

The Roles of Entrepreneurship Education in Job Preparedness Among Students and Young School Leavers in Nigeria

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Published October 2026

Abstract

This report critically examines the pivotal roles of entrepreneurship education in addressing Nigeria's persistent youth unemployment crisis by fostering essential job preparedness skills and promoting self-reliance among young school leavers. The analysis underscores that while policy intent is robust, particularly with the strategic shift from "education for paid employment" to "education for self-employment," significant challenges persist in implementation. These challenges include inconsistent quality of instruction, inadequate resources and infrastructure, and a notable gap between theoretical curriculum content and practical application. Despite these hurdles, entrepreneurship education demonstrably correlates with increased self-employment, job creation, and a crucial mindset shift among beneficiaries. The report highlights that its true value extends beyond mere business mechanics, cultivating a holistic suite of transferable skills vital for any career path. Maximizing the impact of these educational initiatives necessitates a comprehensive, collaborative approach that integrates policy, curriculum reform, robust teacher training, and, critically, a supportive ecosystem encompassing access to finance and sustained mentorship. This integrated strategy is paramount for translating educational outcomes into sustainable employment and fostering long-term economic resilience for Nigeria's vibrant youth population.

1 Introduction

An Entrepreneurship Education is a learning process designed to cultivate in young individuals the skills, competencies, understandings, and attributes essential for innovation (Evans-Obinna, 2016). Bappah et al. (2024) sees entrepreneurship education as specialized instruction that helps students develop skills, ideas, managerial skills, and self-employment abilities. This includes the capacity to identify, create, initiate, and successfully manage diverse opportunities—whether personal, community-based, business-related, or work-oriented, including self-employment (Adenutsi, 2023). Entrepreneurship education transcends the mere acquisition of theoretical knowledge, actively fostering the development of core practical skills, an inquiring mind, and promoting innovation and creativity (Chiemeké-Unogu, 2020). Key objectives include preparing students to be proactive, critical thinkers, transforming challenges into opportunities, stimulating novel ideas, flexible, and adaptable to the evolving demands of the modern economy. Ultimately, it aims to reorient graduates from being passive job seekers into dynamic job creators (Ibid, 2020).

The imperative of Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria is confronted with a profound youth unemployment crisis, with estimates indicating that over 50% of its young population is unemployed (Akingbade, 2021). This significant challenge is paradoxically exacerbated by a pervasive skills shortage within the labor market resulting from poor or little collaboration between University faculties and the industry/job market (Adetayo and Oloruntoba, 2024). The traditional educational qualifications, historically prepared individuals for government-paid employment, which are frequently insufficient for securing desired jobs in the contemporary economy. This is because modern roles increasingly demand proficiency in emerging technologies and a broader array of practical competencies.

Competencies such as critical thinking, Creativity and innovation, self-reliance and initiatives, communication and teamwork, financial literacy, digital literacy and technology handling, resilience and adaptability, business acumen and personal branding, are frequently referred to as "Employability Skills" or "deep learning skills," are indispensable for securing, retaining, and adapting flexibly within the labor market throughout one's career but are often lacking due to the traditional educational approach (Oyebola et al., 2015).

The antique positioning of Nigeria's educational system, which focused on producing individuals for conventional employment, has largely failed to adapt to these dynamic demands of the current labor market, resulting in a substantial pool of unemployed graduates who lack the relevant skills required by industries. This became an unbearable burden even in face of the leaders that on April 18th, 2018, Late President Muhammed Buhari in a Common Wealth Forum, Westminster made statements of facts that the 'Nigerian Youths are generally lazy' due to lack of practical entrepreneurship skills (Tijani, 2018). This fundamental misalignment between the outputs of the educational system and the actual demands of the labor market underscores the severity of the structural issues that necessitated a significant reorientation in the educational policy and strategically prioritizing entrepreneurship education.

Kareem et al. (2015) has observed that graduate unemployment has undoubtedly become a herculean national cankerworm of which every government has to deal with. This is because most graduates in Nigeria lack certain qualities that enhance their performance on the job soon after their graduation. They further state that, graduates from universities acquired knowledge without entrepreneurial skills which would enable them, on graduation to practice what was learnt in school, create jobs for themselves and others and participate in economic development in Nigeria. Cultivating transferable skills vital for any career path is underreported; hence this paper. The paper therefore, undertakes a comprehensive analysis of the diverse roles that entrepreneurship education plays in enhancing job preparedness specifically among young school leavers in Nigeria; examines core definitions and objectives of entrepreneurship education, assesses its demonstrated impacts, identifies persistent challenges, and proposes actionable strategic recommendations to optimize its effectiveness.

2 Literature review and conceptual framework

Entrepreneurship education is a specialized training that helps students particularly in the higher Institutions develop self-employment skills, ideas, and management abilities. The National Policy on Education historically, underwent a significant transformation that led to the full incorporation of Entrepreneurship Education (EEd) into Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) curricula in 2000. This need prompted the National University Commission (NUC) to propose the mandatory inclusion of

an entrepreneurship course in all Nigerian higher institutions in 2006; that birthed the entrepreneurs education whose effect was in 2007/2008 academic sessions.

The compulsory inclusion of Entrepreneurship courses in Nigerian Universities by NUC was a pivotal shift aimed at transforming young Nigerians from passive job seekers into dynamic job creators. This is too aligned with other programs like the Directorate of Employment (NDE) in promoting Entrepreneurship among Youths in the country (Fikpo, 2022). The profound implication of this policy transformation is that, without this critical shift, the youth unemployment (young school leavers) crisis would likely be far more severe, positioning entrepreneurship education as an almost existential policy response rather than merely a beneficial enhancement to the curriculum.

According to Bappah et al. (2024) no society can advance beyond its educational system. This statement formed the basis of the study as previous study directly looked inward to the importance of Entrepreneurship skills development on Employment Generation (Evans-Obinna, 2016; Akingbade and Aberuagba, 2019); exploring the effectiveness of skill development programmes in addressing youth unemployment (Hassan, 2016; Akingbade, 2021; Bappah et al., 2024; Dangi and Agrawal, 2018; Ali, 2022). Sarman et al. (2025) focuses on the Entrepreneurial Motivation and Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy; Ephrem et al. (2021) on Entrepreneurial Motivation, Psychological Capital, and Business Success of Young Entrepreneurs; leaving behind the roles of entrepreneurship education in job preparedness among young school leavers in Nigeria. The analysis above, fall short of preparing the young mind at earlier stage and equipping them with employable skills that may fit into both the circular and entrepreneurship world. This paper close the gap by looking inward towards cultivating a holistic suite of transferable skills vital for any career path by maximizing the impact of these educational initiatives into job placement, job creation and self-reliance.

2.1 Overview of different types and models of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria

Entrepreneurship education in Nigeria is delivered through a diverse array of forms and models, thoughtfully designed to cater to various age groups, educational backgrounds, and learning preferences.

Formal University & Polytechnic Programs: These represent structured academic offerings, providing students with comprehensive courses in Business Plan Development, Innovation, and the Management of Small Enterprises. Such programs typically integrate both theoretical components and practical project work.

Formal Apprenticeship Models: The Apprenticeship Models is rooted in an established traditional systems, such as the widely recognized Igbo "**Imu-Ahia**" that facilitate hands-on learning, direct customer interaction, and practical small business experience under the direct tutelage of a master tradesperson.

Accelerator & Incubator Programs: These initiatives, often sponsored by the government (e.g., YouWin! EdoJobs, WECA), to provide a crucial ecosystem of training, seed funding, and mentorship specifically for early-stage entrepreneurs aiming to scale their ventures. The Information Technology Developers Entrepreneurship Accelerator (iDEA) serves as a prominent example, actively supporting the growth of ICT start-ups.

Early Education Programs: A growing trend sees schools and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) introducing basic business concepts to children through engaging projects like "mini-market

days" and "kids-run stalls." These programs are designed to build early confidence, foster financial literacy, and cultivate teamwork skills from a young age.

Integrated Model: In this approach, entrepreneurship education is seamlessly incorporated into existing academic disciplines, such as agricultural economics, management, and general economics courses.

Composite Model: This model is more focused and purposeful, involving the establishment of dedicated departments or specialized centers specifically for entrepreneurship courses.

Conception Model: Ukpiken and Ukpabio proposed the Conception Model, which posits that individuals possess an innate entrepreneurial ability that can be realized and nurtured through targeted educational support, skills development, and the systematic discovery, application, and appraisal of opportunities.

In all the identified models and types of entrepreneurial skills outline above are very effective and efficient with positive turnover; however the focus of this study is more on the formal University and Polytechnic Programs; forming the basis of the emphasis. This is because the aim of formal University and Polytechnic Programs in Nigeria recently revolves around preparing the young generations from the primary through secondary and university education to tackle the problems of self-reliance rather than thinking of government employment. Kareem et al. (2015) opened that the goal of entrepreneurship education is to empower graduates, irrespective of their areas of academic specialization, with knowledge and skills that will enable them to create their own income generating ventures, even if they are not able to secure jobs in the public sector.

2.2 Entrepreneurship theories

The theory of the economic survival and the theory of Inkele's & Smith Need-to-improve entrepreneurship theories were adopted from the Onyido and Duru (2019) to help reconnect with the objectives of the study and most applicable with respect to the Nigerian situation.

The Economic Survival Theory: According to this theory, the development of entrepreneurship is encouraged by certain unpleasant circumstances in the life of individuals that push them into entrepreneurship. This proposition by the economic survival theory agrees with the life path change model of new adventure creation of Shapero which highlights that certain circumstances are regarded as push factors that as a result of the need for survival due to termination of their jobs, discrimination adopt entrepreneurship as a means of survival (Ogedengbe et al., 2013). As such individuals who find themselves in this group have to employ their creative capabilities toward entrepreneurship (Mbaegbu, 2008).

Inkele's & Smith Need-to-improve theory: This theory recognizes the outlook to embrace new thoughts and adopt new approaches. It suggests that entrepreneurs will continuously seek for new ideas and approaches to carrying out business (Hassan, 2013). As such, this makes the individual more fascinated in the present and future rather than focusing in the past as issues that indirectly or directly impact the development of entrepreneurship. Individual with these attributes are seen as more disposed to the activities of entrepreneurship than those that lack such attributes.

A serious analysis of the above theories indicate that the most applicable theory with respect to the Nigerian situation is the Economic Survival theory which has consequently seen the government of Nigeria strongly campaigning for the adoption of entrepreneurship by its citizen in order to tackle the growing rate of unemployment currently plaguing the nation.

3 Materials and methods

3.1 Study area

Bayelsa State is the sixth state in Nigeria; located in the core Niger Delta, Southern Nigeria with Yenagoa as the Capital. The state was created in 1996 from Rivers State with only eight local Government; bordered by Delta State in the North; Rivers State to the East and the Atlantic Ocean to the West and South and majorly dominated by a vast network of Rivers, Creeks and Mangrove forest. Demographically, it is dominated by the Ijaw ethnic group with languages as Izon; Ogbia; Nembe and Epie-Atissa. The state has a total area of 10,773 square kilometers (4158 sq m) and an estimated population of 3,700,000. The state is a home to several higher educations including the Federal University, Otuoke, Federal University of Agriculture, Bassambiri; Niger Delta University, Amassoma and Yenagoa; Bayelsa Medical University, Yenagoa; University of Africa, Toru-Orua; Federal polytechnic; Ekowe; Isaac Adaka Boro College of Education, Sagbama; Bayelsa State Polytechnic, Aleibiri; College of Health Technology, Otuogidi, College of Nursing and Midwifery, Tombia; College of Arts and Science, Elebele and Hensard University, Toru-Urua as the only private University; each offering entrepreneurship course while spooling out graduates on yearly basics.

3.2 Essential employability skills

Entrepreneurship education directly addresses the increasing demand from business and industry for more relevant skills and practical knowledge (Binuomote and Okoli, 2015). Employers actively seek individuals who demonstrate self-motivation, creativity, flexibility, resourcefulness, and a strong propensity to take initiative. These essential employability skills fostered through entrepreneurship education are indispensable for securing, retaining, and adapting flexibly within the labor market throughout one's career which is not limited to the listed below according to Ali (2022):

- **Critical Thinking & Problem-Solving:** Cultivating critical thinking abilities, developing the capacity to effectively tackle small-scale problems, and providing innovative solutions to complex challenges.
- **Creativity & Innovation:** Actively promoting innovation, fostering creativity, and nurturing enterprising attributes. This also includes the practical skill of generating and meticulously screening business ideas.
- **Self-Reliance & Initiative:** Building a learning culture that empowers young people to assume greater responsibility for their own future development, thereby fostering self-reliance and independence.
- **Communication & Teamwork:** Enhancing the ability to clearly communicate ideas to others and effectively collaborate within teams.
- **Financial Literacy:** Developing a fundamental understanding of value for money, profit generation, and the principles of reinvestment, alongside practical skills in budgeting, accounting, and overall money management.
- **Digital Literacy & Technology Handling:** Equipping individuals with the capacity to effectively handle and adapt to emerging technologies in the workplace.
- **Business Acumen:** Providing a realistic understanding of how the workplace operates, fostering competencies in business idea generation, and developing skills in business plan formulation, innovation management, and the management of small enterprises.

- **Resilience & Adaptability:** Cultivating the capacity to respond positively to change and demonstrating flexibility in dynamic environments.
- **Personal Branding:** Developing effective skills for CV and resume presentation, crucial for job seeking.

The National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) further reinforces the importance of these broader dimensions, emphasizing inter-personal skills such as teamwork, communication, and the ability to organize work, make sound judgments, and solve problems, alongside technical proficiencies. This comprehensive focus suggests that the true and perhaps underestimated value proposition of entrepreneurship education for job preparedness extends significantly beyond merely teaching the mechanics of starting a business. Its profound impact lies in its capacity to cultivate a holistic suite of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor attributes that are universally valuable and transferable across all forms of employment, whether self-generated or traditional paid positions. This perspective reframes entrepreneurship education as a foundational "life skill" education, rather than solely a vocational one, making it profoundly relevant and beneficial even for individuals who ultimately choose conventional career paths.

Research Design and population of study: The study utilized descriptive cross-sectional survey research design, with a study population of 330 and sample size of 181.

3.3 Sampling techniques

The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane (1967) formula for the sample selection.

The calculation is stated below (Albert et al., 2025):

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \quad (1)$$

where n = sample size required, N = population size, e = level of significance and 1 is a constant.

The calculation yielded one hundred and eighty one (181) as sample size.

The study adopted purposive and simple random sampling techniques for data collection. Purposive sampling technique was used to select all the First/second year regular; final year regular undergraduate's students; graduates and among instructors or lecturer taking entrepreneurship course in their various institutions. About 74 first/second-year and 36 final-year undergraduate students in higher institutions; 50 graduates and 15 lecturers from the entrepreneurship education programs; all within Bayelsa State. Akingbade (2019) revealed that fresh graduates usually demonstrate the tendency in the direction of starting a business which make it essential for their inclusions. Though, purposive sampling is underpinned with its limitations (Albert et al., 2025); however, in the context of this study; it uses is subject to willingness and availability. Simple random sampling technique was employed to select available and willing participants at various institutions and places.

3.4 Description of the research instrument

Questionnaire were used for the collection of data for the study which also serve as the primary source of data collection. The questionnaires were administered to 181 respondent including first/second-year and final year regular undergraduate's students; fresh graduates and lecturers from the entrepreneurship education programs. First/Second year because, entrepreneurship is a course mostly offered in the first/second year in ones higher educational journey. Instruments used included the Students' Attitude towards Entrepreneurship Questionnaire (SATEQ); Graduates' Attitude

towards Entrepreneurship Questionnaire and the Entrepreneurship Challenges Questionnaire (ECQ). Data were analyzed using frequency counts, means, and t-tests.

3.5 Basic questions

- What are the attitudes of 100L/200L students before enrolling in the entrepreneurship education degree programme?
- What is the intension of the entrepreneurship education to the student?
- Has the entrepreneurship education degree programme significantly impacted final-year students' attitudes towards entrepreneurial business or circular jobs?
- Has the entrepreneurship education degree programme significantly impacted final-year students' intentions to start a business venture or depending on circular jobs?
- What level of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor attributes has entrepreneurship education on the lives of students and graduates?
- What are the challenges facing entrepreneurship education in higher institutions?
- How has these challenges affect the achievement of entrepreneurship education among graduates?

3.6 Method of data analysis

A total of 160 (88%) of the completed questionnaires were retrieved coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0 (IBM SPSS Inc. Chicago Illinois) for both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentage was used to analyze the demographic data, while the T-test was used to test the hypotheses generated for the study at 0.05 level of significance.

4 Results and discussion

The empirical results of this study are structured to present the demographic profiles of the respondents, followed by an evaluation of undergraduate career path intentions, post-graduation realities of young school leavers, and the institutional barriers embedded within the entrepreneurship education ecosystem in Nigeria.

4.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

The demographic distribution of the sampled university students and recent graduates provides critical contextual grounding for evaluating the efficacy of entrepreneurship education on job preparedness. As summarized in Table 1, the study successfully captured data from a total sample of 160 participants.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents (students and graduates).

Variables	Frequency (n = 160)	Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	58	53.0
Female	52	47.0
Age (years)		

Variables	Frequency (n = 160)	Percent (%)
Below 20 yrs.	13	12.0
21–25 yrs.	31	28.0
26–30 yrs.	36	33.0
>30 yrs.	30	27.0
Parents' Occupation		
Self-employed/Business	39	24.0
Civil Servant	59	37.0
Artisan	45	28.0
Industry (Corporate)	17	11.0
Total	160	100.0

Source: Researcher (2025).

The gender distribution indicates a balanced sample, with males accounting for 53.0% (n = 58) and females constituting 47.0% (n = 52) of the study population. The age metrics reveal that the vast majority of the respondents fall within active youth and transitional workforce brackets: 21–25 years (28.0%), 26–30 years (33.0%), and over 30 years (27.0%). Cumulatively, 88.0% of the respondents are above 20 years of age, representing the demographic tier facing imminent or immediate entry into the highly competitive Nigerian labor market.

Regarding socio-economic backgrounds, the single largest segment of respondents' parents are civil servants (37.0%), followed by artisans (28.0%) and self-employed individuals (24.0%). Only 11.0% have parents working in the corporate industry sector. This heavy reliance on public sector employment within the parental generation underscores a structural dependency mindset that young school leavers may inherit, presenting an ideological hurdle to self-reliance.

4.2 Career path intentions, perceptions, and visions of current students

To understand how entrepreneurship education shapes job preparedness during undergraduate studies, Table 2 isolates the career pathways, perceptions, and structural mindsets of current students (n = 110).

Table 2. Student's attitudes towards career pathways.

Variables	Frequency (n = 110)	Percent (%)
Career Choice		
Government (Public Sector)	60	55.0
Companies (Private Sector)	42	38.0
Self and Business (Entrepreneurship)	8	7.0
Perception and Attitude Towards Entrepreneurship		
Good	65	59.0
Fair	32	29.0
Undecided	13	12.0

Variables	Frequency (n = 110)	Percent (%)
Entrepreneurship Vision		
I have	46	42.0
I don't have	57	52.0
Undecided	7	6.0

Source: Researcher (2025).

The empirical results in Table 2 present a significant psychological paradox. On one hand, student perception of entrepreneurship is overwhelmingly positive, with 59.0% describing it as "Good" and 29.0% as "Fair". This indicates that the theoretical delivery of entrepreneurship curricula successfully communicates the value of business creation.

On the other hand, this positive perception does not translate into actual career intentions. A massive 93.0% of undergraduate students intend to seek paid employment upon graduation—either in the public sector (55.0%) or corporate private firms (38.0%). Only a minor 7.0% (n = 8) express an immediate intent to pursue entrepreneurship. Furthermore, more than half of the students (52.0%) explicitly state that they lack a clear entrepreneurial vision.

These findings point to a major gap in job preparedness: while the curriculum builds conceptual awareness, it fails to build the psychological intent or structural confidence required for students to choose self-employment over traditional employment in Nigeria.

4.3 Entrepreneurial intentions, capital metrics, and strategic outlook of graduates

Table 3 traces the behavioral patterns of young school leavers (n = 50) who have completed their university education and entered the labor market.

Table 3. Graduates' intense attitudes and post-graduation realities.

Variables	Frequency (n = 50)	Percent (%)
Career Pathway		
Government (Public Sector)	9	18.0
Entrepreneurship	35	70.0
Mixed Feeling	6	12.0
Perceived Benefits of Entrepreneurship Education		
Skills and Creativity	31	62.0
Self-reliance	19	38.0
Indifference	0	0.0
Entrepreneurship Skills Improvement Intent		
Will Improve	21	42.0
Will Not Improve	24	48.0
Not Decided	5	10.0
Expected Start-up Fund Requirements (NGN)		
1,000 – 500,000	12	24.0

Variables	Frequency (n = 50)	Percent (%)
501,000 – 1,000,000	23	46.0
Above 1,000,000	15	30.0
Expected Sources of Funding		
Commercial Banks	8	16.0
Family and Friends	30	60.0
Personal Savings	12	24.0
Strategic Mechanism to Increase Sales		
Advertisement	14	28.0
Discount	21	42.0
Innovation	15	30.0

Source: Researcher (2025).

When transitioning from undergraduate studies (Table 2) to graduation (Table 3), the data shows a major shift in career trajectories. While only 7.0% of current students planned to go into business, an impressive 70.0% of actual graduates are actively pursuing entrepreneurship. This dramatic shift highlights the harsh economic reality in Nigeria, where a shortage of public and private corporate jobs forces graduates into self-employment out of necessity.

Graduates widely recognize the value of university-level entrepreneurship education; 62.0% state it equipped them with essential skills and creativity, while 38.0% credit it with enabling self-reliance. However, a troubling 48.0% of these graduates do not intend to further improve their entrepreneurial skills. This suggests that many see entrepreneurship as a temporary survival mechanism rather than a long-term professional career.

Financially, capital remains a major barrier. Seventy percent (70.0%) of business-oriented graduates require up to 1 million Naira in startup capital. To secure this, the vast majority rely on informal financial networks, with 60.0% depending on family and friends, and 24.0% using personal savings. Only 16.0% look to formal commercial banks, showing that conventional financial institutions are largely inaccessible to young entrepreneurs in Nigeria. In terms of market strategy, graduates focus on price incentives (42.0% using discounts) over long-term product value creation (30.0% using innovation), reflecting a survivalist approach to business management.

4.4 Pedagogical and structural challenges in entrepreneurship training

To optimize how entrepreneurship education prepares students for the workforce, it is essential to isolate the institutional barriers encountered during university training, as detailed in Table 4 (n = 15).

Table 4. Entrepreneurship Challenges Questionnaire (ECQ).

Attributes / Challenges Encountered	Frequency (n = 15)	Percent (%)
Crowdedness (Overpopulated Classrooms)	3	20.0
Lack of Modern Equipment	3	20.0
Lack of Practical Skills Acquisition	3	20.0

Attributes / Challenges Encountered	Frequency (n = 15)	Percent (%)
Mindset and Commitment Gaps	2	13.3
Poor Motivation and Encouragement	2	13.3
Curriculum Deficiencies and Pedagogy	2	13.3
Total	15	100.0

Source: Researcher (2025).

The institutional roadblocks identified by respondents are evenly distributed across key structural areas. The primary issues are large, overcrowded classrooms (20.0%), a lack of modern equipment (20.0%), and a deficiency in hands-on, practical skill acquisition (20.0%). Together, these three resource-linked constraints account for 60.0% of all reported barriers.

Secondary concerns focus on psychology and teaching methods, including student mindset and commitment gaps (13.3%), weak motivational support systems (13.3%), and rigid, outdated pedagogical structures (13.3%). These challenges show that while entrepreneurship education is structurally mandatory in Nigerian universities, it remains heavily theoretical and lacks the infrastructure needed to foster real innovation.

4.5 Discussion and policy implications

4.5.1 *The paradox of attitude versus action*

The empirical results reveal a stark paradox in the Nigerian higher education ecosystem: undergraduates view entrepreneurship very positively (59.0% "Good"), yet almost all of them (93.0%) prefer traditional salary-paying jobs. This gap between attitude and action shows that entrepreneurship is often viewed as a backup plan rather than a primary career choice. Students prefer the perceived stability of public sector work (55.0%), which mirrors the career paths of their parents (37.0% civil servants).

This reflects a deep-seated cultural preference for traditional employment, driven by the volatile economic environment in Nigeria. Entrepreneurship education programs must shift from simply providing theoretical knowledge to actively changing mindsets, ensuring students view business creation as a viable, prestigious path to financial success.

4.5.2 *Necessity entrepreneurship and the capital vacuum*

The dramatic shift from a 7.0% entrepreneurship interest rate among undergraduates to a 70.0% active participation rate among graduates points to a pattern of "necessity-driven entrepreneurship". Young school leavers are not starting businesses because of a strong entrepreneurial drive, but because they face high unemployment rates upon entering the labor market.

Once thrust into the economy, these young graduates face a severe funding shortage. Because formal commercial banks present high barriers to entry (only a 16.0% adoption rate), a massive 84.0% of graduates must rely on informal networks, such as family loans or personal savings, to raise capital. This heavy reliance on informal funding limits the scale and sustainability of these startups. Without accessible micro-credit facilities, seed grants, and government-backed venture funds for young school leavers, most graduate-led businesses will remain small-scale survival operations that cannot generate meaningful employment.

4.5.3 Pedagogical reforms for effective job preparedness

The structural complaints highlighted in the Entrepreneurship Challenges Questionnaire (ECQ) show that current training methods are not effectively preparing students for the workforce. Overcrowded classrooms (20.0%) and a lack of modern equipment (20.0%) prevent the interactive, hands-on learning that is vital for business success.

When entrepreneurship courses are taught as large, lecture-based classes, they fail to build practical, real-world skills. Additionally, the widespread reliance on discounting (42.0%) rather than innovation (30.0%) among graduates shows a lack of deep competitive strategy. To improve job preparedness, Nigerian universities must move away from purely theoretical exams. Instead, they should invest in specialized business incubators, establish university-industry partnerships, offer technical workshops, and use project-based assessments that require students to launch functional micro-enterprises before they graduate.

5 Recommendations

Strategic Policy Frameworks: It is imperative to develop and implement robust strategic policy frameworks that actively promote technical education, provide sustained support for enterprise development, and vigorously encourage public-private partnerships across all levels.

Integrated National Policy: A critical need exists to seamlessly link educational policy with broader industrialization and employment policies through formalized educational interventions in entrepreneurship development. This integrated approach ensures coherence and maximizes impact.

Adequate Funding and Infrastructure: Government bodies and all relevant stakeholders must commit to supporting entrepreneurship education policies and their implementation through substantial and consistent funding, coupled with the provision of requisite infrastructure. This directly addresses the identified "trilemma" of exclusion, training disconnect, and inadequate infrastructure.

Alignment with NSQF: All entrepreneurship and skills training programs should be meticulously aligned with the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) to ensure that young Nigerians acquire skills and credentials that are recognized globally, thereby enhancing their competitiveness.

Continuous Policy Revision: Given the mixed outcomes observed over time, Nigeria's entrepreneurship education policy should undergo regular, evidence-based revisions to more effectively address the evolving challenges of youth unemployment.

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