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**PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
EDUCATION IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN RIVERS STATE,  
NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

This survey examined prospects and challenges of entrepreneurship education in public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The aim was to ascertain the challenges and prospects of entrepreneurship education in public universities domiciled in Rivers State drawing insights from an empirical review of extant literature. The empirical review of existing literature identified key challenges of entrepreneurship education as inadequate funding, poor infrastructural facilities, shortage of qualified instructors, a disconnect between theory and practical knowledge, poor integration of digital and innovation-based skills and weak collaboration between industry stakeholders and tertiary institutions. Despite these challenges, this study, revealed venture creation and employment generation as prospects of entrepreneurship education. Consequent on this, this study concludes that entrepreneurship education promises a self-reliant future, it holds strong developmental prospects in public universities in Rivers State and serves as a viable scheme for addressing unemployment in Rivers State, Nigeria. Therefore, this study recommended that a more robust curriculum development on entrepreneurship, stronger university-industry collaboration/partnership, adequate funding, adoption of practical and experiential learning methods, integration of technology into work and strengthened entrepreneurial policies and frameworks.

**KEYWORDS:** Entrepreneurship education, employment generation, venture creation, entrepreneurial intention.

## INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is currently battling with rising poverty, food scarcity, economic stagnation and inadequate employment for its growing population. The increasing rate of unemployment, poverty and economic hardship in Nigeria intensified the need for educational programme capable of equipping students with entrepreneurial competencies that promote self-reliance and productive engagement. Owing to this, entrepreneurship education was introduced into Nigerian universities curricula as a strategic response to socioeconomic challenges, for the purpose of fostering new ideas, creativity, venture creation and jobs generation. The Nigeria Government having realized its importance integrated entrepreneurship education into its tertiary education curricula to promote a shift in the mindsets of students and graduates from job seeking to job creation (Onyido and Duru, 2023). The curriculum in public universities seeks to develop students entrepreneurial mindset, creativity, opportunity recognition as well as practical and business management competencies that are critically needed for entrepreneurship and meaningful economic contribution through productivity. According to Sulaimon (2020) and Amadi and Eze (2019) the integration of entrepreneurship education into Nigerian curricula seeks to align with the poverty reduction, economic diversification and human capital development policies of the Nigerian government who seeks to boost its economic growth, reduce unemployment and improve Nigerian's quality of life. Despite, the good intentions, its implementation in Nigerian public universities gets plagued by numerous obstacles as noted by Amadi and Ochie (2023) which includes inadequate funding, poor infrastructural development, shortage of qualified lecturers with practical entrepreneurial experience and over reliance of theoretical teaching methods, etc.

Buttressing this viewpoint, scholars argue that the duration of the programme, over reliance on available instructors, infrastructural deficiency, quality of training and lack of synergy between industries and Nigerian universities limits the real-world exposure and learning experiences of students of entrepreneurial education (Adamu & Augustus-Daddie, 2024, Nwangwu, 2023). In essence, while entrepreneurship presents opportunities for nations to foster innovation, stimulate the generation of employment and ultimately economic growth, the distance between policy expectations and actual outcomes remains vast in Nigeria. This study therefore critically reviews the challenges and prospects of entrepreneurship education in Rivers State public universities.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The rising rate of unemployment, economic hardship and poverty in Nigeria has continued to place enormous pressure on the educational system to produce graduates who possess practical skills for self-reliance, risk taking and productive engagement. Although entrepreneurship education was introduced into public universities to encourage innovation, creativity and job creation among students, many university graduates still remain unemployed and dependent on limited white collar job opportunities after graduation. This development has raised concerns about the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in achieving its intended objectives. In many Nigerian public universities, the implementation of entrepreneurship education appears to face several challenges that hinders its purpose among students and graduates. Issues that relate to inadequate practical exposure, poor learning facilities, limited industry collaboration, insufficient training resources and ineffective teaching approaches impacts the quality of entrepreneurial knowledge and skills acquired by students. As a result, many graduates exit the university with low confidence, or motivation needed to establish businesses or engage in productive entrepreneurial ventures after graduation.

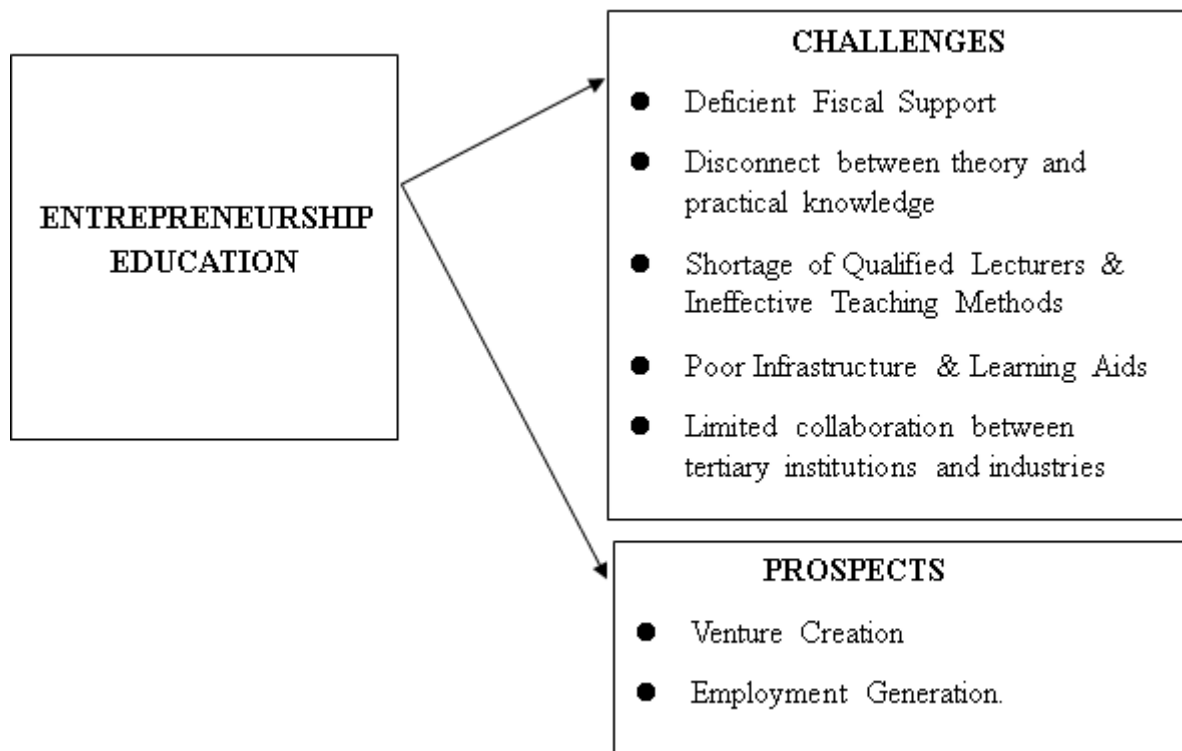
Despite the growing emphasis on entrepreneurship education as a strategy for jobs generation and fiscal development, the expected impact on graduate self-employment and venture creation appears to remain limited. This has created a gap between the objectives of the programme and the realities experienced by graduates within the society.

### **Aim of this Study**

This study aims to analyse entrepreneurship education in public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The objectives are to:

- (i) Determine the challenges confronting entrepreneurship education in public universities in Rivers State
- (ii) Examine prospects of entrepreneurial education in public universities in Rivers State.

## Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1: The indicators of the challenges and prospects were adapted from Adamu and Augustus-Daddie, 2024, Sulaiman, 2020.**

## CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

### Concept of Entrepreneurship

According to Onyido (2026), an entrepreneur is an individual who has or operates a commercial venture with the purpose to make profit and or generate revenue. Onyido and Duru (2019) stated that an entrepreneur recognizes opportunities, gathers resources to set up the new enterprise and is exposed to risk and uncertainties with the objective of attaining profit and growth. As such, an entrepreneur is an individual that manages production of goods or renders service for the aim of making profits (Onyido & Duru, 2019). Entrepreneurship as a course was first taught at Harvard University as part of its curricula, in 1948 by Professor Miles Mace (Orluwene & Magnus-Arewa, 2019). Today its role and critical importance in the development of countries has seen its integration in curricula of schools across the globe. With its inclusion in tertiary institutions curricula, entrepreneurship education sets the pace for innovation, venture creation, employment generation, self-reliance, employment opportunities and all of these stimulates economic growth and development of nations.

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

Oyido and Duru (2019) posits that entrepreneurship education is fashioned to impart students with knowledge, practical ability and attitudes that are needed for venture creation and management. It places emphasis on developing creativity, innovation among others critical for entrepreneurial success. Entrepreneurship education tries to reduce the risk inherent in venture creation while guiding the enterprise across its stages of development (Efegbudu, Ogbari & Ogunnaike, 2023). Chanda, Chisebe and Ngulube (2023) opined that entrepreneurial education encompasses the teaching of principles and best practices with the aim to make learners self-reliant and economically productive. Similarly, Orluwene and Magnus-Arewa (2019) described entrepreneurship education as an educational process that seeks to develop or instill entrepreneurial cognition, and aptitude among students or individuals. It involves teaching individuals how to ideate, recognize opportunities, take risks and transform their ideas into workable enterprises for profits or goodwill. In the Nigerian context, the program was introduced to equip students and graduates practical entrepreneurial skills as a means to becoming self-employed, self-reliant, job creators and as such reduce dependence on government paid jobs. It is considered as an economic and educational strategy for developing human capital and improving employability (Banha, Coelho & Flores, 2022). At the center of entrepreneurship education is venture creation, employment generation, value creation, self-reliance which are considered as proxies to its prospects and are central to stimulating, growth and development of any economy (Ahmed et al., 2020).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

This study is hinged on the Human Capital Theory. The theory purports that investing in people through transmission of knowledge and practice enhances the productivity and economic value of such persons and the society in general. The human capital theory argues that education equips individuals with competencies capable of enhancing their economic performance and contribution to the society. The relevance of the theory to entrepreneurship education lies in its emphasis on the capacity and ability of humans to acquire knowledge, skills and be productive. The human capital theory views the imparting or transmission of knowledge as a form of investment that has the potential of increasing the knowledge, competencies, innovative abilities and productivity of individuals within the society. The theory highlights humans as assets that when trained and developed, drives organizations productivity and performance levels higher than expected in such a manner that over time the

employees become experts and more competent on their jobs. This theory considers the fact that entrepreneurship is production-oriented and the human capital theory encapsulates education, skills, knowledge, competence and the ability to carry out work activities in order to produce economic value. This implies that labour activities which produces economic value boosts and sustains businesses.

## **CHALLENGES OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA**

Entrepreneurship education in Nigerian public universities is challenged by several multifaceted issues such as:

### **Deficient Fiscal Support**

A major challenge confronting entrepreneurship education in Nigerian public universities is inadequate funding (Sulaimon, 2020). Public universities often operate under financial constraints as a result of low budgetary allocation, over dependence on government subventions and poorly internally generated revenue (Uko, 2024). This suppresses the provision of modern facilities, practical equipment, workshops, laboratories and instructional materials needed for effective entrepreneurial training. According to Amadi and Ochie (2023) insufficient funding impacts the execution and sustainability of entrepreneurship education programme in Nigerian universities. Absence of adequate financial support limits students exposure to practical entrepreneurial experiences and the quality of training.

### **Poor Infrastructural Facilities**

Entrepreneurship education requires practical training environments such as laboratories, workshops and incubation centers. In many public universities poor classroom conditions, poor internet facilities and connectivity, shortage of equipment/tools, absence of functional entrepreneurship centers limits practical learning and experience (Adooh & Ononogbo, 2021) and inadequate teaching materials such as text books, instructional aids and modern tools constrain effective delivery of entrepreneurship education (Amadi & Ochie, 2023). The inadequacy of these facilities limits the acquisition of practical skills and creativity among students. Overcrowded classrooms make it difficult for lecturers to provide individualized guidance and mentorship, which are essential in entrepreneurship training (Adamu & Augustus-Daddie, 2024). Scholars have argued that poor infrastructural facilities weakens the practical orientation of entrepreneurship programmes and reduces its effectiveness in preparing students for venture creation and generation employment (Sulaimon, 2020).

### **Shortage of Qualified Lecturers**

The shortage of qualified instructors with practical entrepreneurial experience is a major challenge in public tertiary schools in Nigeria (Amadi & Eze, 2019). In Nigeria, instructors with certifications in entrepreneurial education in most cases are over burdened with official engagements to adequately follow up the advancement of graduates of entrepreneurship education. Currently, in many public universities, entrepreneurship courses are taught by lecturers who possess the theoretical knowledge and inadequate practical business exposure. This ultimately impacts the standard of teaching and limits understanding of real world business practices for students. Oyido (2026) established that the excess official workload on available instructors impedes the quality of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria.

### **Disconnect between theory and Practical Knowledge**

In Nigerian tertiary institutions, the persistent disconnect between theoretical instructions and practical application according to (Sulaimon, 2020), is the most persistent challenge. That is, the over-emphasis and reliance on theoretical teaching with little or no practical exposure, in most public universities. Amadi & Ochie (2023) opined that entrepreneurship by its nature is practice-oriented and requires experiential learning. Unfortunately, many institutions in Nigeria continue to depend heavily on traditional approaches to theoretical teaching thereby, exposing students to classroom lectures with limited opportunities for practical demonstrations, internship and field experiences. This mismatch undermines the strength of purpose geared towards empowering students with the right skills necessary for venture creation, enterprise growth and business sustainability. Thus, limiting students acquisition of entrepreneurial competencies and confidence in venture creation after graduation.

### **Weak Industry Collaboration**

The absence of strong collaboration between universities and industries impact entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. Effective entrepreneurship training requires partnership between educational institutions and business organizations that should provide mentorship, internship, practical exposure and funding opportunities for students or graduates of entrepreneurship education. This weak collaboration between tertiary institutions and the private sectors or industries limits students and graduates exposure to real business environment and consequently reduces opportunities for learning and development in these environments (Adamu & Augustus-Daddie, 2024, Sulaimon, 2020).

### **Inadequate Digitalization of Entrepreneurial Programmes**

With the rise of digital entrepreneurship and the growing dependence on digital tools in many industries, entrepreneurship education programmes across the world are fusing modern-day technologies like artificial intelligence and other technology based tools into the curricula with the objective of equipping learners or graduates with the necessary skills towards meeting the demands of today's society (Erus, 2025). In the Nigerian educational sector, many tertiary institutions still struggle in integrating and application of modern technologies during instructions, thereby, limit the competitiveness of graduates in the global economy (Ukata & Mekuri-Ndimele, 2025). Similarly, Idowu and Iyabode (2024), mentioned that the education sector is currently struggling with providing internet services and digitalization solutions in its teaching curricula which the scholars foresee as far fetched for public tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

### **PROSPECTS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION**

Regardless the challenges confronting entrepreneurship pedagogy in Nigeria, its prospects has gained significant attention as a strategic tool for economic transformation and development. These prospects are:

#### **Venture Creation**

Venture creation is a central concept in entrepreneurship studies that highlights the means individuals identify opportunities, mobilize resources, establish new business enterprises and sustains the venture. It represents the practical outcome of entrepreneurial intention and is often used as a key measure of entrepreneurial success, especially among graduates of entrepreneurship education programs. Venture creation involves the transformation of ideas into viable business entities through structured planning and resource deployment. Venture creation is fundamentally driven by the identification and exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities (Schlichte & Jungle, 2024)

#### **Employment Generation**

One of the major prospects of entrepreneurship education is employment generation. Equipping students who are potential graduates with enterprising knowledge, skill, and competencies helps them create jobs for themselves and others rather than relying solely on paid jobs. This is especially important in economies with high unemployment rates such as Nigeria, where formal job opportunities are limited (Nwankwo & Nnajofofor, 2021). Entrepreneurship education therefore serves as a viable solution to youth unemployment and

underemployment. Employment generation promotes self-reliance and poverty reduction. Individuals who acquire entrepreneurial skills are more likely to start and sustain businesses, thereby generating sources of income which will improve quality of life and contributes to national development through poverty alleviation and economic empowerment, particularly among youths (Nwankwo, Obinwa & Onwuasoanya, 2021).

### **Innovation**

The Schumpeterian view describes innovation as a creative destruction, meaning that new ideas or new ways of producing goods or rendering services and its management renders old ideas outdated (Okumu et.al, 2019). Innovation means to introduce new, useful and valuable ideas or methods and transforming it into products or services for a profit or goodwill. Innovation enables entrepreneurs to solve problems, discover opportunities, improve existing products, develop competitive advantage and support business growth. Innovation encourages individuals to think critically, identify opportunities, and develop innovative solutions to societal problems. Entrepreneurship education promotes innovation and having innovative capacity is essential for economic competitiveness and industrial development (Orluwene & Magnus-Arewa, 2019). Okumu et al (2019), noted that innovative-driven entrepreneurship contributes significantly to employment and economic growth and leads to increased production, income generation, and national output.

## **EMPIRICAL REVIEW OF CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION**

Orluwene and Magnus-Arewa (2019), investigated the impact entrepreneurship instruction has on the entrepreneurship skills development of undergraduates in Rivers State, Nigeria. The investigation adopted the quasi-experimental research design. A total of 432 year two students from two different tertiary institutions were obtained through a 2-level sampling method were the study sample. These group of undergraduates served as experimental and control proxies. The observational group were taught entrepreneurship instruction whilst the other that served as the control group were not. The twenty-item measurement scales of Vaidya (2014, cited in Orulwene & Magnus-Arewa, 2019) were adopted. The research instrument reliability test had significant coefficients of 0.88. Descriptive statistics, paired sample T-test and ANCOVA were used for data analysis. The outcome proved entrepreneurship education significantly and positively affects the improvement of enterprising skills of undergraduates. The study suggested that entrepreneurship education

should as a matter of utmost importance be an uninterrupted study programme at tertiary institutions and should also be taught at primary and secondary levels of education in Nigeria. Barisoma and Obinna (2025) investigated how the development and repositioning of entrepreneurship could be used in achieving employment and sustaining same for business education graduates. The aim were to probe the function of repositioning entrepreneurship development in improving sustainable jobs for graduates of business education in Rivers State. The population were 180 business education graduates form where 100 of the graduates were sampled using the random sampling method. A structured instrument on a four-point Likert scale weighted 4 - 1, respectively for each item on the instrument were used in eliciting responses from the respondents. The questionnaire were validated by two subject specialists. In order to determine the dependability of the instrument, the instrument was subjected to a reliability test and all items had a 0.75 thresholds, affirming its reliability. The hypotheses were at 0.05 level of significance using z-test. The results demonstrated that repositioning entrepreneurship education and development enhances the sustainability of jobs for graduates of business education through creativity, innovation, self reliance, empowerment, skill acquisition and personal development. The study recommended for efforts to be made in repositioning entrepreneurship programs in universities since its strategic role reduces the rate of unemployment in the society.

Empirical evidence from Sheyin (2024) identified persistent weakness in entrepreneurship education, particularly in Nigerian tertiary institutions, where students often lack hands-on experience, mentorship, and exposure to the real business world. The author conducted an investigation among students in selected public universities in North-Western Nigeria, with a population of 1,200 undergraduate students offering entrepreneurship courses across different faculties. The study found that students were taught theoretical foundations of entrepreneurship such as opportunity recognition, business planning, and basic management principles but few times carry out practical business tasks that gives room for application of theoretical knowledge gained. The study also established that students were unable to develop critical entrepreneurial skills such as decision-making under uncertainty, risk management, customer engagement, and financial planning due to the near absence of practical or industry experiences. The study concluded that bridging the gap between theory and practice requires a shift towards experiential learning approaches, stronger industry academia collaboration, and the establishment of functional entrepreneurship development centers where students can actively engage in real life entrepreneurship practice.

## CONCLUSION

Drawing from the reviewed empirical literature, this study concludes that entrepreneurship education has strong potential to tackle graduate unemployment and promoting sustainable development in Rivers State, Nigeria. Its implementation requires significant improvement to achieve maximum impact and to achieve this, there must be a major shift from a predominantly theoretical approach to a more experiential, skill-driven, and industry-integrated model, while not neglecting practical training, integrating digital tools into learning, promoting innovation labs, and establishing mentorship and networking platforms as essential strategies for improving students and graduates readiness for venture creation and employment generation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Nigerian's tertiary institutions curricula in entrepreneurial education should be reviewed and redesigned to reflect current business realities including digital entrepreneurship, e-commerce, global market trends etc.
2. Public universities should adopt experiential and practical learning methods such as business simulations, case studies, student enterprise projects, internships, and industrial attachments as this will help students apply theoretical knowledge in real-life situations.
3. Institutions should create well-equipped entrepreneurship hubs, innovation labs and incubation centers where students can actively develop and test business ideas under supervision and mentorship.
4. Universities should partner with private sector organizations to enhance students exposure to real business and also develop mentorship programs involving successful entrepreneurs and industry experts.
5. Government should enforce policies that promote standardized, practical, and industry-relevant entrepreneurship education across all levels of education in Nigeria.

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