

Assessing the Role of Entrepreneurship Education in Reducing Youth Unemployment in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This literature review examines the influence of entrepreneurship education on youth employment and skill development based on findings synthesized from peer-reviewed research published within the last decade. The review draws on studies conducted primarily in developing countries, particularly sub-Saharan Africa with a focus on Nigeria, retrieved from academic databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, JSTOR, and ResearchGate using keywords including “entrepreneurship education,” “youth employment,” “skill acquisition,” and “economic empowerment.” The review reveals that entrepreneurship education significantly enhances youth employability by fostering entrepreneurial intentions, promoting self-employment, and reducing dependence on limited formal job opportunities. It also contributes to the development of vocational, technical, and managerial skills relevant to the labor market. However, its effectiveness is constrained by limited institutional support, inadequate funding, lack of qualified instructors, and theoretical-oriented instructional approaches. Overall, the literature indicates that entrepreneurship education plays a strategic role in economic and social empowerment of youth when effectively implemented, and calls for curriculum reform, practical-based training, and stronger school–industry partnerships to maximize impact.

1. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship education has garnered significant attention globally as a pivotal mechanism to address youth unemployment and equip young individuals with essential vocational and mechanical skills. Entrepreneurship education is often grounded in human capital theory, which posits that education enhances individuals' skills and knowledge, thereby increasing their productivity and employability (Manafe et al, 2023). Human capital theory provides a lens through which the benefits of entrepreneurship education can be assessed, suggesting that it equips students with the skills and competencies necessary to create and manage new ventures (Wu et al, 2022). Entrepreneurship education refers to the structured teaching of the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required to recognize opportunities, marshal resources, and initiate and manage business ventures. It is an interdisciplinary field that integrates concepts from business, economics, sociology, psychology, and education to foster an entrepreneurial mindset and capabilities (Bismala et al, 2024).

The primary aim of entrepreneurship education is to equip learners with the competencies needed to develop new businesses, foster innovation, and contribute to economic growth. This education encompasses a range of topics, including opportunity recognition, business planning, financial management, marketing, and leadership (Wardana et al, 2020). Additionally, it emphasizes soft skills such as creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, resilience, and adaptability. Entrepreneurship education can be introduced at various educational levels, from primary schools to universities and even through lifelong learning programs (Sitaridis & Kitsios, 2024). At the primary and secondary levels, the focus is often on developing an entrepreneurial mindset, encouraging creativity, and fostering basic business skills through experiential learning activities such as project-based learning, simulations, and collaborative projects (Tran et al, 2024). In higher education, more advanced topics are covered, including venture creation, innovation management, and strategic entrepreneurship. These programs often involve practical components such as internships, mentorship, and the development of actual business plans (Raharjo et al, 2023).



Moreover, entrepreneurship education is not limited to the creation of new businesses; it also prepares individuals to be entrepreneurial within existing organizations, a concept known as intrapreneurship (Wardana et al, 2020). This aspect of entrepreneurship education is crucial for fostering innovation and competitiveness within established companies. The value of entrepreneurship education extends beyond economic benefits. It promotes personal growth, self-efficacy, and a proactive approach to life and career (Handayati et al, 2020). It encourages youths to take initiative, embrace change, and seek out opportunities in their professional and employment. Youth employment refers to the engagement of young individuals, typically between the ages of 15 and 24, in paid work or entrepreneurial activities that provide them with a means of income, skill development, and social integration (Njora & Yilmaz, 2022). This period of life is critical as it often marks the transition from education to the labor market, shaping future career trajectories and economic stability.

In today's rapidly evolving global economy, youth unemployment remains a persistent and pressing challenge. The International Labour Organization (ILO) reports that the global youth unemployment rate is consistently higher than that of adults, highlighting the significant barriers young people face in securing stable and meaningful employment (ILO, 2021). One promising solution that has garnered considerable attention is entrepreneurship education. By equipping young people with the skills, knowledge, and mindset necessary to start and manage their own businesses, entrepreneurship education is posited to be a powerful tool in combating youth unemployment and fostering skill development.

Despite the potential benefits, there is a noticeable gap in the empirical evidence supporting the direct impact of entrepreneurship education on youth employment and skill development. Many educational institutions and policymakers advocate for the inclusion of entrepreneurship curricula, yet comprehensive studies examining its effectiveness and long-term outcomes are limited. This gap presents a critical need for rigorous research to substantiate the claims and understand the nuanced impacts of entrepreneurship education on youth.

The need for this study is underscored by several factors. Firstly, the persistent high rates of youth unemployment highlight the urgent need for innovative solutions. Entrepreneurship education offers a potential pathway for young people to create their own job opportunities, thus reducing reliance on traditional employment sectors, which may be saturated or in decline. Secondly, entrepreneurship is a key driver of economic growth and innovation. By fostering entrepreneurial skills among youth, economies can benefit from increased business creation, innovation, and economic diversification. Understanding how entrepreneurship education contributes to these outcomes is crucial for designing effective educational policies and programs. Thirdly, beyond employment, entrepreneurship education is believed to enhance a broad set of skills, including critical thinking, problem-solving, and resilience. These skills are valuable not only for entrepreneurial ventures but also for general employability in a dynamic job market. However, the specific skills imparted and their relevance to both entrepreneurship and traditional employment need to be empirically verified.

While the theoretical benefits of entrepreneurship education are well-documented, several gaps and problems persist in the current body of research. There is a lack of longitudinal studies, with most existing research being cross-sectional and not tracking the long-term impacts of entrepreneurship education on youth employment and skill development. Longitudinal research is needed to assess whether the initial benefits observed are sustained over time. Additionally, the impact of entrepreneurship education may vary significantly across different educational contexts and cultural settings. Many studies focus on developed countries, leaving a gap in understanding its effectiveness in developing countries where youth unemployment rates are often higher, and educational resources may be more limited.

Furthermore, there is a lack of standardized metrics to measure the success of entrepreneurship education programs. Studies often use varied indicators, making it difficult to compare results and draw general conclusions. Developing robust and consistent measures of both employment outcomes and skill development is essential. Moreover, most studies focus narrowly on either employment outcomes or skill development, but few examine the holistic impact of entrepreneurship education. A comprehensive approach that considers both direct and indirect effects, including personal development and societal benefits, is necessary. Addressing the gaps and problems in the existing research on the impact of entrepreneurship education on youth employment and skill development is critical. This study aims to provide robust evidence and deeper insights into how entrepreneurship education can effectively contribute to alleviating youth unemployment and enhancing skill development.

2. METHOD

This study employed a literature review (review study) design. The design was considered appropriate since it enabled a systematic, objective, and critical examination of existing scholarly works related to entrepreneurship

education, youth employment, and skill development. The study relied on secondary data obtained from peer-reviewed journal articles, academic reports, policy documents, conference papers, and credible electronic publications published within the last ten years. Through this approach, the study synthesized various theoretical perspectives and empirical findings to generate a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between entrepreneurship education and youth empowerment.

The focus of the review was on studies related to entrepreneurship education and its implications for youth skills and employment, with specific contextual attention to developing countries, particularly Nigeria. The selection of literature emphasized studies conducted in sub-Saharan Africa due to the region’s shared socio-economic characteristics, such as high youth unemployment rates and limited access to formal job opportunities. Special consideration was given to previous research conducted in Anambra State and similar geographical contexts to ensure relevance. The review included literature sourced from reputable scholarly databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, JSTOR, ResearchGate, and Semantic Scholar, using keywords like entrepreneurship education, youth employment, skill acquisition, and Nigeria.

Data collection was conducted through systematic literature search and selection. Inclusion criteria were established to ensure quality and relevance, including: (1) studies published between 2013 and 2024, (2) publications written in English, (3) research focused on entrepreneurship education and youth development, and (4) sources from peer-reviewed journals or institutional reports. Exclusion criteria eliminated duplicate publications, non-academic sources, and studies lacking methodological clarity. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flow model guided the selection process. A data extraction matrix was developed to categorize information such as author(s), year, study context, methodology, findings, and relevance to the review objective.

The collected literature was analyzed using content analysis and thematic analysis techniques. The analysis involved comparing and synthesizing findings from different authors to identify recurring themes, trends, and gaps. Thematic categories that emerged from the literature included: (1) the role of entrepreneurship education in promoting youth employment, (2) entrepreneurship education and vocational skill development, and (3) challenges in the implementation of entrepreneurship education. Validity and reliability of the review were reinforced through source triangulation and cross-validation by comparing findings from multiple studies. The review findings were logically interpreted to build coherent arguments and answer the research objectives.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Table1. Assessing the Role of Entrepreneurship Education in Reducing Youth Unemployment in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Nigeria

Author(s) & Year	Focus of Study	Key Findings	Relevance to Current Study
Arinze et al. (2025)	Graduate Entrepreneurship Fund and Youth Economic Inclusion	Financial support, entrepreneurship training, and entrepreneurial networking significantly influence youth economic inclusion in Onitsha North LGA.	Directly examines the impact of entrepreneurship education and support mechanisms on youth economic inclusion in the study area.
Oraka & Okechukwu (2025)	Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development in Onitsha North LGA	Identified critical entrepreneurial skills include risk-taking, adaptability, networking, market research, time management, and management skills.	Provides insight into the specific skills that entrepreneurship education should focus on to reduce youth unemployment.
Osaro-Martins et al. (2025)	Private Costs and Benefits of Entrepreneurship Education in Lagos State	Entrepreneurship education positively impacts graduate employability, though financial constraints affect students from low-income backgrounds.	Highlights the importance of accessible entrepreneurship education in enhancing employability among youths.
Jacob & Ehijiele (2019)	Role of Entrepreneurship	Entrepreneurship education aids in developing skills for self-	Supports the argument that entrepreneurship education is

Author(s) & Year	Focus of Study	Key Findings	Relevance to Current Study
Ezeanokwasa (2025)	Education in Reducing Unemployment in Nigeria Effective Entrepreneurship Skills in Reducing Unemployment	employment, thereby reducing unemployment rates. Identified key entrepreneurship skills that contribute to small business innovation and unemployment reduction.	a viable solution to youth unemployment. Offers practical insights into the skills that should be emphasized in entrepreneurship education programs.
Sheila & Ngozi (2022)	Youth Entrepreneurship and Unemployment Reduction in Anambra State	Found significant positive relationships between creativity, opportunity discovery, and employment generation.	Demonstrates the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in reducing unemployment through skill development.

The literature converges on the conclusion that entrepreneurship education is a powerful tool for reducing youth unemployment in Onitsha North LGA. Its effectiveness depends on a combination of practical skill development, motivational support, financial and institutional backing, and alignment with local socio-economic conditions. However, barriers such as limited access to resources, inadequate mentorship, and policy gaps can hinder the full potential of these programs. Therefore, a comprehensive approach that integrates education, skills training, financial support, and policy implementation is necessary to maximize the impact of entrepreneurship education on youth employment.

Discussion

The role of entrepreneurship education in enhancing youth employment has been widely studied and documented. Findings show that entrepreneurship education significantly contributes to youth employment in various ways, which aligns with multiple recent studies. First, the assertion that all individuals who pursued entrepreneurship education are self-employed is supported by a study by Tuan (2023), which found that a large majority of entrepreneurship graduates start their own businesses. This finding agrees with the results, indicating that entrepreneurship education equips youths with the skills and confidence to become self-employed. Contrastingly, the claim that one cannot be employed without entrepreneurship education is disputed by Mittal & Raghuvaran (2021), who observed that while entrepreneurship education enhances employability, it is not the sole determinant of securing employment. Many other factors, including technical skills and networking opportunities, also play crucial roles.

The study also reveals that youths can be self-employed with the knowledge acquired from entrepreneurship education. In a related study, Jena (2020) found that entrepreneurship education provides essential business management skills and innovative thinking, which are critical for self-employment. This concurs with the findings, reinforcing the idea that such education prepares youths for entrepreneurial ventures. Furthermore, the notion that youths can secure government employment through entrepreneurship education is supported by Lose (2016), who reported that many government programs and initiatives favor candidates with entrepreneurial skills. This finding aligns with the results, showing that entrepreneurship education can enhance prospects for government employment. Lastly, the perception that entrepreneurship education is compulsory for every youth or graduate is echoed in a study by Bharucha (2019). They argue that incorporating entrepreneurship education in the curriculum is essential for developing a versatile and resilient workforce. This aligns with the findings, suggesting the necessity of such education for all youths. Overall, the study rejects the null hypothesis and accepts the alternative hypothesis, demonstrating that entrepreneurship education significantly helps youth to be gainfully employed in Onitsha North Local Government Area. This finding is consistent with other recent research, which underscores the importance of entrepreneurship education in fostering both self-employment and traditional employment opportunities for youths.

Entrepreneurship education plays a pivotal role in enlightening youths on vocational and mechanical skills, which are essential for both self-employment and traditional employment opportunities. This assertion is supported by multiple recent studies. Firstly, the idea that entrepreneurship education equips youths with skills to be self-employed when they cannot find payable jobs is corroborated by Friday et al, (2023), who found that such education significantly enhances youths' abilities to identify and exploit business opportunities. This finding agrees with the notion that entrepreneurship education fosters practical skills necessary for self-employment. Furthermore,

entrepreneurship education providing employment opportunities is reinforced by Hameed & Irfan (2019), who demonstrated that graduates of entrepreneurship programs are more likely to secure employment, either through starting their own businesses or being hired for their innovative skills. This finding aligns with the view that entrepreneurship education broadens employment prospects.

In contrast, the high rate of unemployment resulting from inadequate entrepreneurship education is highlighted in a study by Adaeze (2019), which noted that regions with less emphasis on entrepreneurship education face higher unemployment rates. This finding emphasizes the critical role of entrepreneurship education in addressing unemployment. Additionally, the idea that the uneducated can be self-employed via skills acquired in entrepreneurship education is supported by Ayolugbe et al, (2019), who observed that even individuals with limited formal education can succeed in business with the right entrepreneurial training. This finding underscores the transformative power of entrepreneurship education in empowering all youths.

However, the assertion that entrepreneurship can help you be self-sufficient, though not self-reliant, is nuanced. Anyigor-Ogah (2023) argue that while entrepreneurship education promotes self-sufficiency by providing essential skills, true self-reliance also requires ongoing support and resources. This finding suggests that entrepreneurship education is a crucial, but not sole, factor in achieving self-reliance. Overall, the study rejects the null hypothesis and accepts the alternative hypothesis, indicating that entrepreneurship education significantly enlightens youths on vocational and mechanical skills in Anambra State. This conclusion is consistent with recent research, which highlights the importance of entrepreneurship education in equipping youths with the practical skills needed for various employment avenues.

5. CONCLUSION

The study on the impact of entrepreneurship education on youth employment and skill development in Anambra State underscores the transformative potential of entrepreneurship education. The findings reveal that entrepreneurship education is crucial in enhancing youth employment and skill acquisition, equipping young people with the necessary tools to navigate the job market and fostering self-employment opportunities. Firstly, the study demonstrates that entrepreneurship education significantly contributes to youth employment. Graduates of entrepreneurship programs are more likely to secure jobs, either through starting their own businesses or being hired due to their innovative and entrepreneurial skills.

Secondly, the study highlights the role of entrepreneurship education in skill development, particularly vocational and mechanical skills. These skills are essential for self-employment and improving employability in various sectors. The research supports the notion that even individuals with limited formal education can benefit significantly from entrepreneurship training. The study also identifies a critical gap: the high rate of unemployment in areas with inadequate entrepreneurship education. This underscores the importance of integrating entrepreneurship education into the broader educational framework to mitigate unemployment and foster economic growth. In conclusion, entrepreneurship education is a vital catalyst for youth employment and skill development. It provides young people with the knowledge, skills, and mindset needed to succeed in an ever-changing job market. Policymakers, educators, and stakeholders must prioritize entrepreneurship education to harness its full potential, thereby empowering youths and driving sustainable economic development. This study provides a strong foundation for further research and policy initiatives aimed at

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