

## **ENTREPRENEURSHIP CURRICULUM IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES AND GRADUATES ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION**

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### **Abstract**

The study examined the connection between entrepreneurial curriculum in Nigerian Universities and entrepreneurial intention of graduates. It was set out to investigate if entrepreneurship education curriculum in higher institutions can necessarily educate and train undergraduates to acquire entrepreneurial skills for the purposes of reducing the high level of unemployment in Nigeria and curb social vices. The un-employability nature of Nigerian graduates has been linked to poor implementation of entrepreneurial curriculum as well as the inherent deficiencies in the curriculum contents. Relevant literatures were surveyed and entrepreneurial curriculum contents of several Universities in Nigeria reviewed. Findings from the study showed that there is a strong, positive and significant connection between entrepreneurial curriculum and graduates' entrepreneurial intentions, and that entrepreneurial curriculum contents of Nigerian higher institutions have the potentials of arousing entrepreneurial intention amongst Nigerian graduates. Arising from the findings of the study, it was recommended that the entrepreneurship education curriculum in Nigerian Universities should be re-designed and fortified to accommodate technological and digital changes that are sweeping through the 21<sup>st</sup> century entrepreneurship practices, and that innovative courses like digital and electronic marketing, information and communication technology, computer programming, etc., should be infused into the curriculum to equip students with technological skills that are in hot demand today and in the nearest future. Conventional vocational training courses like baking, cooking, beads-making, and hairdressing should be synchronized with technology-related skills like computer programming, software design, hardware repairs and maintenance, cyber security, graphic and web design to acquaint students with the latest digital technologies.

**Keywords:** entrepreneurship education curriculum; graduates' entrepreneurial intention; entrepreneurship training; skills acquisition; Nigerian higher institutions; employability of graduates

## 1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship has been identified as one of the key drivers of socioeconomic growth in developing countries, because it empowers young people to become economically independent and actualize some measure of self-sufficiency (Ramoni, 2016). Inspired by the wonders of entrepreneurial initiatives in developed countries, governments and civil society groups in developing African countries like Nigeria have sought to encourage the practice of entrepreneurship by graduates by infusing it into academic curriculums. This also comes against the backdrop of perceived inadequacy of white collar-style education that had dominated the Nigerian education system, where students are trained to be employed in imaginary jobs that no longer exist (Aladejebi, 2018).

The deliberate attempt to grow the economy of Nigeria had resulted in the exploration of several strategic options by Nigerian government. One of the courses of actions adopted by the Federal Government in pursuance of this noble objective is the introduction of entrepreneurship education curriculum in Nigerian universities, which is made compulsory for every undergraduate student, irrespective of the course/specialty pursued.

The cardinal objectives of the entrepreneurship education focus on exposing students to business skills as well as inculcating entrepreneurial interest and motivation of the students upon graduation. In other words, the business skill and motivation would very likely lead many graduates to actual business investments and practices, hence, making them self-employed and job creators.

Many development agencies, such as educational and training institutions around the world are facing the challenge of how to create an enterprise culture and many of them already provide valuable and much needed assistance such as advice and financial direction.

Education is said to be the bedrock for national development in terms of economy, science and technology, social and cultural development (Ayomide, 2022). It is an instrument for human capital development. Accordingly, universities and other skill development institutions are designed to train individuals, equip them with skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that will enable them to contribute to national development. There are many states, federal and private universities in the country. However, one of the challenges that youths in the country contend with is unemployment. The graduates from the universities are said to be unproductive (Bassey & Archibong, 2005). Effort to combat this worrisome situation has led to the introduction of entrepreneurship in the Nigerian universities curriculum. Despite the introduction of entrepreneurship education in the Nigerian Universities' curricula, the problem of massive graduates' unemployment still persists. This may be as a result of the approach through which learners are exposed to entrepreneurship education which largely affects their entrepreneurial interests and does not equip them with the relevant entrepreneurial skills for self-employment. The aim of introducing entrepreneurship education is to address lack of entrepreneurial interest among Nigerian school graduates.

Therefore, the extent to which the established curriculum and its operationalization could lead to the accomplishment of the objectives so as to attain the economic development goal became the crux which this article dealt with.

### **2.1 The Concept of Entrepreneurship**

In the dictum of Etuk and Mbat (2010), entrepreneurship means the process of through which individual and/or government either on their own or jointly exploit available economic opportunities without being scared by associated risks or inadequate resources under their control. Entrepreneurship is the process of creating something new with values, by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial, psychic and social risks, and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction and independence (Akpan, Effiong & Ele, 2012). Entrepreneurship is the innovation and risk-taking ability to identify economic opportunities and application of resources for profit making. It concerns the determination to plan, organize, and execute a business venture despite uncertainties involved with the aim of making profit.

Entrepreneurship is the deliberate process of taking calculated risks to organize factors of production (such as land, labour and capital) to establish a venture that produces or delivers products and/or services to customers to make a profit (Urbano *et al.*, 2019). It is the process whereby people recognize economic opportunities, bear some measure of risks, coordinate and management productive resources to start and expand business ventures in the hopes of maximizing profitability. Entrepreneurs are individuals that recognize economic opportunities, develop them, invest their resources and time to exploit them in order to profit from them. It is an important part of economic empowerment in both developed and developing societies because it provides the platform for individuals to harness their gifts, resources, skills and acumen to build enterprises that make them financially independent, while creating employment opportunities for others (Acs *et al.*, 2018). According to Doran *et al.* (2018), entrepreneurs are not supernatural people; they are everyday human beings that are risk-compliant and not risk-averse. This entails that entrepreneurs are keen to take advantage of calculated risks to maximize profitability and improve the quality of life in the societies they operate.

The concept of entrepreneurship is elusive, that is difficult to define and taking various meanings as it is viewed differently by different scholars with regard to the context it is employed for. For example, the psychologist (behaviourist) see it as “the need for achievement, perceived locus of control, and risk-taking propensity”. The economist looks at it as bringing together the factors of production (land, labour, capital, and entrepreneur) and bearing the risk of buying at a certain price and selling at uncertain prices. While the sociologist views it as the ability to recognize and act upon market opportunities in order to provide social services. Neither of these approaches is sound and all-embracing because each focuses upon some aspects of entrepreneurship and leaving some untouched.

Entrepreneurship embodies special knowledge and skills that spur an entrepreneur into innovative, and creative ideas that are crystallized into quick and risky business decisions that result to sustainable profitability (Nwekeaku, 2013). These innovative, creative, independent and self-reliant qualities are lacking in most of our university graduates, who have become mere white collar job seekers rather than job makers. Entrepreneurship is the engine of small

and medium enterprises in America, Europe, Asian Tigers, among other advanced countries where private sector compliments the efforts of government in the provision of employment opportunities, social securities and welfare services to the citizenry. Which is why Fritsch and Wyrwich (2017) maintain that entrepreneurship is a critical recipe for economic growth, because entrepreneurs create wealth through returns on investment, create employment opportunities and produce goods and services required to boost standards of living in the society. It also holds tremendous benefits for the individual entrepreneur themselves, because it enables them to achieve financial independence, economic stability and strive to be the best versions of themselves while maintaining an optimistic attitude towards life.

In other words, the entrepreneur is a person with the ability to see an opportunity, obtain the necessary capital, labour and other inputs, and put together an operation successfully (Wehrich, Carnice & Koontz, 2011). Entrepreneurship is the process of being an entrepreneur.

## 2.2 Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education is targeted at developing youth with the passion and multiple skills (Izedonmi & Okafor, 2010). It is aimed to reduce the risk associated with entrepreneurship thought and guide the firm successfully via its initial stage to the majority. Entrepreneurship education is designed to communicate and inculcate competencies, skills, knowledge, and values required to recognize business opportunity, organize and start new business venture (Brown, 2000). Garavan and Costine (1995) view entrepreneurship education as the process of or series of activities which aims to enable an individual to assimilate and develop knowledge, skills, abilities, values and understanding that are not simply related to a narrow field of activity but which allow a broad range of problems to be defined, analyzed and solved. This type of education emphasizes on teaching people with the passion and desired skills needed to create an entrepreneurial venture and guide the venture successfully. It seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings (Maria, 2010).

The success of entrepreneurship in transforming individuals and enhancing economic growth of economies around the world has inspired initiatives aimed at sustaining the practice of entrepreneurship across generations (Nnaji & Ahmed, 2018). One of these initiatives is to coach or teach entrepreneurial knowledge and skills to newer generations in order to build their interest and capacity to be successful entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship education is a manner of education aimed at enabling students to build and master the skills required to start, grow and manage commercial enterprises that will enable them maximize profit and achieve self-reliance. It could be provided to students through learning at formal educational institutions, vocational or technical training designed to build a collection of practical skills in students (Eze *et al.*, 2016). According to Uju and John-Akamelu (2018), entrepreneurship education is the “introduction into schools’ curricular the general knowledge for entrepreneurial skills aimed at producing potential young entrepreneurs adequately trained in practical and management techniques needed for effective running of small scale businesses”. Another view by Undiyaundeye and Otu (2017) maintains that entrepreneurship education is the process of teaching students to develop knowledge and skills that can enable them to identify economic opportunities, exploit and manage them through a commercial enterprise that guarantees return

on investment. To contribute to the foregoing viewpoint, Haddoud *et al* (2022) opined that “entrepreneurship education prepares young graduates to become entrepreneurial thinkers by exposing them to real life learning experiences where they will be required to think outside the box, take risks, manage circumstances and incidentally learn from the outcome”. As such Usman *et al* (2022) argued that entrepreneurship education is a practical and useful tool necessary to enable youths achieve financial stability, self-sufficiency and self-independence after graduation.

### **2.3 Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria**

It has been acknowledged that entrepreneurship plays a significant role within an economy, and it is an activity that can lead to economic growth. Realizing the importance of entrepreneurs in the development of the economy in Nigeria, efforts have been taken to nurture entrepreneurship in all ways. The government is continuously concerned to promote an enterprise culture among the school and university graduates to meet the objective of creating entrepreneurial and innovative society. As a result, education institutions, particularly higher education institutions, are entrusted with a new additional task, which is to contribute to the development of entrepreneurial talent among young graduates..

In 2006, President Obasanjo gave a presidential directive for the introduction entrepreneurial education (Anene & Imam, 2011). The directive was informed by two reasons. The first was to stem the disturbing spiral rise in graduate unemployment, which it was hoped that with entrepreneurship education, Nigerian graduates would become self-employed, and become even employers of labour. The second reason was the desire of the then government to make Nigeria one of the leading twenty economies of the world by 2020. It was the belief of the then President that entrepreneurship education for Nigerian undergraduates was one of the strategies for achieving this (Bamkole, 2007). The National Universities Commission (NUC) set out to implement the Presidential directive immediately,

Related to the above is the directive of the Federal Government to all higher education institutions in the country to run entrepreneurship studies programme as a compulsory course for all students irrespective of their disciplines with effect from 2007/2008 academic session, and the Commission to coordinate and ensure compliance (Ayomide, 2022). Pursuant to the above directive, the Federal Government set up a Presidential Committee on the implementation of entrepreneurship education with a broad based membership drawing from NUC, National Board for Technical Education, NBTE, Education Trust Fund, ETF, ILO, UNESCO and the Hamiltle Consult, a consulting firm on entrepreneurship education in the country with the NUC as a coordinating agency.

Nigerian universities are expected to have commenced the implementation of the government directive on entrepreneurship education. This directive, therefore, is predicted to equip their undergraduate students with the skills that would make them useful to themselves and the the country generally (Ayomide, 2022).

### **3.1 The Role of entrepreneurship education in graduates’ empowerment**

Graduates’ empowerment entails the provision of economic and social opportunities for school graduates to earn incomes and gain financial independence in order to support their families. It is critically important for school graduates to be empowered economically after graduation, especially in developing African countries like Nigeria, where employment opportunities are

scarce and inadequate to accommodate the teeming youth population. With the high rate of youth unemployment and under-employment in Nigeria, too many graduates are roaming the streets with little or chances of getting a job; and this cycle of youth unemployment is one of the leading causes of youths' involvement in criminal activities and other social vices (Peprah & Adekoya, 2020). Against this backdrop, the Nigerian Government through various entrepreneurial initiatives is trying to support young people, including school graduates to be job creators and not job seekers through support for entrepreneurship promotion programmes (Ibrahim & Mustapha, 2019).

Some of these government initiatives are the Youth Entrepreneurship Support (YES) Programme, Small & Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC), among others. Even the private sector is complementing government's efforts by initiating their own support programmes to ignite the entrepreneurial ambitions of Nigerian youths. One of those private-sector support programmes is the Tony Elumelu Entrepreneurship Programme (TEEP), which targets entrepreneurs across Africa with seed capital. The essence of these programmes is to encourage more Nigerian graduates to embrace entrepreneurship as a career, recognizing its ability to empower and liberate them from financial dismay after graduation. And across the country today, there are examples of ordinary Nigerian graduates who turned their lives around after graduation by becoming entrepreneurial instead of pursuing non-existent white-collar jobs. One example is Uche Pedro, the founder and chief executive officer of BellaNaija, a media company known for creation of content in the lifestyle and entertainment domain. She earned a Master's degree in Business Administration from the Harvard Kennedy School. Another example is Obinna Okwodu, the founder and chief executive officer of Fibre, a Nigerian real estate start-up founded in 2016 to provide middle-income tenants flexible payment options for homes around Lagos and other parts of Nigeria. For these Nigerian youths, entrepreneurship is not just a practice; it is a self-empowerment venture that has transformed their lives for the better after graduation.

### **3.2 Entrepreneurship Education Curriculum in the Nigerian Universities**

Curriculum is the totality of the content of an area of study to be imparted to its intended learners. Achor, Agogo and Dodo (2020) in Ijaiye, (2007) defined curriculum as a tool through which the needs, aspirations, interest and objectives of a society are articulated and addressed as learning experiences for the development of individuals through teaching and learning process. In its prescribed course of study. The definition of curriculum is made more elaborate and professional by Wasagu (2000) who views it as the whole spectrum of content, resources, materials and method of teaching by which the objectives of education are accomplished.

Curriculum has its origin in the running/chariot tracks of Greece (Anene & Imam, 2012). The word curriculum originated from a latin word "currere" meaning "the course to be run" (Kerr, 1968). It implies a track, a set of obstacles that an individual is to overcome, something that has a beginning and an end, and something that one aims at completing. For instance, schools have designated courses of study through which successful completion leads to certification of competence. The components of the courses are referred to as "curriculum". Kerr (1968) viewed curriculum as all the learning (experiences) which is planned and guided by the school, whether it is carried out in groups or individually inside or outside the school. According to

Ornstein and Hunkins (2004) cited in Anene and Imam (2012), the success of a new curriculum depends largely on how well those who have planned its development and implementation have perceived the needs of students.

The integration of entrepreneurship education into learning institutions around the world has led to the development of several entrepreneurship curriculums to guide educators and students as they explore the educational aspects of entrepreneurship. According to Moses and Mosunmola (2014), entrepreneurship curriculum “contains information on how students can identify and shape opportunities, assess business concepts, develop operational plans, fund and launch ventures, grow new enterprises and case studies which should be discussed in the classroom to provide students with another venue for examining entrepreneurial strategies and learning about the successes and failures of new ventures”. In American universities, it has been observed that the entrepreneurship curriculum equips students with courses, knowledge and exposure they need to build and succeed entrepreneurially after graduation. A typical example is the University of San Diego, which contains the following courses in their entrepreneurship curriculum: Principles of Financial Accounting, Creating and Growing Sustainable Ventures, Principles of Microeconomics, Entrepreneurship and New Ventures, Innovation and Design Thinking, Negotiation in a Global Business Environment, Family Business, Small Business Management, Global Social Entrepreneurship, Emerging Trends in Entrepreneurship, New Venture Finance, Business Leadership, Professional Selling, Social Media Marketing, and Digital Marketing (University of San Diego, 2023).

One of the major ways to get out of poverty is through getting a sound education that will enable the present generation to compete favourably with their counterparts in certain other countries (Isaac, 2010). In other words, finding productive engagement for our youths is the only answer to our vast development needs and the attempt to make entrepreneurship compulsory for all students will make a worthwhile alternative.

In an attempt to address the problem of youths restiveness, the 2006 presidential directive through the Federal Ministry of Education made entrepreneurship education compulsory for all students of higher educational institutions in Nigeria, effective 2007/2008 academic sessions (Yahaya, 2011, cited in Anene and Imam (2012).

Based on the Federal Government directive, entrepreneurship curriculum was established for implementation in Nigerian universities under the guidance and supervision of National Universities Commission (NUC). As at more than a decade ago, the NUC directed Nigerian Universities to establish Entrepreneurship Development Centre (EDC), to manage and co-ordinate the activities and programmes for full-implementation of the entrepreneurship curriculum, in order to achieve the Federal Government goal. According to EDC Unical (2017), the centre is saddled with responsibility of stimulating entrepreneurship consciousness among undergraduate students in theory and practice, in Nigerian universities. The NUC combined approach (curriculum) to stimulating the entrepreneurship consciousness among undergraduate students encompassed the: Theory (through teaching), Practical skill acquisition, Continuous Assessment and Examination.

The prescribed entrepreneurship curriculum is composed of Introduction to Entrepreneurship and Youth Development, for year 1 students, Entrepreneurship Theory, for year 2 students, and Entrepreneurship Practical Skills for year 3 students.

While the first two courses are meant to introduce students on the concepts and theories of entrepreneurship, the last one deals with practical skills. Some of the common practical skills which students are trained include catering, paint making, fashion and design, aquaculture, fisheries, bakery, photography, video coverage, shoe making, cosmetology, interior decoration, poultry, welding, furniture making, tiling, hair weaving, computer services, weaving, soap making, etc.

#### **4.1 Perceived Gap in Entrepreneurship Curriculum in the Nigerian Universities**

The entrepreneurship intention among university graduates has been very poor in spite of the establishment of and investment in entrepreneurship development programme in Nigerian universities. The scenario could be attributed to inadequacy of the curriculum currently used, couple with other prevalent factors within and outside the university environment such as:

##### **4.1.1 Inadequacy of entrepreneurship education curriculum**

The curriculum does not make provision for students' industrial attachment in viable small and medium scale firms outside the institutions, based on their interest, where their skill acquisition and performance effort could be scored and appropriately reported to their institutions (Entrepreneurship Development Centre). To achieve meaningful intension and skill development, the undergraduates should spend at least three weeks intensive attachment in the relevant ventures outside their institutions' EDC. The period of attachment will expose the students to work behaviour, use of equipment, clients, suppliers, customers and useful strategies for business competition. The extant curriculum has not given serious attention to training undergraduates on developing Business Plan (for specific venture of their interest), environmental scanning, and business registration, to help shape their entrepreneurial aspiration.

##### **4.1.2 Organizational gap**

Implementation of the curriculum in universities is marred by entrepreneurship lecture/training time tables conflicting with the time tables for certain other courses. This situation often lead to many students choosing to attend their departmental lectures at the expense of entrepreneurship lectures/training sessions, leading to loss of motivation and intention in future entrepreneurial activities.

##### **4.1.3 Poor training environment**

In most universities, students receive entrepreneurship lectures and training in environments that are not conducive in terms of space, lighting, lay-out, hazard prevention, public address system and ventilation. This condition could result in boredom, stress, fatigue, absenteeism, lack of concentration, poor performance, and ultimately loss of motivation, interest, and intention in entrepreneurship venture creation after graduation.

##### **4.1.4 Lack of business-oriented skill by EDC administrators**

In some universities, people who have no skill from business related discipline and are not experienced in entrepreneurship are often appointed as EDC directors. The ability to effectively manage the human aspect of the centre as well as other resources require serious managerial skill. Also, since the centre is aimed at training the undergraduate to acquire relevant business venture skills, know how to establish and run businesses, it therefore, means that the need to consider professional competence in the appointment of administrator of Entrepreneurship



Development Centre (EDC) cannot be overemphasized, as this could significantly affect the implementation of the curriculum in universities.

Absence of trainers retraining programme could keep people off track with developments in the external environment as they affect businesses. Also, trainers relationship with co-workers and students could be defective especially, if they (trainers) lack interpersonal skill. This could be improved through effective train-the-trainers (retraining) programme.

The entrepreneurship curriculum in place in most Nigerian universities is fraught with technical, vocational and innovative weaknesses, hence undermining the entrepreneurial prowess of undergraduates. The reason that scholars like Moses and Mosunmola (2014) believe the curriculum to be inadequate to the demands of today's world is centered on its over-emphasis on theory rather than practice. It also lacks innovation in the sense that students are not taught innovative 21<sup>st</sup> skills like data engineering, software development, artificial intelligence, big data management, and other technological trends that are already shaping the entrepreneurial landscape of today and will certainly be the entrepreneurial focus of future investors. As a consequence, students graduate into the labour market ill-equipped with the kind of technical and digital skills that are required for success in today's digitized work environment.

#### **4.1.5 Other challenges confronting entrepreneurial education in the Nigerian universities include:**

- Unfavourable curriculum: The extent to which entrepreneurship education curriculum inculcates entrepreneurial skills in undergraduates is very poor.
- Entrepreneurial studies is allocated little time in the school timetable (once a week) while students are not given opportunity for IT.
- Poor funding of the universities and inadequate entrepreneurship education facilities such as adequate hall for teaching and learning of entrepreneurship education, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) gadgets are not adequately provided for students as well as in adequate entrepreneurial skills acquisition equipment.
- Students are not exposed to facilitators or practical trainers who can organize workshops and seminars. Also, the entrepreneurship education pedagogies used by lecturers in the universities are poor.
- Poor facilities like incessant power outage, poor network of roads and lack of pipe borne water. Yet, after graduation, government is hesitant in giving soft loans to graduate business starters.
- The quality of resource persons used to teach entrepreneurship education in the Nigerian universities is poor. Most of the lecturers in entrepreneurship education appear not to possess the requisite knowledge to impart entrepreneurial skills in undergraduates..

#### **4.2 Perceived undergraduates' lack of interest in entrepreneurship**

As a consequence of the weak entrepreneurship education curriculum in Nigerian universities, some undergraduate students do not fully appreciate and value the practice of entrepreneurship, because they do not understand its rudimentary potential. It would be surprising to conduct a quick survey of 5 undergraduate students in any random Nigerian university and realize that 3 of them may not even know who an entrepreneur is, much less what they do and how they operate in the society. In some students' communities, entrepreneurship is used synonymously

with business as if they mean the same thing. Students still lack a full appreciation of the concept and practice of entrepreneurship, and that can be tied directly to the weak entrepreneurship education curriculums prevalent in Nigerian universities (Moses & Mosunmola, 2014). And so, if Nigerian students do not fully understand the meaning and imperatives of entrepreneurship, it then begs the question – how will they be interested in walking an entrepreneurial path after graduation? It is no wonder why admissions into Nigerian universities are mostly skewed towards perceived professional courses like Law, Medical Allied disciplines, banking and finance, accounting, insurance, engineering, among others (Abdullahi, 2021).

This is because most Nigerian potential undergraduates already have the mindset of working white-collar jobs after graduation; hence they are not interested in taking an entrepreneurial path. Often times, the reality check comes after graduation, when Nigerian graduates spend two or three years without employment despite their perceived professional certificates (Ayomide, 2022). At this stage, they begin to lose faith in their credentials and start imagining ways to leverage their God-given potential and skills to strive for self-reliance and financial independence. This is when most of them begin the entrepreneurial journey, and most times, they realize that formal education at the university was out of touch with the demands of the real world. Then, they reach for various kinds of hands-on vocational training, apprenticeship and craftsmanship to prepare them for the demands of self-employment through entrepreneurship. This is how most Nigerian graduates begin their entrepreneurial journeys after graduation (Olufemi, 2020).

### **4.3 Perceived Undergraduate Interest in Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship study has been identified as a strategic instrument having the potentials to enhance employability and curtail unemployment across the nations of the world, especially in developing nations. It is, therefore, no gainsaying that entrepreneurship education is a panacea to graduates' unemployment and a booster to their employability and self-employment. In light of this, educating undergraduates on entrepreneurial skills is expedient for job creation and the nation's economic growth and development. The role of entrepreneurship study in solving graduates' unemployment and enhancing nation's development is laudable and undergraduates need to capture and acknowledge the intention of the Federal Government by introducing entrepreneurship education into the curriculum of Nigerian Universities. This should form their perception of the relevance of entrepreneurship study to their university education.

The perceived interest of undergraduates is simply their conception and belief about entrepreneurship study, entrepreneurial skills to be acquired and intentions to start their ventures after graduation. The right perception of undergraduates of its relevance will enhance their reasoning and attitudes towards acquiring entrepreneurial skills and the overall achievement in entrepreneurship education. It would also lead to ventures creation by students after graduation thereby reducing graduates' unemployment. Thus, achieving the Federal Government proposed outcomes which informed the integration of entrepreneurship education curriculum as a matter of compulsion in all Nigerian Universities, aiming at enhancing entrepreneurship development will be feasible. The perceived interests of undergraduates would supposedly be enhanced through entrepreneurship education which includes sensitization and in turn promote entrepreneurship development in the country.

Universities authorities are now intensifying efforts to sensitize undergraduates on the need for acquiring entrepreneurial skills. Bamiro, (2012) explains that private and public sectors across the countries of the world are now trying to chart a direction for growth and development through knowledge, information and innovation which centres on universities as eminent members of the knowledge industry. Universities, being eminent members of the knowledge industry should wake up to the task of educating undergraduates in entrepreneurial skills. However, achieving the objectives of entrepreneurship in universities would depend on the perception of entrepreneurial interests of undergraduates (Ayomide, 2022; Henry, Hill, & Leitch, 2003).

The right perception of the relevance of entrepreneurship by undergraduates in universities would act as a catalyst in the overall achievement in the learning of entrepreneurial skills by the Nigerian youths. It was expected that at entry, undergraduates may not have been well informed of the relevance of entrepreneurship study and this could have an implication on their perception. The perception of undergraduates at entry into the university may be enhanced as they are being exposed to entrepreneurship study year after year. Expectantly, the perceived interests of undergraduate entrepreneurial skills to be acquired and their intentions to start their ventures would have been positively influenced and improved at graduation.

In a study by Chen and Liwen (2019), it was assumed that university status and ownership is a factor that could influence the perception of undergraduates of the relevance of entrepreneurship study. For instance, the implementation of the Federal Government policy on entrepreneurship education is capital intensive and federal universities may be favourably funded compared to State Universities. This may as well lead to diverging of opinion or perception of the scheme by students of the institutions. Maria, Felipe and Mario (2018) investigated the influence of the university environment (public and private) universities on the entrepreneurial intentions of students in Brazil. The results show that there is no evidence of a difference in the influence of public and private university environments on entrepreneurial intentions of the students, but they express the desire to learn about entrepreneurship. Another study by Wong (2007) found that federally owned universities are well structured and can influence undergraduate interests of entrepreneurship. Ubogu (2013) provided evidence that quality assurance and supervision of entrepreneurship activities enhances student perception on the relevance of entrepreneurship.

From the foregoing, it is a known fact that the graduates of universities are increasingly adding up annually without equivalent vacancies for the white-collar jobs and the Government has made efforts to curb graduates' unemployment through the introduction entrepreneurship education to universities programmes. The success of this development however depends on the perceived interest of undergraduates; if undergraduates perceive entrepreneurship study as relevant to their university education, it will make positive impacts on youth empowerment and job creation.

## **5 Conclusion**

Based on the reviewed literature, it is concluded there that a successful development of entrepreneurial activity depends on the students' entrepreneurial interest and intentions. The extent to which entrepreneurship education curriculum inculcates entrepreneurial skills in undergraduates is very poor. The quality of resource persons used and the methodology

employed by lecturers in teaching entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities are inadequate and obsolete. The curriculum lay too much emphasis on theory rather than practical entrepreneurial skills. In addition, entrepreneurship education facilities such as lecture halls and seats, ICT services, and equipment for skills acquisition are either inadequate or totally absent.

The study has revealed that the entrepreneurship curriculum in use by most Nigerian universities is out of touch with the demands of practical entrepreneurship environment dominated by innovation, creativity, digitization and the internet. As a consequence, rather than spur students' entrepreneurial interests and actively support them to establish and build successful ventures of their own, the system is producing millions of graduates who end up being unemployable in the labour market. This therefore reveals the need for a curriculum review from a holistic perspective, with a view to upgrading it and retrofitting it with the requirements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century entrepreneurship practice. It is believed that the 21<sup>st</sup> century entrepreneurship skills acquired through the entrepreneurship programme will develop the intention and aspiration of the students toward venturing into self-employed endeavours after graduation.

## **6 Recommendations**

In line with the major observations made in existing literature, the following recommendations are presented for possible consideration by players in the Nigerian education sector:

1. The manner of entrepreneurship education delivery in Nigerian universities needs to be moved away from theories-based teaching to practice-based teaching that opens students' minds to the realities of real-world entrepreneurship. Instead of draining students with excessive theories-based assignments, practical entrepreneurial tasks such as registering a business, creating corporate brands, running business advertisements and operating a business software should be given to students in order to familiarize them with the demands of today's digital entrepreneurship environment.
2. There is need for the entrepreneurship education curriculum in Nigerian universities to be re-designed and retrofitted to accommodate the technological and digital changes that are sweeping through 21<sup>st</sup> century entrepreneurship practice. Innovative courses bordering on digital and electronic marketing, information and communication technologies, and computer programming should be infused into curriculum to equip students with technology skills that are in hot demand today and in the nearest future.
3. Instead of offering conventional vocational training choices like baking, cooking, beads-making, and hairdressing to students, more technology-related skills like computer programming, software design, hardware repairs and maintenance, cyber security, graphic and web design should increasingly be introduced to acquaint students with latest digital technologies in vogue in today's labour market.
4. University students should be encouraged and given the space to engage in on-campus entrepreneurial activities, such as starting and running retail stores in order to nurture and sustain their interest in entrepreneurship. Through such experience, students will be better prepared to take the entrepreneurial journey after graduation in the event of unavailability of white-collar jobs.

5. The curriculum should define when students should mandatorily write and defend business plan on areas of interest (could be as group projects) to be certified for the programme completion. The certificate issued could serve as a condition for accessing loan or grant from government for venture creation after graduation.
6. Entrepreneurship lecture/training time table should be drawn at the university central timetable level to avoid conflict in period and venue for any lecture or training. This will help students to properly plan for lectures, training and other activities, hence, making their programmes interesting and motivating.
7. Conducive environment should be provided for entrepreneurship lectures and training. Skill acquisition centres should be adequate in terms of space, ventilation, lighting, audition, equipment, hazard prevention, etc. The conducive environment could make training very attractive, interesting and reduce absenteeism, stress, and boredom to the barest level, and fast-track skill acquisition, which can facilitate future business ownership.
8. Entrepreneurship Development Centre of Universities should be headed by people with relevant skills and expertise. The notion of the basic concepts and theories that constitute the entrepreneurship development programme as well as the skills of business formation, principles and functions of managing, marketing, accounting, finance, and human resource could glaringly guide university management on appointment of EDC directors.
9. Re-training of trainers is very vital in helping them keep pace with developments in the dynamic business environment. Re-training could as well develop trainers' interpersonal relationship skills, and facilitate effective interaction with the students and co-workers in the EDC.
10. The introduction of entrepreneurship education at both primary and secondary school so that a solid foundation would be laid at a lower level before university education. This will enhance graduate commitment of the curriculum and boost their entrepreneurial interests at the university level.

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