mobile technology, particularly in isolated locations (British Council, 2014). Campus incubators that give young entrepreneurs access to facilities, mentorship, and seed money to develop their ideas into viable businesses and prototypes are effective platforms for empowering young people (Femi, 2014). Odia and Odia (2013), however, advise incubators that in order to support adolescent endeavours, they must have enough staff and resources. It is possible to guarantee the participation of underprivileged youth, such as girls, rural populations, and minorities, for comprehensive empowerment by expanding access to entrepreneurship education through community outreach, online formats, and cost subsidies (Garba, 2010; Njoku et al., 2019).



Nigerians, especially the youth without jobs, will start economic activities and eventually stop engaging in illegal activities such as kidnapping, hostage-taking, bombing, vandalism, and homelessness if they are given the guidance and resources they need to start their own businesses. Indeed, new businesses are created as a result of activities in entrepreneurship development, showing how entrepreneurship entails the creation of businesses that frequently produce significant wealth, as demonstrated by individuals like Bill Gates and Aliko Dangote. The foundation of entrepreneurship improvement in Nigeria and other places is the founding of various small and medium-sized businesses by people who, if they are not hired at first, go into self-employment and often become employers.

### **Impact of EEd in Nigeria**

In the recent times, there exist a notable emphasis on entrepreneurship education in Nigeria, which is considered as a strategic approach to discuss the matter of youth being without a job and promote economic growth through the development of enterprises. In order to ensure effective policymaking, it is essential to assess the outcomes of entrepreneurship education initiatives.

Various studies have discovered that partaking in the entrepreneurship training Programmes, courses, could leads to an enhancement in entrepreneurial knowledge and capabilities among Nigerian students. For instance, a research conducted by Owoseni and Akambi in 2010, which focused on universities in southwest Nigeria, confirmed the positive impact of entrepreneurial education on capacities such as opportunity identification, risk-taking, and resource management. Similar effects were observed in studies like the one conducted by Inyang and Enuoh in 2009, which assessed the growth of entrepreneurial skills among Nigerian business students after undergoing specific course training.

Empirical evidence indicates that experience to entrepreneurship education has a profitable impact on the mindsets and orientations of Nigerian learners. A survey carried out by Amaewhule in 2007 among students in northeast Nigeria revealed an increased inclination and willingness towards entrepreneurship as a career option after completing an entrepreneurship curriculum.

Although limited, some studies propose that entrepreneurship education facilitates the establishment of actual enterprises among Nigerian students. For instance, Garba's study in 2010

assessed the trends two years after the completion of a Nigerian university entrepreneurship education Programme and found that over 60% of the participants had established new business by utilizing the knowledge and skills acquired. Okebukola also reported an increase in self-employment ventures among Nigerian university graduates who were exposed to entrepreneurial learning interventions compared to those who had not received such exposure

However, scholars note that the magnitude of entrepreneurial activity resulting from entrepreneurship education in Nigeria is hindered by factors such as inadequate funding, infrastructural constraints, theoretical teaching models, and the lack of post-graduation incubator support. This was highlighted by Femi in 2014 and the British Council in 2014. To comprehensively assess the outcomes of venture creation, more longitudinal data is required. In summary, existing studies affirm that EEd in Nigeria has a significant profitable influence on entrepreneurial knowledge, attitudes, and intentions. However, its influence on actual youth venture creation is moderate and needs to be strengthened through a holistic approach that includes experiential learning supported by a robust business incubation system.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

It is worth noting that several research endeavours on entrepreneurship in Nigerian Universities emphasise the entrepreneurship education curriculum perspective of students towards entrepreneurship education, and the potential entrepreneurship to education to generate employment opportunities. However, the present study primarily focuses on the historical background of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian Universities from onset 2006. Its foundational step aimed not only to enhance educational outcomes but also to align graduates' skills with market demands, thereby contributing national economic development.

The study concludes the EEd as practical oriented virtue with lifelong effect on people and the society as a whole requires to be fully focused, considering the required assistance structure from impact.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made as a milestone in repositioning EEd for impact.

- (1) Immediate need for universities to reassess and align EEd curriculum by living the BEMAS with what the school are doing presently. If the universities are actually during the right thing.

- (2) Government should be able to try and fulfil all their initial plan and major reasons why EEd was established.
- (3) NUC and Government should try and visit all the universities if truly they are in order with NUC Benchmark.

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