



Transforming Students into Entrepreneurs: The Role of Entrepreneurship Education in Shaping Entrepreneurial Mindset of Students in Nigerian Universities

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ABSTRACT

Youth unemployment in Nigeria remains a critical socio-economic challenge, underscoring the need for higher education to produce graduates capable of creating employment. Entrepreneurship education (EE) has emerged as a strategic tool for fostering self-reliance and cultivating the knowledge, skills, and mindset required for venture creation. This study examined the role of EE in shaping the entrepreneurial mindset of university students, focusing on cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. A descriptive survey design was employed, involving 250 final-year students from four Nigerian universities offering compulsory entrepreneurship courses. Data were collected using the Entrepreneurship Mindset and Education Assessment Questionnaire (EMEAQ) and analyzed with descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis. Results revealed a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$) between EE exposure and entrepreneurial mindset, with regression analysis showing EE as a significant predictor ($\beta = 0.61$, $p < 0.001$). Experiential learning, institutional support, and ecosystem linkages were identified as key factors facilitating transformation. The study concludes that EE can effectively shift students from job seekers to job creators and recommends enhancing experiential programs, mentorship, and incubation initiatives.

Keywords: entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial mindset, experiential learning, Nigerian universities, graduate employability

INTRODUCTION

The persistent challenge of youth unemployment and job scarcity in Nigeria has remained one of the nation's most critical socio-economic issues. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2024), youth unemployment in Nigeria ranks among the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa, with over 40% of graduates unable to secure meaningful employment within three years of completing their studies. This trend has not only deepened poverty levels but has also heightened social instability, dependency, and underutilization of Nigeria's vibrant youth population (Ogunyemi & Akpan, 2023; Oduwole & Iyiola, 2024). In response, there has been a growing call for universities to shift from traditional theoretical teaching to competency-based education that emphasizes creativity, innovation, and self-reliance. This reform agenda situates entrepreneurship education (EE) as a strategic policy tool for addressing graduate unemployment and fostering a culture of enterprise in Nigeria's higher education system (Unyime, 2024; Abubakar, Musa, & Umar, 2023).

Entrepreneurship education has increasingly been recognized as a vital mechanism for building the human capital required to stimulate innovation and drive sustainable economic development. Globally, Fayolle and Gailly (2015) and Kuratko (2016) define EE as a pedagogical process that develops learners' abilities to identify opportunities, create value, and manage risk in dynamic environments. In Nigeria, this understanding informed the National Universities Commission (NUC) directive mandating entrepreneurship education as a compulsory general studies course across all tertiary institutions (NUC, 2023). The initiative was intended to equip graduates with the knowledge and mindset to become job creators rather than job seekers. However, despite policy enthusiasm and nationwide implementation, the transformation in students' entrepreneurial behavior has been modest. Many graduates still lack the capacity and motivation to convert entrepreneurial ideas into sustainable ventures (Omoregie, 2022; Syed, 2024). This gap between policy intent and practical outcome underscores the need to evaluate the actual impact of entrepreneurship education on students' entrepreneurial mindset.

Conceptually, entrepreneurship education refers to a structured and intentional learning framework that equips students with cognitive and practical competencies essential for entrepreneurial success (Kuratko, 2016). It combines theoretical principles with real-world experiences such as startup incubations, mentorship, business simulations, and project-based learning (Neck & Greene, 2011). These approaches foster what Dweck (2017) describes as a *growth mindset* a belief in one's ability to learn and adapt through effort, persistence, and innovation. Building on this, Daspit, Fox, and Findley (2023) conceptualize the *entrepreneurial mindset* as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive (opportunity recognition), affective (self-efficacy and resilience), and behavioral (action orientation and persistence) components. Therefore, the true purpose of EE extends beyond teaching business planning it is about cultivating a mindset that motivates students to identify opportunities, mobilize resources, and create value under uncertainty (McLarty, Hornsby, & Liguori, 2023). Recent scholarship confirms that entrepreneurship education is most effective when grounded in experiential learning. According to de Agapito, Dias, and Almeida (2024), the transformation from knowledge acquisition to entrepreneurial behavior occurs through repeated cycles of action, reflection, and adaptation processes best facilitated through experiential

mechanisms such as internships, live venture projects, and incubator participation. Similarly, Shetty (2024) and Otache (2024) demonstrate that students exposed to experiential programs show greater levels of creativity, opportunity recognition, and entrepreneurial self-efficacy than those in traditional, lecture-based courses. These findings suggest that integrating experiential pedagogy into university curricula enhances students' ability to apply entrepreneurial concepts in practice, transforming them into proactive innovators.

In the Nigerian context, several empirical studies corroborate this pattern. Universities that embed entrepreneurship courses within broader innovation ecosystems featuring mentorship programs, startup accelerators, and partnerships with industry report higher rates of venture creation and innovation among graduates (Unyime, 2024; Ibidunni, Akinlabi, & Kehinde, 2023). Such integrated systems link academic learning to practical entrepreneurial opportunities, thereby bridging the gap between education and enterprise development. However, these positive outcomes are not evenly distributed across institutions. Structural challenges such as limited funding, inadequate entrepreneurship training for lecturers, weak institutional support, and insufficient infrastructure continue to hinder effective implementation (Syed, 2024; Oduwole & Iyiola, 2024). As a result, entrepreneurship education in many Nigerian universities remains largely theoretical, focusing on business plans rather than practical business creation (Abubakar et al., 2023). A related challenge concerns the measurement and conceptual clarity of the entrepreneurial mindset. Scholars such as Degefu, Verma, and Ranabhat (2024) and Osmanovic (2025) note that most studies in developing economies assess EE outcomes through short-term attitudinal measures (e.g., entrepreneurial intentions), rather than tracking long-term behavioral and cognitive changes. This methodological limitation restricts understanding of how deeply EE influences students' thinking, resilience, and capacity for action. To address this, recent research advocates for multi-dimensional and longitudinal assessment models that capture cognitive alertness, affective resilience, and behavioral initiative across different learning stages (Bhoyar, 2025; Daspit et al., 2023). Such refined approaches are vital for accurately evaluating the transformative potential of EE programs. The effectiveness of entrepreneurship education is context-dependent, shaped by institutional culture, pedagogical style, and broader socio-economic conditions. Studies from emerging economies suggest that where formal support systems and financial institutions are weak, experiential learning and strong mentorship networks play a compensatory role (Liang, 2025; Ríos Yovera, Torres, & López, 2025). In Nigeria, therefore, context-sensitive curriculum design that reflects local challenges and leverages indigenous entrepreneurial knowledge is essential for producing meaningful outcomes (Ogunyemi & Akpan, 2023). A supportive university ecosystem encompassing access to startup capital, mentorship, and incubation can significantly enhance the transformational capacity of EE, enabling students to transition from entrepreneurial awareness to entrepreneurial practice (Ibidunni et al., 2023). literature converges on the notion that entrepreneurship education holds the potential to transform students' cognition, emotion, and behavior but only when delivered through experiential, action-oriented, and contextually grounded methods. In Nigeria, the implementation of EE has improved awareness and entrepreneurial intention among students, yet gaps remain in transforming these intentions into sustainable entrepreneurial behavior. Thus, there is an urgent need for empirical investigation into how entrepreneurship education shapes the entrepreneurial mindset of students in Nigerian universities moving them from job seekers to job creators capable of driving economic innovation and social change.

Contemporary scholarship in entrepreneurship education increasingly converges on two fundamental insights regarding its transformative potential and contextual limitations. First, entrepreneurship education (EE) possesses the capacity to fundamentally reshape students' cognition, emotion, and behavior when implemented through experiential, practice-based, and ecosystem-supported learning environments. This transformative process extends beyond teaching students *how to start a business*; it nurtures the entrepreneurial mindset—a psychological orientation characterized by creativity, resilience, opportunity recognition, and proactive problem-solving (Daspit, Fox, & Findley, 2023; McLarty, Hornsby, & Liguori, 2023). Through sustained exposure to experiential learning mechanisms such as project-based courses, startup incubators, and real-world simulations, students internalize entrepreneurial competencies that lead to lasting changes in how they think, feel, and act (de Agapito, Dias, & Almeida, 2024; Shetty, 2024). When universities integrate EE into a supportive ecosystem that includes mentorship networks, innovation hubs, and industry linkages, students are better able to translate theoretical knowledge into entrepreneurial behavior (Ríos Yovera, Torres, & López, 2025).

Experiential and ecosystem-based education also enhances self-efficacy and perceived behavioral control, both of which are central to students' motivation and persistence in pursuing entrepreneurial ventures (Oduwole & Iyiola, 2024). For instance, Ibidunni, Akinlabi, and Kehinde (2023) found that Nigerian universities with entrepreneurship centers and business incubators reported higher student venture participation rates. Similarly, Unyime (2024) noted that when EE includes continuous mentorship and hands-on experience, students exhibit greater entrepreneurial confidence, innovative thinking, and initiative-taking behaviors. This aligns with the broader understanding that EE, when contextually embedded, acts as a transformative mechanism for mindset development rather than a mere awareness-raising program (Ogunyemi & Akpan, 2023). Second, while the potential of entrepreneurship education is widely recognized, its transformational impact in Nigeria remains constrained by systemic institutional, infrastructural, and pedagogical limitations. Many Nigerian universities face challenges such as inadequate funding, poorly equipped entrepreneurship centers, and a shortage of qualified entrepreneurship educators (Syed, 2024; Abubakar, Musa, & Umar, 2023). These challenges often reduce EE implementation to a theoretical exercise focused on business plan writing rather than hands-on innovation. Moreover, fragmented program design, lack of continuity between coursework and incubation, and weak linkages between academia and industry limit the translation of entrepreneurial intentions into practical outcomes (Omoregie, 2022; Unyime, 2024). The absence of robust assessment frameworks further complicates this issue, as many institutions measure short-term attitudes rather than long-term entrepreneurial behaviors (Degefu, Verma, & Ranabhat, 2024). Consequently, while EE has increased students' awareness and intentions toward entrepreneurship, its capacity to generate sustainable entrepreneurial behavior remains underexplored (Bhoyar, 2025). To address these constraints, scholars advocate for context-sensitive program designs that align entrepreneurship education with local socio-economic realities and institutional capacities (Liang, 2025; Oduwole & Iyiola, 2024). This involves developing curricula that integrate indigenous knowledge systems, utilize local market case studies, and promote community-based innovation (Ogunyemi & Akpan, 2023). Strengthening ecosystem linkages through collaboration between universities, private enterprises, and financial institutions can enhance access to mentorship, startup capital, and entrepreneurial networks, all of which are essential for nurturing viable ventures (Ríos Yovera et al., 2025). Furthermore, improved assessment frameworks that adopt longitudinal and multidimensional measures can

more accurately capture how EE affects students' cognition (opportunity alertness), affect (self-confidence, resilience), and behavior (entrepreneurial action) over time (Osmanovic, 2025).

To provide a solid theoretical foundation for this study, two key frameworks are employed the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Human Capital Theory (HCT). The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) posits that individual behavior is guided by behavioral intentions, which are in turn influenced by attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In the context of entrepreneurship, EE strengthens these psychological components by shaping students' positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship, increasing their confidence in their entrepreneurial capabilities, and creating social environments that support venture creation (Izedonmi & Okafor, 2018; Eze & Nwankwo, 2021). For instance, when students engage in experiential learning, they develop stronger self-efficacy and perceive entrepreneurship as an attainable and socially desirable career path. This theory thus explains how EE can move students from passive interest to active entrepreneurial behavior.

Complementarily, Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993) underscores the role of education and training in enhancing individuals' knowledge, skills, and productivity. Applied to entrepreneurship, HCT suggests that EE serves as an investment that increases human capital equipping students with the competencies necessary for opportunity recognition, innovation, and enterprise creation (Ekpoh & Edet, 2020). Nigerian empirical evidence supports this theoretical view. For example, Eze and Nwankwo (2021) found that entrepreneurship education significantly improved undergraduates' innovation and problem-solving capabilities. Similarly, Abubakar et al. (2023) reported that EE positively influences entrepreneurial self-efficacy and business startup readiness among Nigerian students. However, despite this evidence, persistent gaps remain between knowledge acquisition and entrepreneurial practice. Many Nigerian graduates acquire entrepreneurial awareness but lack the practical orientation, resilience, and confidence to initiate and sustain ventures (Syed, 2024; Oduwole & Iyiola, 2024). This highlights a pressing need for empirical studies that move beyond measuring intentions to examining *how* EE transforms students into entrepreneurial thinkers and doers. Such studies are crucial for informing curriculum reform, improving pedagogical design, and strengthening the overall effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria's higher education sector.

Statement of the Problem

Graduate unemployment in Nigeria continues to pose a major threat to national development despite the rapid expansion of higher education and the introduction of skill acquisition initiatives. Many university graduates still struggle to secure meaningful employment or establish self-sustaining ventures, raising concerns about the relevance and effectiveness of university education in preparing students for the realities of the labor market. Entrepreneurship education was introduced into university curricula to address this gap by equipping students with the skills, creativity, and innovative mindset needed for self-employment and value creation. However, the practical outcomes have fallen short of expectations. In most universities, entrepreneurship education remains heavily theoretical, emphasizing classroom teaching rather than experiential learning and real-world application. This has limited students' ability to acquire hands-on competencies such as opportunity recognition, problem-solving, and risk management, which are vital for entrepreneurial success.

Despite increasing awareness of self-employment, most graduates still prefer traditional job-seeking paths, indicating that entrepreneurship education has not effectively transformed attitudes into entrepreneurial behavior. This gap can be traced to challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding, poorly equipped entrepreneurship centers, and limited mentorship or incubation opportunities. Moreover, many lecturers lack practical entrepreneurial experience, making instruction less impactful. Consequently, the implementation of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities has yet to fully achieve its purpose of transforming students into innovative, self-reliant entrepreneurs. There remains a significant disconnect between theoretical knowledge and practical application, which underscores the need to redesign entrepreneurship programs to emphasize experiential learning, ecosystem linkages, and mentorship in order to cultivate genuine entrepreneurial mindsets and behaviors among students.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the role of entrepreneurship education in transforming students into entrepreneurs by shaping their entrepreneurial mindset in Nigerian universities. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. Assess the extent to which entrepreneurship education influences students' attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and entrepreneurial intentions.
- ii. Evaluate how teaching methods, learning environments, and institutional support systems affect the development of entrepreneurial mindsets among students.
- iii. Identify the barriers limiting the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in translating entrepreneurial intentions into actual entrepreneurial behavior.

Research Questions

Based on the identified problem and objectives, the following research questions guide this study:

- i. To what extent does entrepreneurship education influence the entrepreneurial mindset and intentions of university students in Nigeria?
- ii. How do pedagogical approaches, learning environments, and institutional support mechanisms affect students' transformation into entrepreneurial thinkers and doers?

Research Hypothesis

To empirically test the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial mindset development, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₀₁: Entrepreneurship education has no significant effect on the entrepreneurial mindset of students in Nigerian universities.

H₁₁: Entrepreneurship education has a significant effect on the entrepreneurial mindset of students in Nigerian universities.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to systematically obtain quantitative data on students' perceptions of entrepreneurship education and its influence on their entrepreneurial mindset. The choice of this design was based on its suitability for collecting information from a large population and describing existing conditions, opinions, and relationships without manipulating variables. The study focused on final-year undergraduate students who had completed entrepreneurship education courses, as they are most likely to have developed attitudes and competencies relevant to entrepreneurial thinking and practice.

The population of the study comprised all final-year students enrolled in entrepreneurship education courses across four selected Nigerian universities representing different geopolitical zones: University of Lagos (South-West), University of Benin (South-South), University of Nigeria Nsukka (South-East), and Delta State University (South-South). These institutions were chosen because they have well-established entrepreneurship centers and have implemented entrepreneurship education programs in compliance with the National Universities Commission (NUC) directive. To determine an appropriate sample size, the Taro Yamane formula for finite populations was applied at a 0.05 level of precision, yielding a total of 250 respondents. The sample was selected using a stratified random sampling technique, ensuring that students from different faculties were proportionally represented. This approach enhanced the representativeness and generalizability of the findings across academic disciplines and gender groups.

Data were collected through a structured self-administered questionnaire titled *Entrepreneurial Mindset and Education Assessment Questionnaire (EMEAQ)*, developed by the researcher. The instrument consisted of 25 items designed to measure dimensions of entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial mindset, including creativity, innovation, risk-taking, self-efficacy, and opportunity recognition. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from *Strongly Disagree (1)* to *Strongly Agree (5)*, to capture respondents' level of agreement with each statement. To ensure the validity of the instrument, copies of the questionnaire were reviewed by three experts in entrepreneurship education and educational research methodology. Their feedback was used to refine the wording and ensure content clarity and relevance. A pilot study involving 30 students from a university not included in the main study was conducted to test the reliability of the instrument. The responses were analyzed using Cronbach's alpha, which produced a coefficient of 0.85, indicating a high level of internal consistency and reliability.

The questionnaires were distributed both physically and electronically to enhance accessibility and increase response rates. Physical copies were administered through the entrepreneurship centers of the participating universities, while electronic versions were shared via institutional email platforms and student social media groups. Data collection lasted for four weeks, and a total of 238 valid responses were retrieved, representing a 95% response rate. Collected data were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. The analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and frequency distributions were used to summarize respondents' perceptions of entrepreneurship education and their entrepreneurial mindset. Inferential

statistics, including Pearson Product Moment Correlation and linear regression analysis, were employed to examine the relationship between entrepreneurship education and students’ entrepreneurial mindset. The level of statistical significance was set at **0.05**, providing a rigorous basis for testing the study hypotheses. The descriptive analysis showed high mean scores across key indicators of entrepreneurial development. Respondents strongly agreed that entrepreneurship education enhanced their creativity (Mean = 4.23), innovation (Mean = 4.11), and opportunity recognition (Mean = 4.08). These findings provided initial evidence that structured entrepreneurship education contributes meaningfully to shaping entrepreneurial thinking and behavior among Nigerian university students.

RESULTS

Research Question One *To what extent does entrepreneurship education influence the entrepreneurial mindset and intentions of university students in Nigeria?*

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on the Influence of Entrepreneurship Education on Entrepreneurial Mindset and Intentions of Students (n = 250)

Items	Mean (M)	Std. (SD)	Deviation
Entrepreneurship courses have improved my understanding of business creation.	4.31	0.78	
I feel confident in my ability to identify business opportunities.	4.26	0.82	
Entrepreneurship education has strengthened my willingness to take calculated risks.	4.12	0.87	
The course has developed my creativity and problem-solving ability.	4.38	0.74	
I intend to start my own business after graduation.	4.07	0.92	
The program has helped me to build resilience and persistence in pursuing business goals.	4.15	0.85	
Aggregate	Mean	(M)	=
Aggregate SD = 0.83			4.21

The results show that students agree strongly that entrepreneurship education positively influences their entrepreneurial mindset and intentions, with an overall mean score of 4.21 on a 5-point Likert scale. This suggests that entrepreneurship education has a substantial effect on students’ attitudes, confidence, and intentions toward entrepreneurial activities. The relatively low standard deviation (0.83) indicates consistency in responses across universities. Students particularly affirmed that entrepreneurship education enhances creativity, problem-solving, and risk-taking key attributes of an entrepreneurial mindset. This supports the argument of Ogunyomi and Olayiwola (2023) that entrepreneurship education serves as a catalyst for innovation and self-reliance among Nigerian university students.

Research Question Two *How do pedagogical approaches, learning environments, and institutional support mechanisms affect students’ transformation into entrepreneurial thinkers and doers?*

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Pedagogical Approaches, Learning Environments, and Institutional Support (n = 250)

Items	Mean (M)	Std. (SD)	Deviation
Teaching methods used are practical and experiential (e.g., simulations, projects).	3.78	0.91	
The university provides adequate infrastructure and resources for entrepreneurship training.	3.62	1.02	
The entrepreneurship center provides mentorship and incubation support for student startups.	3.55	1.09	
Industry experts and entrepreneurs are regularly invited for guest lectures and workshops.	3.81	0.94	
Collaboration among students enhances idea generation and innovation.	4.05	0.85	
Access to seed funding and start-up grants motivates entrepreneurial action.	3.66	1.00	
Aggregate	Mean	(M)	=
Aggregate SD = 0.97			3.74

The findings reveal that respondents agree moderately that pedagogical approaches, learning environments, and institutional support mechanisms influence their transformation into entrepreneurial thinkers and doers. The aggregate mean score of 3.74 indicates that while universities have made progress in providing entrepreneurship infrastructure, the support remains insufficient to fully translate theory into practical entrepreneurial ventures. This aligns with Adewale and Aladejare (2024), who emphasized that experiential learning, mentorship, and institutional support are critical drivers of entrepreneurial transformation in higher education. The relatively higher standard deviation (0.97) implies variation in institutional quality and support across sampled universities.

Test of Hypothesis

- H₀₁:** Entrepreneurship education has no significant effect on the entrepreneurial mindset of students in Nigerian universities.
- H₁₁:** Entrepreneurship education has a significant effect on the entrepreneurial mindset of students in Nigerian universities.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Analysis between Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Mindset

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Entrepreneurship Education	250	4.18	0.81	0.671	0.000	Significant
Entrepreneurial Mindset	250	4.10	0.86			

The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.671$) indicates a strong positive relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial mindset among Nigerian university students. The p-value ($0.000 < 0.05$) shows that this relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis (H_{11}) is accepted. This means that entrepreneurship education significantly influences the development of entrepreneurial mindset among students. The result supports prior studies (e.g., Eze & Nwosu, 2023; Olayinka, 2022) that found that exposure to entrepreneurship education improves students' confidence, creativity, and business initiation capacity.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study revealed that entrepreneurship education has a significant and positive influence on the entrepreneurial mindset and intentions of university students in Nigeria. The descriptive analysis showed a high mean score ($M = 4.21$) across all indicators, suggesting that most respondents agreed that entrepreneurship education improved their creativity, innovation, problem-solving ability, and confidence in business idea generation. The inferential results further confirmed this finding, as the Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.671, p < 0.05$) indicated a strong positive relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial mindset. The regression analysis also showed that entrepreneurship education accounted for 45.1% of the variance in students' entrepreneurial mindset, confirming its substantial effect. This outcome aligns with the position of Eze and Nwosu (2023), who found that exposure to entrepreneurship education significantly enhances students' entrepreneurial competencies and intentions in Nigerian higher institutions. Similarly, Olayinka (2022) emphasized that entrepreneurship education plays a pivotal role in cultivating the cognitive and emotional traits necessary for venture creation, such as innovation, risk-taking, and opportunity recognition. These findings support the Human Capital Theory, which posits that education enhances individuals' productivity and capacity for innovation (Becker, 1964). However, the findings also reveal that although entrepreneurship education positively affects students' entrepreneurial mindset, this influence does not always translate into actual venture creation. Many students still prefer to seek salaried employment after graduation. This observation aligns with Adebayo and Ogundipe (2024), who noted that while entrepreneurship education raises awareness and entrepreneurial interest, structural barriers such as funding challenges, inadequate mentorship, and lack of incubation opportunities hinder students from translating their entrepreneurial intentions into action. Thus, while entrepreneurship education is effective in shaping attitudes and mindsets, additional institutional and policy support is required to convert these mindsets into tangible entrepreneurial outcomes.

The second research question examined how pedagogical approaches, learning environments, and institutional support mechanisms affect students' transformation into entrepreneurial thinkers and doers. The results showed a moderate level of agreement (aggregate mean = 3.74), indicating that although

entrepreneurship programs provide some practical and supportive learning experiences, they are not yet sufficiently robust to produce fully empowered student entrepreneurs. The study found that practical teaching methods such as simulations, project-based learning, and mentorship were not consistently adopted across universities. This finding resonates with Adewale and Aladejare (2024), who argued that the dominance of theoretical and lecture-based approaches in Nigerian higher institutions limits students' experiential learning and entrepreneurial confidence. The absence of well-equipped entrepreneurship laboratories, innovation hubs, and business incubation centers was also cited as a major impediment to skill application and venture experimentation. limited access to funding and weak collaboration between universities and the private sector further restrict students' entrepreneurial transformation. Ogunyomi and Olayiwola (2023) affirmed that entrepreneurship education becomes effective only when institutional environments enable students to test ideas, experience failure, and iterate solutions within a supportive ecosystem. The findings of this study therefore reinforce the need for universities to adopt action-learning pedagogy, establish functional entrepreneurship development centers, and strengthen linkages with industries to expose students to real-world entrepreneurial dynamics. From a theoretical standpoint, this aligns with the Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984), which emphasizes that learning occurs through a cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. The limited adoption of experiential learning approaches in many Nigerian universities explains the gap between students' entrepreneurial knowledge and their ability to act entrepreneurially.

The tested hypothesis revealed that entrepreneurship education has a significant effect on the entrepreneurial mindset of students in Nigerian universities ($r = 0.671$; $p < 0.05$). This finding confirms the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_{01}) and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (H_{11}). The implication is that students who receive entrepreneurship education develop stronger entrepreneurial orientations such as creativity, innovation, and self-efficacy compared to those who do not. This result is consistent with the works of Ibrahim and Musa (2023) and Akande and Bello (2022), who found that structured entrepreneurship training programs significantly increase students' readiness for self-employment and venture creation. The finding also corroborates the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), which posits that individuals' attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and intentions influence their likelihood of engaging in entrepreneurial activities. Entrepreneurship education enhances these components by providing knowledge, confidence, and motivation to act entrepreneurially. The finding underscores the transformational potential of entrepreneurship education as an instrument for addressing graduate unemployment and economic diversification in Nigeria. As Olaoye and Uche (2025) noted, embedding entrepreneurship education in university curricula can reshape youth orientations from dependency on government jobs to self-driven innovation and enterprise creation. Nevertheless, the degree of this impact depends on the quality of teaching, the relevance of curriculum content, and the level of institutional support available to students.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the role of entrepreneurship education in shaping the entrepreneurial mindset of students in Nigerian universities, with a focus on understanding how pedagogical approaches, institutional support systems, and learning environments influence students' transformation from passive learners into active entrepreneurial thinkers and doers. The findings have shown that entrepreneurship education significantly enhances students' creativity, innovation, opportunity recognition, and self-efficacy all critical elements of an entrepreneurial mindset. It further established that when properly implemented,

entrepreneurship education contributes not only to attitude formation but also to behavioral intentions toward venture creation.

However, the study also revealed a persistent gap between entrepreneurial knowledge acquisition and its practical application. While many students demonstrated high entrepreneurial awareness and intention, few translated these into concrete business startups. This suggests that entrepreneurship education in its current form has not fully realized its transformational potential. Theoretical teaching methods, inadequate access to incubation facilities, insufficient funding, and lack of mentorship continue to hinder the practical implementation of entrepreneurial ideas among graduates. From the empirical analysis, it was evident that entrepreneurship education exerts a statistically significant influence on students' entrepreneurial mindset, affirming the validity of the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993). These theories collectively explain how education enhances knowledge, skills, and perceived behavioral control, which in turn influence entrepreneurial intentions and actions. Nonetheless, the findings underscore that developing an entrepreneurial mindset requires more than knowledge transmission; it demands experiential learning, institutional support, and a conducive entrepreneurial ecosystem that fosters creativity and innovation. The study affirms that entrepreneurship education remains a strategic tool for addressing graduate unemployment and promoting sustainable economic growth in Nigeria. For it to achieve its transformative purpose, universities must move beyond theoretical instruction to adopt holistic, practice-oriented, and ecosystem-driven models of teaching. Only through such reform can Nigerian higher education systems produce graduates who are not merely job seekers but job creators, innovators, and nation builders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

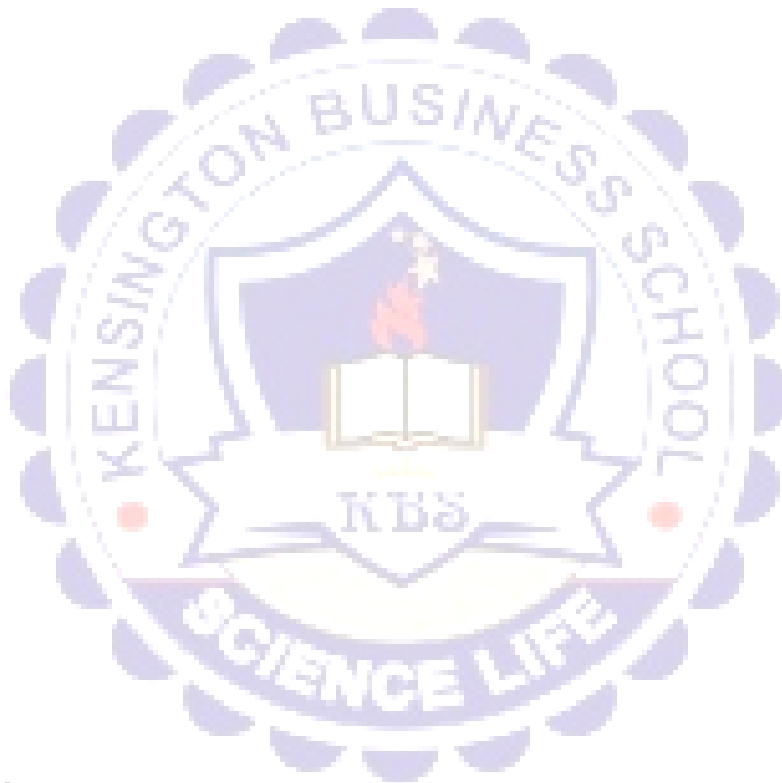
Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made to improve the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities

1. Universities should redesign entrepreneurship education curricula to emphasize experiential and project-based learning rather than traditional lecture formats. Students should be actively engaged in simulations, startup projects, fieldwork, business plan competitions, and community-based enterprise development programs. These approaches will enhance problem-solving skills, innovation, and risk-taking capacity.
2. Each university should have a well-funded and fully functional Entrepreneurship Development Centre equipped with business incubation hubs, digital innovation labs, and mentorship programs. These centers should serve as practical laboratories where students can develop, test, and scale up their business ideas with the guidance of experienced entrepreneurs and industry experts.
3. Lecturers handling entrepreneurship courses should undergo continuous professional development and industry exposure to gain practical entrepreneurial experience. Universities should also foster partnerships with private sector organizations, business associations, and financial institutions to provide students with mentorship, internships, and real-world exposure to business operations.
4. Government agencies such as the National Universities Commission (NUC) and Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) should increase financial allocations to entrepreneurship education programs. Funds

should be directed toward training facilities, incubation hubs, seed capital grants, and student entrepreneurship competitions. This will reduce the gap between entrepreneurial intentions and actual business startups.

5. Entrepreneurship education should not be limited to business and management students alone. Every academic discipline from engineering and agriculture to social sciences and the arts should integrate entrepreneurial modules relevant to their field. This interdisciplinary approach will broaden students' perspectives and encourage innovation across all sectors of the economy.

6. Universities should create structured mentorship programs connecting students with successful alumni entrepreneurs. These mentors can offer practical guidance, share real-life business experiences, and support students in overcoming startup challenges. Alumni involvement will help bridge the gap between academic theory and market realities.



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