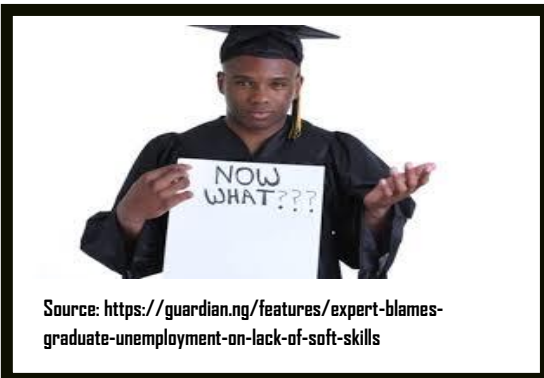




How Relevant and Effective are the University Entrepreneurship Programmes in Addressing Graduate Unemployment in Nigeria?

POLICY BRIEF

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Source: <https://guardian.ng/features/expert-blames-graduate-unemployment-on-lack-of-soft-skills>

WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

Until the 1980s, the notion that automatic employment would be secured in the public sector immediately after university graduation prevailed in Nigeria. However, from around 1985 when the Federal Government began a push towards a private sector-driven economy, the burden of employment generation was also shifted to the private sector. Sadly, the private sector, operating in a weak and unfavourable business and investment climate, could not undertake the task sufficiently.

Unfortunately, most of the young graduates lacked the skills required to tap into the emerging modern economy and, therefore, remained largely unemployed. What the universities did next are examined in this policy brief.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Graduate unemployment is a major concern in many developing countries, including Nigeria. Despite the increasing number of university graduates, job opportunities remain scarce, leading to high unemployment rates and associated social problems. This is worrisome as it translates to a bulging youthful, energetic unemployed population with no contribution to the economic growth of the country. There are about 308 degree-awarding institutions in Nigeria, admitting a population of about two million students and graduating about 600,000 students yearly (RipplesNigeria, 2024). Most of the graduates, if not all, possess no practical skills that meet the immediate recruitment needs of employers of labour. To bridge the gap, entrepreneurship education programmes were introduced in the universities. The relevance and effectiveness of the programmes in addressing the graduate unemployment build-up are examined in this brief, using statistical data and interviews with key stakeholder drawn from a NISER study.

Findings indicate that, while entrepreneurship programmes are integrated into university curricula, the overwhelming evidence suggests that the programmes have not been effective in addressing graduate unemployment in Nigeria. This is largely attributed to inadequate entrepreneurship education delivery method in which the teaching method predominates as opposed to the more effective experimental/practical method obtained in polytechnics and related institutions.

Key Recommendations:

- ✓ University administrations should ensure that lecturers use a combination of teaching method, experimental and practical sessions, industrial training and internships, excursions, group learning, and seminars/workshops to effectively impart entrepreneurial knowledge and skills.
- ✓ Stakeholder agencies in the public and private sectors (SMEDAN, CBN, FIRS), and NGOs should provide adequate funding, grants, start-up capital, tax exemptions, incentives, and capacity-building opportunities for graduate entrepreneurs.

1.1 Background

The employment of graduates has become a pressing issue in developing countries, including Nigeria where the country's unemployment rate is put at 33.3% with exclusive graduate unemployment of 42.5% (NBS, 2023). The International Labour Organisation (ILO), in a publication titled “Unemployment with Advanced Education”, linked graduate unemployment in Nigeria to the phenomenon of jobless economic growth, increased number of graduates with no matching job opportunities due to disconnect or mismatch between academic programmes and labour market realities, etc. (ILO, 2024), resulting in increasing graduate unemployment. This has led to various social problems, such as crime and militancy among the youth.



Source: <https://www.ripplesnigeria.com/feature-as-graduates-increase-yearly-and-jobs-dwindle-heres-one-way-to-solve-the-problem/>

Thus, entrepreneurship education programmes were introduced in Nigerian universities in 2006 to address this issue of graduate unemployment by fostering self-employment and self-reliance among graduates. However, its impact on graduate employment largely remains unclear, and this is addressed in this brief, using statistical and interview data drawn from a NISER study on the subject.

2.0 FINDINGS

2.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Information on the entrepreneurship programme is derived from youth aged between 21 and 30 years, with a mean age of 25 years. They comprised 52% males, and 46% females.

A further breakdown by type of institution attended indicates that 83% attended universities and 16% attended polytechnics/monotechnics. 73% of the institutions were publicly owned and 17% privately-owned. Of these respondents, 35% are in the sciences and technology, 30% in management and social sciences, and 26% in arts and humanities.

2.2 Techniques of Delivering Entrepreneurship Education Curriculum

Results indicate that teaching method is predominantly used in universities (55.8%) while experimental/practical method is more common in polytechnics/monotechnics (42.1%).



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/NIBScollege/posts/school-of-engineering-june-intake-is-still-onenroll-for-the-following-coursesart/2107646159285924/>

All respondents, irrespective of type of institution attended, affirmed the experimental/practical method as the most effective for the impartation of entrepreneurial skills to students.

2.3 Relevance of Entrepreneurship Education to Graduate Employment

Most of the respondents did not perceive the current entrepreneurship programmes in the universities as relevant to enhancing graduate employment. This aligns with another case which found no significant association between

entrepreneurship programmes and graduate employment in Nigeria (Ghasi et al., 2021).

2.4 Factors Constraining against Effective Implementation of Entrepreneurship Programmes in Universities

Constraints on effective entrepreneurship programmes in the universities reported by respondents include insufficient funding (82.2%), inadequate training materials (59.3%), poor mentoring (41.9%), poor access to marketing networks (40.7%), obsolete workshop equipment (39%), and lack of qualified instructors (36.4%).

2.6 Conclusion

Entrepreneurship education, without compromising academic values, aims to develop students' creativity, job-related skills, and talents. However, the current programme delivery method in Nigerian universities do not significantly improve graduates' employment prospects. Addressing the constraining factors is crucial to making the programmes relevant and effective in enhancing graduate employment and contributing to economic growth in Nigeria.

2.7 Recommendations

- i. **Review and Update Entrepreneurship Education Curricula:** The National Universities Commission (NUC) should review and ensure that university entrepreneurship education curricula are consistent and functional. Universities should invest in experienced professors, updated infrastructure, and comprehensive entrepreneurship education curricula.
- ii. **Diverse Teaching Techniques:** University administrations should ensure that lecturers use a combination of teaching method, practical exercises, industrial training, excursions, group learning, internships and seminars/workshops to impart entrepreneurial knowledge effectively.
- iii. **Support for Graduate Entrepreneurs:** Government agencies (SMEDAN, CBN, FIRS), NGOs, and other organisations should

provide adequate funding, grants, start-up capital, tax exemptions, incentives, and capacity-building opportunities for graduate entrepreneurs.

- iv. **Collaboration for Enhanced Entrepreneurship Education:** The NUC and National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) should collaborate to restructure the NYSC SAED programme and streamline the entrepreneurship education policy in universities.

Implementing these recommendations will help enhance the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities, thereby improving graduate employment prospects and contributing to the nation's economic development.

Further Reading

Afolabi, M. O., Kareem, F. A., Okubanjo, I. O., Ogunbanjo, O. A. & Aninkan, O. O. (2017). Effect of entrepreneurship education on self-employment initiatives among Nigerian science & technology students.

Agbonlahor, A. A. (2016). Challenges of Entrepreneurial Education in Nigerian Universities: Towards a Repositioning for Impact. *Journal of Educational and Social Research* MCSER Publishing, Rome-Italy 6(1).



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**This Policy Brief draws on a NISER Study on Enhancing Graduate Employment through
Entrepreneurship Education in Nigerian Universities**