
Bridging Policy and Practice: Curriculum and Pedagogical Reforms for Effective Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the persistent gap between policy objectives and practical implementation in Nigeria's Entrepreneurship Education (EE) system. Using an exploratory research approach and a critical literature review of studies from 2019 to 2025, the study assesses the adequacy of EE curricula for an SME-driven economy; examines dominant pedagogical methodologies and their effectiveness in achieving practical entrepreneurial competencies; and identifies the main challenges limiting the adoption of innovative, practical, and digitally relevant curricula and pedagogical models. Findings show that although EE has been formally integrated into tertiary curricula, its operationalisation remains largely theoretical and superficial - overloaded with theory and without the necessary infrastructure, personnel, or practical orientation. Pedagogy remains predominantly teacher-centred, anchored in lectures supplemented by foreign case studies that are ineffective in the Nigerian context. Major challenges are in five folds- policy-related, such as cosmetic reforms, policy inconsistency, and weak political will; human capital and pedagogical deficits, such as a shortage of entrepreneurial educators, inadequate teacher training, and assessment methods that reinforce memorisation; Infrastructural and resource limitations, such as unstable internet access, underfunding, and socio-cultural preferences for white-collar jobs. The study concludes that meaningful EE requires holistic reform in terms of curriculum overhaul for experiential learning, a shift to digital and student-centred pedagogy, strategic academia-industry partnerships, investment in capacity and infrastructure, and policy and cultural re-orientation to reposition EE as a driver of job creation, innovation, and sustainable economic development in Nigeria.

Introduction

The continuous problem of youth unemployment is considered one of the most important socio-economic threats to stability and development in Nigeria. Consequently, there has been increasing criticism of the national education sector for failing in its responsibility to adequately prepare graduates to navigate or stimulate the modern labor market (Adedeji, 2023). This kind of failure is particularly acute, given that education is generally acknowledged as a reformative process and an enduring investment in societal development and general welfare (Oyekan, 2015). In response, the Nigerian government has initiated policies, such as making entrepreneurship education part of the tertiary educational curriculum, intended to alter graduate trajectories away from job-seeking to job creation. This policy direction is based on the belief that there is a global consensus that entrepreneurship education can be one of the critical catalysts in fostering innovation, self-reliance, and economic growth (Adekunle & Olaniyan, 2019).

The economic imperative for this shift is powerfully underlined by the central role of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs). As Omotayo et al. (2019) noted, “the SMEs are the major drivers of the Nigerian economic growth and job creation. This sector is so critical that most of the countries are building their job creation strategies around SMEs.” This observation serves to underscore a basic fact that the health of the SME sector, reliant as it is on an “efficient cost of financing for growth”, is inextricably tied to the quality of entrepreneurial human capital that the system of education can produce. Thus, the quality of Entrepreneurship Education (EE) has a direct bearing on the robustness of this important economic sector. But a very disturbing disconnect remains between the theoretical frameworks created in policy documents and the at-school, experiential learning needed to produce capable and confident entrepreneurs (Ezeokeke & Nnamani, 2021). It is this disconnect between the intended outcomes of EE policies and on-the-ground realities with respect to curriculum content and teaching methodologies that this study centers on.

Despite the formal integration of entrepreneurship education into the Nigerian curriculum, its impact on developing successful high-growth entrepreneurs and strengthening the SMEs ecosystem remains suboptimal at best (Osakwe, 2021). Again, the problem is multifaceted and embedded in a huge gulf between policy aspiration and classroom realities. Today, most curricula in EE have been widely criticised as overly theoretical, rigid, and divorced from the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous realities of the Nigerian business environment (Eze, 2019). Pedagogical approaches remain largely traditional, anchored around passive lectures and case studies derived from textbooks, beyond which the critical hands-on skills, risk-taking ability, and innovative thinking crucial for entrepreneurial success are not offered in the classroom (Nwosu & Adigun, 2020).

This is made worse by a blatant mismatch between the skills generated in the classroom and the fluid competencies required by the modern SMEs sector. For example, graduates may have certificates in entrepreneurship but often lack the practical acumen to navigate real-world challenges such as access to finance, leveraging digital technologies, or managing supply chains (Kabir & Kamal, 2023). The situation is further compounded by systemic problems, which include a lack of adequate training for teachers, inadequate funding for practical aspects like business incubators, and a policy environment that does not wholly incentivise collaboration between industry and academia (Adesina et al., 2022). Consequently, the promise of entrepreneurship education being an effective tool in mitigating unemployment and fostering economic diversification, as depicted by high rates of youth unemployment and Youth not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) statistics, remains largely unrealised. This paper, therefore, attempts to explore in detail the dimensions of this misalignment in policy and practice within the curriculum and pedagogy and proposes a framework for real reforms.

This exploratory research, therefore, aims to investigate and analyse the necessary reforms in curriculum design and pedagogic strategies that would foster a strong policy-practice connection to enhance the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. In fulfilling this objective, the specific objectives are to (i) assess the present status and adequacy of EE curricula in Nigerian tertiary institutions with respect to their appropriateness to meet the needs of the SME-driven economy; (ii) determine the dominant pedagogical methodologies and their effectiveness in achieving practical entrepreneurial competencies and intentions; and (iii) identify the main challenges hampering the application of innovative, practical, and digitally-relevant curriculum and pedagogical models in Nigeria.

The research findings are expected to make a significant contribution to various stakeholders in the Nigerian education and economic spheres. To policymakers and regulatory bodies such as the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), this study offers evidence-based critique of the existing EE frameworks and gives clear directives on policy review and strategic alignment, ensuring that national educational objectives translate into tangible economic outcomes and strengthen the SME sector, as identified by Omotayo et al. (2019)

Pedagogy and Entrepreneurship Education

The concept of pedagogy, derived from the Greek Paidagogeia, refers essentially to the art and science of teaching and learning. Pedagogy, in the context of higher education, assumes practice-based presumptions and methods underlying good teaching (Kurakto & Morris, 2018). There is often a division into traditional and innovative approaches to pedagogy. Traditional pedagogy has been described as teacher-centered, where the instructor remains the dominant source of knowledge and students passively receive information through lectures and rigid curricula (Boczar & Jordan, 2022). It has been criticised for not allowing students to apply concepts learned in the classroom to real situations and scenarios, a serious weakness in a subject as applied as entrepreneurship.

By contrast, it is at this point that digital and innovative pedagogies use technology to construct dynamic, student-centered learning environments. Digital pedagogy has been described as the use of contemporary technologies in enhancing the quality of education through active student engagement in critical-skills development, creation, collaboration, and reflection (Rukman et al., 2023). This moves towards the active and experiential aspects of learning from passive theoretical approaches; therefore, it becomes increasingly imperative for entrepreneurship education. In simple terms, it aligns with the development of students' practical "know-how" and adaptive mentalities that ensure feasibility in establishing and managing ventures within a digital economy.

Historical Overview of Curriculum Reforms in Nigeria

There have been many curriculum reforms in Nigeria's education system, reflecting shifting national priorities. Following independence, the 6-3-3-4 system was implemented to reinforce technical and vocational education; this was soon followed by the 9-3-4 system, formulated to reinforce universal basic education (Uwaifo & Uddin, 2009). A major policy turn occurred in 2006 when a system of Entrepreneurship Education was formally and specifically inserted into the tertiary education curriculum to address graduate unemployment (Ajayi, 2020).

These reforms have, however, often been described as superficial rather than transformational. Recent curriculum reviews have introduced subjects such as civic education, peace, security, and climate change (Owolewa, 2025). While such curriculum changes seemingly reflect current trends in global sustainability, their actualisation continues to be thwarted by systemic issues: inadequate infrastructure, lack of teacher training, and a disconnect between curriculum content and workforce needs (Ilavbare & Anyima, 2025). The government has moved to ensure that every graduate has employable skills that reflect the orientation toward practical education, but there is little likelihood of success so long as these structural barriers are left unaddressed (Tyohemba, 2025). This history represents a trend wherein policy is articulated with great fanfare but then undermined by the failure to address the realities of its implementation, a core focus of this research.

Joseph Schumpeter's theory of innovation states that entrepreneurs are the key players for economic change, referring to it as "creative destruction": breaking down existing industries and practices to usher in new, more efficient innovations. Schumpeter categorised innovation into five types: introducing new products, new production methods, opening new markets, securing new sources of supply, and creating new organisational structures (Schumpeter, 1939). This theory provides a macro-level justification for entrepreneurship education. In essence, for Nigeria to achieve sustained economic development, the country's education system needs to churn out graduates who can serve as agents of "creative destruction." As it is, the current - often theoretical - EE curriculum is not up to this task. Reforms inspired by Schumpeter's theory would focus on developing creativity, encouraging disruptive thinking, and providing the practical skills necessary to bring innovative ideas to market, thereby aligning educational outcomes with national economic aspirations.

The Theory of the Entrepreneurial Event

The Theory of the Entrepreneurial Event (TEE) describes venture creation as the result of a "triggering event" that sets in motion an individual to act upon an opportunity that they consider credible and desirable. The intention to act is influenced by three decisive factors: Perceived Desirability refers to the attractiveness of entrepreneurship, while Perceived Feasibility concerns the belief in one's capability to succeed. Propensity to Act means the personal disposition to take initiative and action. (Shapiro & Sokol, 1982) The TEE provides a micro-level, psychological framework particularly applicable to the curriculum and pedagogy. Traditional passive pedagogy does little to enhance perceived feasibility since it provides no demonstration of capability. Reformed experiential curriculum featuring business simulations, incubators, and real-world projects can directly build feasibility beliefs through task completion. An engaging, innovative pedagogy can raise perceived desirability through dynamism and relevance while fostering a greater disposition to act via empowerment and competency building.

Intrapreneurship Theory

Intrapreneurship theory extends entrepreneurial principles inside established organisations. It refers to intrapreneurs as employees using corporate resources for innovating, developing new products, and driving strategic renewal, acting as entrepreneurs within the boundaries of their organisation. This theory critically extends the scope of relevance of entrepreneurship education (Pinchot, 1985). It challenges the narrow focus on new venture creation, arguing that EE should equally equip graduates with the ability to be innovators within the SMEs and larger corporations they join. This calls for a curriculum beyond business plan writing, including corporate innovation skills, project management within structures, and change management. Pedagogically, this calls for projects in collaboration and case studies emulating corporate settings, thereby bridging the gap between graduate skills and innovative, entrepreneurial employees sought by industry.

Empirical Review

Mahi (2025) did a qualitative study on barriers and strategic interventions for effective entrepreneurship education within the context of private higher institutions. In an emerging economy, using Institutional Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior, this study was able to point out multi-faceted barriers relating to socio-cultural resistance, poorly designed curricula, economic constraints, and insufficient educator capacity through 22 semi-structured interviews conducted with stakeholders. The research concluded that holistic reforms in dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystems are required to support entrepreneurship-centric curricula and instrumental industry collaboration for effective EE, a perspective very relevant to the Nigerian context.

In a similar vein, Shokunbi et al. (2025) conducted a systematic review of how entrepreneurship education could be aligned with corporate entrepreneurship in order to address critical skill gaps. The study, through a PRISMA-guided review of 43 peer-reviewed articles, established a supportive relationship between Entrepreneurship Education (EE) and Corporate Entrepreneurship (CE), and identified five key enhancement strategies: developing industry-focused curricula, integrating experiential learning, fostering industry collaboration, deploying technical tools, and building trainer competencies. This work positions EE as a vital bridge between academia and industry, underlining the need for pedagogical reforms that prepare graduates for both entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial pathways.

Igwe et al. (2022) focus on pedagogical innovation and conceptualise a framework for developing responsible entrepreneurial competencies. An analysis of the various existing pedagogical models leads to the derivation of the "4Rs" framework that includes re-imagining the curriculum for relevance in today's context, reconfiguring pedagogies to engage with real-world problems, reshaping curricula by collaborating with stakeholders, and reforming teaching to accommodate innovative knowledge pathways. This framework gives a systematic and actionable direction for moving from traditional, theoretical instruction toward the development of responsible and effective entrepreneurial behavior.

Focusing narrowly on the Nigerian context, Adedayo 2025 undertook a systematic review meant to explore the adoption and relevance of digital tools in entrepreneurship education. From the synthesis of sources (N=45), an adoption rate of digital pedagogies in higher education institutions within Nigeria was revealed to be strikingly low. Offering urgent recommendations for a pan-policy supportive framework involving educators' upskilling and collaborative partnerships in ethical integration of digital tools, the study warned that graduates would be unable to compete in the international digital economy without such reforms.

Further critiquing the Nigerian landscape, Ilavbare and Anyima (2025) critically appraised the depth of recent curriculum reforms vis-à-vis Sustainable Development Goal 4. Through a qualitative analysis of policy documents and expert opinions, they found that even though contemporary subjects have been included in policy documents, the reforms remain symbolic due to pervasive systemic constraints in the way of underfunding, weakened implementation frameworks, and poorly trained teachers. Their findings also serve as critical reminders that policy intent cannot be fulfilled without concomitant investments in implementation capacity.

Finally, at the sub-sector of teacher education, a descriptive survey by Agada (2024) targeted at assessing the extent of infusion of EE into the teacher training curricula in Benue State is very relevant. The data were obtained from 200 respondents and were analysed using chi-square and frequency analysis, indicating an average and fragmented infusion of entrepreneurship education. Therefore, the study proposed reforms that would be context-specific, embedding EE as a core component, fostering business partnerships, introducing mentorship, and incorporating project-based learning. This shows that the problem of inadequate curricula and lack of practical exposure extends to even foundational levels of the education system.

Synthesised empirical studies together shed light on the global consensus of persistent challenges dogging entrepreneurship education, especially in developing economies. The research has shown a wide gap between policy intent for curriculum reforms and the actual implementation, which often results in superficial changes that cannot address core issues such as outdated pedagogical methods, weak linkages between industry and academia, and a general deficiency of educator capacity, as documented in works by Mahi (2025), Ilavbare & Anyima (2025), and Agada (2024). While these studies deftly diagnose the multilayered barriers running across economic, regulatory, socio-cultural, and pedagogical dimensions, there remains a critical need for focused and contextualised analysis that bridges these generalised findings into the specific realities of the Nigerian EE landscape. This study directly addresses this gap. It moves beyond the simple diagnosis from the foundational barriers recognised in these works to a pointed discussion of the current realities, systemic challenges, and concrete, actionable way forward for curriculum and pedagogical reforms in Nigeria, thus offering a localised framework for transforming entrepreneurship education from a policy statement into effective practice.

Methodology

This adopts an exploratory research approach, adopting a critical literature review method to provide an in-depth analysis of curriculum and pedagogical reforms toward effective entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. The research is based on a desk review of literature comprising a systematic search and synthesis of peer-reviewed journal articles, books, empirical studies, and national policy documents from 2019 to 2025 that addressed entrepreneurship education, curriculum development, and pedagogical strategies within the Nigerian context and/or comparable developing economies. The literature was subjected to a thematic analysis in which data were carefully read, identified, and analysed before reporting in order to identify patterns and themes. Analysis and synthesis were guided by the research objectives on the state of the entrepreneurship education curriculum, pedagogical approach and effectiveness, implementation challenges, and proposed reform strategies. Scholarly works were thus critically evaluated and

synthesised to build a coherent narrative that bridges policy and practice, and which gives a robust representation of current academic and practical discourse on the subject in both the mainstream literature and policy arena.

Discussion

Current Realities and Appraisal of Curriculum and Pedagogy in Nigerian Entrepreneurship Education

The state of Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria is one of serious disconnection between policy ambitions and institutional realities. While EE was officially integrated into the tertiary education curriculum since 2006, its operationalisation has remained largely theoretical and superficial even to this day (Ajayi, 2020). For instance, the curriculum is often tight and loaded with theoretical lessons on how to develop business plans and carry out feasibility studies, without the needed dynamism in capturing the volatility of modern business times (Adeola, 2022).

While the inclusion of new subjects in the curriculum, such as civic education and Information and Communications Technology (ICT), has been a positive move, it has also been termed cosmetic, as they are not supported with the necessary infrastructure and personnel or practical orientation to achieve real impact (Ilavbare & Anyima, 2025). Secondly, there is a gross mismatch between what the current EE system has been imparting in terms of skills and what competencies the SME sector, which Omotayo et al. (2019) refer to as the major driver of economic growth and job creation in Nigeria, requires. Graduates often leave their entrepreneurship courses with certificates but without any practical acumen to cross real-world hurdles such as access to funding or the application of digital tools, resulting in the perpetuation of unemployment and underemployment.

Despite the strategic policy decision in 2006 to embed EE into the national curriculum in order to arrest graduate unemployment, the operationalisation of this intention has remained superficial (Ajayi, 2020). The core content of most EE programmes is overwhelmingly theoretical, structured around textbook models of business development in a manner that is both inflexible and restrictive. All too often, the curriculum gets reduced to some form of procedural checklists focusing on the drafting of business plans and the conduct of feasibility studies (Adeola, 2022). Consequently, the curriculum neglects critical thematic areas such as crisis management, pivot strategies, ethical negotiation in informal markets, and building resilience in the midst of systemic shocks.

This inadequacy is evident in the mismatch between graduate competencies and the demands of SMEs. According to Omotayo et al. (2019), SMEs are the major drivers of economic growth and employment in Nigeria, so they depend on entrepreneurial human capital that can innovate and be adaptable. However, as the profile indicates, this is not produced by the current EE curriculum. While the graduates may apply theoretical understanding, they normally have little applied, "street-smart" insight into how to handle challenges that are commonly encountered in the environment. In other words, whereas a graduate might theoretically understand how to manage finance, in practice, he or she is often ill-equipped to actually secure seed capital from an angel investor or microfinance institution; to negotiate collateral requirements, which may be highly complex; and to manage cash flow against conditions of high inflation (Kabir & Kamal, 2023). Another glaring omission is competencies related to the digital economy. Despite living in a time when digital marketing, e-commerce platforms, and fintech solutions are crucial to ensuring the competitiveness of SMEs, the curriculum trails behind, not systematically integrating modules around social media analytics, digital payment systems, or supply chain management technologies.

As such, recent efforts at reviewing the curriculum to include streams of learning in areas such as Information and Communication Technology and civic education have rightly been criticised as 'cosmetic' (Ilavbare & Anyima, 2025). These tacked-on additions lack a fundamental re-engineering of pedagogical delivery to ensure that an enabling environment is invested in. The introduction of subjects like ICT, for example, is useless without corresponding practical labs, reliable internet, and instruction targeted toward applying digital tools to solve business problems. Thus, the curriculum remains a document of intent rather than a blueprint for capability development. Instead, it perpetuates

an adaptation of a model that would produce job-seekers literate in business theory but illiterate in the practical language of business creation and innovation required to sustain the SME sector.

Dominant Pedagogical Methodologies and Their Effectiveness in Fostering Competencies

The dominant pedagogy remains decidedly teacher-centered, anchored in the lecture format where the instructor is the sole repository of knowledge and students are passive recipients (Nwosu & Adigun, 2020). Sometimes this is supplemented by the use of case studies, which again are often imported from Western contexts and thus tend to be abstract and inapplicable to the Nigerian experience. This pedagogical approach is critically ineffective for a number of reasons rooted in educational and entrepreneurial theory.

This methodology fails to build perceived feasibility, a core construct in the Theory of the Entrepreneurial Event (Shapiro & Sokol, 1982). The belief in one's capability to execute entrepreneurial tasks- feasibility is best developed through mastery experiences. Passive listening provides no opportunity for students to test skills, overcome obstacles, or experience small wins. Students cannot internalise a sense of competency without simulated or real venture experiences, thus leaving their entrepreneurial intentions fragile and theoretical. Second, traditional pedagogy is at odds with the complex suite of competencies required for entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial success requires practical, hands-on competencies like opportunity identification, prototyping, customer discovery, and iterative pitching. It also involves meta-competencies such as critical thinking, adaptive problem-solving, risk assessment, and resilient thinking. A lecture-based system, often coupled with assessment through examinations that reward rote memorisation (Agada, 2024), cannot engender such abilities. It fosters instead a "right answers" culture rather than one of experimentation, iteration, and learning from failure, the very essence of the entrepreneurial process. This methodology does little to enhance perceived desirability (the attractiveness of an entrepreneurial career) or the propensity to act. What will help students become inspired are dynamic, engaging, and relevant learning experiences. Indeed, the often-dull transmission of static theory can further entrench the perception that entrepreneurship is best left as an academic subject rather than a fulfilling and exciting career path. But this is compounded by the near absence of genuinely innovative pedagogies.

The systematic review by Adedayo (2025) confirms that the adoption of digital pedagogy in Nigerian EE is critically low. Virtual business simulations, e.g., running a simulated startup-online collaboration platforms used for working remotely in teams, and digital content creation for marketing are some of the leading-edge tools that create engaging, student-centered learning environments, none of which are utilised. The contrast with effective models is striking. For example, experiential pedagogies such as design thinking workshops force students to empathise with users and prototype solutions. Business model canvas exercises conducted for real local market gaps move theory into applied strategy. Mentorship from practicing entrepreneurs bridges the classroom and the market. In line with this proposed "4Rs" framework-re-imagining, reconfiguring, reshaping, and reforming (Igwe et al., 2022), there is a dire need for a pedagogical approach that "problematizes the real world." The continued reliance on outdated teaching methods thus represents another major point of failure, ensuring that even a potentially improved curriculum would be neutered by its mode of delivery.

Challenges Facing Curriculum and Pedagogical Reforms

The road toward real reform is paved with complex challenges across many levels. Barriers can be categorised as systemic, human capital, and infrastructural.

1. *Systemic and Policy-Related Challenges:* The widespread phenomenon of cosmetic reforms, so-called, as they do not really represent changes in core structures-is one key barrier to overcome, according to Ilavbare & Anyima (2025). This is coupled with policy inconsistency from governments, where changing regimes translate to abandoned policies, as well as a sustained deficiency in political will. Another huge gap lies in the area of

stakeholder collaboration-there is inadequate participation on the part of industry partners in the designing of curricula, so that the curricula are out of step with labour market needs (Mahi 2025).

2. *Human Capital and Pedagogical Deficits*: The effectiveness of any curriculum depends on its deliverers. In Nigeria, there is a severe shortage of academically qualified educators who are also practically entrepreneurial (Agada, 2024). Teacher training programs are few, and even fewer have not shown a reluctance toward adopting innovative, student-centered pedagogical approaches. The prevailing assessment methods strengthen rote memorisation and weaken critical thinking and practical competence, thereby reinforcing the theory-practice divide.
3. *Infrastructural and Resource Constraints*: Inadequate infrastructure seriously hinders the adoption of digital pedagogy, which is essential in today's EE. A great many institutions are without stable internet access, computers, and even simulation software. Chronic underfunding has characterised the education sector, meaning that even basic teaching aids, let alone high-tech facilities like business incubators or labs, are lacking. This problem of a digital divide is worse in rural settings and creates unequal opportunity in getting quality EE.
4. *Socio-cultural barriers*: This includes the entrenchment of a cultural penchant for white-collar jobs over entrepreneurial ventures, which continues to stigmatise business failure and discourage risk-taking among graduates and their families (Mahi, 2025).

The Way Forward: A Framework for Substantive Reforms

This requires a holistic, integrated reform framework that simultaneously targets curriculum, pedagogy, educator capacity, and the broader ecosystem to bridge the policy-practice gap.

1. *Curriculum Overhaul for Experiential Learning*: The curriculum needs to be converted from a static document into a living, experiential guide. Work-integrated learning programs, compulsory periods of business incubation, and modules on live projects with local industry form part of this. The curriculum would need to be modular and flexible to accommodate emerging trends such as digital marketing, e-commerce, and sustainable enterprise to make it directly relevant to the SMEs' needs.
2. *Pedagogical Shift to Digital and Student-Centered Models*: A non-negotiable decisive shift should be made from traditional lectures to innovative pedagogies. This includes the adoption of case studies, simulations, role-playing, and design thinking workshops. In addition, as noted by Adedayo (2025), there needs to be a focused drive to introduce digital pedagogy through online collaboration tools, virtual business simulations, and digital content creation to prepare students for the digital economy.
3. *Strategic Partnerships and Ecosystem Development*: Higher education institutions (HEIs) need to actively create strong industry-academia partnerships through joint curriculum development committees, mentorship programs comprising seasoned entrepreneurs, and internships that offer exposure to real-life settings. On-campus incubators and accelerators can be created and funded for providing the right environment for students to start and test their ventures.
4. *Investing in Educator Capacity and Infrastructure*: Reforms should focus on continuous professional development for educators in contemporary pedagogical skills, as well as in practical entrepreneurial exposure. This should be coupled with massive investment by the government and private sector in improving educational infrastructure, especially digital tools and reliable internet access that will make digital pedagogy real across the board.
5. *Enabling Policy and Cultural Re-orientation*: The government needs to create an enabling environment by introducing sustained and well-funded policies, including giving tax breaks to universities where successful incubators are set up, as well as to businesses collaborating with HEIs. This must be underpinned through a national campaign to celebrate successful entrepreneurs and re-frame failure as an opportunity to learn in order to change the socio-cultural mindset towards the acceptance of entrepreneurship.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study critically investigated the reforms that were needed in curriculum design and pedagogical strategies in order to bridge the pervasive policy-practice gap and enhance the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. The exploratory analysis, grounded in a critical review and synthesis of contemporary literature, discloses a landscape marked by serious dissonance between policy intent and educational reality. Confirmatory findings illustrate that the current entrepreneurship education curriculum in Nigerian tertiary institutions is largely theoretical and inflexible, ill-matched for the dynamic competencies needed in the modern SME-driven economy (Omotayo et al., 2025; Adeola, 2022). Pedagogical approaches remain considerably traditional, teacher-centered, and accordingly have fallen short in fostering practical, hands-on skills, risk-taking aptitude, and an innovative mindset-necessary ingredients for entrepreneurial success (Aroles & Küpers, 2022).

These are systemic and multi-dimensional challenges, ranging from cosmetic curriculum changes that are not deep (Ilavbare & Anyima, 2025), a critical shortage of practically-oriented educators, severe infrastructural and resource constraints, particularly for digital pedagogy (Adedayo, 2025)-and deep-seated socio-cultural biases that stultify entrepreneurial ventures. This study, therefore, concludes that unless these basic barriers are overcome, the promise of entrepreneurship education to act as a catalyst for job creation, economic diversification, and sustainable development will be largely unmet.

The overarching conclusion of this research is that the ineffectiveness of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria is not a failure of policy conception but a failure of implementation and alignment. The Nigerian government and educational regulatory bodies have consistently identified EE as being of strategic importance, hence its inclusion in the national curriculum. This policy vision has not been matched by a concomitant commitment to the structural, pedagogical, and resource-based reforms necessary for its successful enactment. This results in a system that churns out graduates with entrepreneurial certificates without entrepreneurial capabilities, therefore increasing instead of narrowing the gap between education and economic productivity.

This paper, therefore, makes targeted recommendations through which key stakeholders can help bridge the policy-practice gap in Nigerian entrepreneurship education. For the policymakers and regulatory bodies such as the NUC and NBTE, this means making experiential learning compulsory by revising their current accreditation benchmark to include internships, business incubation projects, and simulation-based assessment. Besides, an exclusive fund for entrepreneurship training will be very supportive of digital infrastructure and incubation hubs, while formal incentives for industry bodies and entrepreneurs to participate in curriculum reviews will ensure labour market relevance. For higher education institutions and educators, priority areas of investment should include continuous capacity building for lecturers with a view to equipping them with student-centered pedagogies such as case-based teaching and design thinking, beyond symbolic gestures towards creating fully resourced, mentor-driven incubation centres offering seed funding and even legal advice. This means systematic integration into the curriculum of digital tools and literacies as a way of preparing students for the global digital economy. To the Government and Private Sector, the paper recommends fostering public-private partnerships through policy frameworks that incentivise private investment in university ecosystems through mentorship, funding, and infrastructure support, while launching a sustained national entrepreneurship campaign to celebrate success stories and reshape societal perceptions toward entrepreneurship as a prestigious and viable career path.

This research is limited to an analytical study of entrepreneurship education in the Nigerian tertiary education system, focusing strictly on the nature and content of the curriculum - the “what” - and the pedagogical methods used for its delivery - the “how”. While the research acknowledges the critical role of other factors, such as government policy, funding, infrastructure, and the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem, these factors fall outside the scope of the study, as

the primary analytical lens is focused on the core of education: curriculum and pedagogy. Future research may focus on the specific roles and influences of the above-identified factors in shaping the nature and content of EE curriculum.

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Authors have no competing interest(s)

Authors' contributions

KAMALUDDEEN, Salmat Ayo: Conceptualisation, Writing Original draft, Literature Review, Methodology, Writing – review & editing

SALAU, Abdulazeez Ahaji: Writing Original draft, Findings and Discussion, Writing – review & editing

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