

## Measures for Improving the Entrepreneurial Skills Development of University Students in Nigeria

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### Abstract

*The study employed a descriptive survey design and was conducted across all universities in Cross River State. The population consisted of 1,724 students in the Faculty of Education, with 820 male and 680 female students. Data was collected using a 12-item structured questionnaire titled Measures for Improving the Entrepreneurial Skills Development of University Students (MIESDUSQ). The questionnaire items were designed on a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. To ensure the instrument's reliability, a trial test was conducted on 60 students from the Faculty of Education at Ebonyi State University, who were not part of the primary study population. The reliability coefficient was calculated using the Cronbach Alpha method, resulting in a score of 0.74. Research assistants aided in distributing the questionnaire to the respondents. The analysis of research questions was performed using mean and standard deviation; mean scores above the cut-off value of 2.50 indicated agreement, while scores below 2.50 indicated disagreement. Additionally, the t-test statistic was employed to test the null hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance. The study's findings indicated that curriculum enhancement and alignment with industry needs, along with access to practical training and mentorship programs, significantly improve the entrepreneurial skills of university students in Nigeria. In other words, implementing these strategies would enhance the development of entrepreneurial skills among university students in Nigeria. Based on these findings, it was recommended, among other things, that universities establish robust practical training programs to provide students with real-world experiences. This could include mandatory internships, cooperative education placements, and hands-on workshops in collaboration with local businesses and industries.*

**Keywords:** *Measures, improving, entrepreneurial skills and development of University students*

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## Introduction

In recent years, the urgency for effective entrepreneurial skills development among university students in Nigeria has become increasingly pronounced. The escalating unemployment rate, particularly among graduates, underscores the critical need for equipping students with the skills necessary to thrive in a fiercely competitive job market. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2021), Nigeria's overall unemployment rate has reached a staggering 33.3%, with youth unemployment at an even more alarming level, reflecting a systemic issue in the country's labor market. This crisis indicates a significant gap between the competencies acquired through traditional education and the expectations of employers in various sectors, highlighting the inadequacy of conventional educational systems in preparing students for the realities of the labor market (Osuala, 2016). As a result, there has been a compelling call for a shift towards entrepreneurial education as a viable and necessary solution (Nwosu, et al., 2022).

Entrepreneurial skills development transcends merely instructing students on how to establish their own businesses; it encompasses a broader spectrum of competencies essential for navigating today's dynamic economic landscape (Bessong, et. al., 2022). This includes critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and an innovative mindset (Adebayo & Ojo, 2019). These competencies are not only vital for individual success but also crucial for fostering a robust culture of entrepreneurship that can stimulate economic growth and generate employment opportunities within Nigeria (Abang, and Atah, 2022). The integration of entrepreneurial education into university curricula has been advocated as a strategic approach to address the widening skills gap and to inspire self-employment among graduates (Adeniyi & Olaniyan, 2020). Moreover, a well-structured entrepreneurial education program has the potential to cultivate an entrepreneurial spirit among students, motivating them to identify and pursue new opportunities, thus contributing positively to their communities and the national economy (Mokogwu, 2020).

Despite the recognition of the importance of entrepreneurial skills development, several significant challenges hinder its effective implementation among university students in Nigeria (Atah, 2019; Idika, et al., 2023; Ukah, and Atah, 2022 and Chukwurah and Atah, 2019). These obstacles include inadequate funding for educational programs, a lack of trained instructors with real-world experience, insufficient infrastructure to support practical training, and a curriculum that often fails to align with current industry needs (Yusuf & Adebayo, 2021). To address these challenges effectively, universities must adopt comprehensive measures aimed at enhancing the quality and relevance of entrepreneurial education (Ukah, and Atah (2021). This may involve establishing partnerships with industries to create internship and mentorship opportunities, providing practical training sessions that equip students with hands-on experience, and fostering a supportive ecosystem that nurtures entrepreneurial initiatives (Odukoya & Odukoya, 2021).

One of the fundamental measures for improving entrepreneurial skills development in Nigerian universities is the enhancement and alignment of curricula with industry needs (Atah, and Abeng, 2019). A curriculum that is adapted to the realities of the job market equips students with practical and relevant skills, fostering entrepreneurial competencies that support economic growth (Adeniyi & Olaniyan, 2020). For many years, Nigerian higher education has been heavily theoretical, focusing on knowledge transmission rather than on cultivating critical thinking, problem-solving, and innovation -skills crucial for entrepreneurship (Adebayo & Ojo, 2019). In response, there is a growing call for universities to integrate entrepreneurial education that emphasizes experiential learning, case studies, and project-based assignments aligned with

industry standards (Chukwurah and Atah, 2019). By doing so, students are not only exposed to the challenges and opportunities in the business world but also trained to approach them with an entrepreneurial mindset (Atah, and Alabi, 2024).

Research underscores the importance of industry-aligned curricula in fostering an entrepreneurial culture among students. Adeniyi and Olaniyan (2020) argue that aligning university programs with industry needs ensures students graduate with skills that are both in demand and practical for launching their ventures. For instance, courses that incorporate problem-solving within industry-relevant scenarios allow students to better understand market dynamics and gain skills directly applicable to starting and sustaining a business (Yusuf and Adebayo, 2021). Similarly, partnering with local industries to introduce emerging business concepts, tools, and technologies in the classroom enhances students' entrepreneurial acumen. By integrating these approaches, Nigerian universities could bridge the current gap between theoretical learning and practical skill-building, preparing graduates who are not only employment-ready but also capable of creating job opportunities (Chukwurah, et al., 2023)

In addition to curriculum improvements, providing students with access to practical training and mentorship programs is essential for developing entrepreneurial skills (Akeke, et al (2023). Practical training, through internships and real-world exposure, allows students to gain hands-on experience in navigating business challenges, understanding market demands, and developing business solutions (Odukoya & Odukoya, 2021). Such training goes beyond classroom theory, immersing students in environments where they can apply entrepreneurial concepts and experiment with business models (Atsu, et al., 2021). For instance, universities could collaborate with local entrepreneurs, business incubators, and industry leaders to provide students with internship opportunities, workshops, and on-campus incubation programs that enable them to develop and test their business ideas under real market conditions (Yusuf & Adebayo, 2021). Mentorship programs further strengthen entrepreneurial skill development by pairing students with experienced entrepreneurs and business professionals who offer guidance, insights, and industry knowledge (Otum, and Atah, 2021).

According to Mokogwu (2020), mentorship fosters a learning environment where students can learn directly from experienced professionals, gaining insights into both the challenges and rewards of entrepreneurship. Mentors provide invaluable support, helping students navigate the uncertainties of starting a business and fostering resilience, which is crucial in entrepreneurship. This exposure to entrepreneurial role models not only builds confidence but also enhances students' business acumen, problem-solving skills, and capacity for innovative thinking (Atah, and Ukah 2021). Studies have shown that entrepreneurial mentorship and practical training have significant positive effects on graduates' career paths and their likelihood of pursuing self-employment (Osuala, 2016). By gaining direct exposure to the workings of businesses, students are better equipped to identify viable market opportunities, understand customer needs, and develop robust business plans (Ukah and Atah, (2021). Together, access to practical training and mentorship offers a dual approach that bridges the gap between academic learning and real-world entrepreneurial experience, laying a strong foundation for students to contribute meaningfully to Nigeria's economy.

The present study seeks to identify and analyze various measures for improving entrepreneurial skills development among university students in Nigeria, thereby providing valuable insights that can inform policy and practice within higher education institutions. By addressing these issues, the study aims to contribute to the creation of a more robust educational framework that supports the entrepreneurial aspirations of students, ultimately leading to greater economic empowerment and resilience within the nation.

## **Problem Statement**

The development of entrepreneurial skills among university students in Nigeria is critical for addressing the country's high unemployment rates and fostering economic growth. However, there are significant barriers that impede the effective cultivation of these skills within the higher education system. The traditional educational framework often emphasizes theoretical knowledge over practical application, leaving students ill-prepared to navigate the complexities of the modern job market. As a result, many graduates find themselves lacking the necessary competencies to either secure employment or establish their own businesses. Inadequate funding for entrepreneurial education programs further exacerbates this issue, limiting the resources available for training, mentorship, and practical experience. Moreover, there is a noticeable scarcity of qualified instructors who possess both academic credentials and real-world entrepreneurial experience. This lack of trained personnel inhibits the delivery of high-quality entrepreneurial education and mentorship that students require to develop their skills effectively.

Additionally, the existing curriculum in many Nigerian universities frequently fails to align with the current demands of the industry. This misalignment creates a disconnect between what students learn and the skills needed in the workforce, further diminishing their employability and entrepreneurial readiness. Compounding these challenges are infrastructural deficiencies, including inadequate access to technology and facilities that support hands-on learning and innovation. Therefore, there is an urgent need to investigate and implement effective measures for improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria. This study aims to identify the specific challenges faced by students and educational institutions in fostering entrepreneurial skills and to propose actionable solutions that can enhance the quality and impact of entrepreneurial education. By addressing these gaps, the study seeks to contribute to the broader goal of reducing unemployment and promoting sustainable economic growth in Nigeria.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to determine the Measures for improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine;

1. Curriculum Enhancement and Industry Alignment for improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria,
2. Access to Practical Training and Mentorship Program for improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What are the curriculum enhancement and industry alignment for improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria?
2. What are the access to practical training and mentorship programme for improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria?

## Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female students on the curriculum enhancement and industry alignment for improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria?
2. Significant difference does not exist in the mean responses of male and female students on the access to practical training and mentorship programme for improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria.

## Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design and was conducted across all universities in Cross River State. The population consisted of 1,724 students in the Faculty of Education, including 820 male and 680 female students. A 12-item structured questionnaire, titled Measures for Improving the Entrepreneurial Skills Development of University Students (MIESDUSQ), served as the data collection instrument. The questionnaire items were designed on a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. To ensure reliability, the instrument was trial-tested on 60 Faculty of Education students from Ebonyi State University, who were not part of the primary study population. The reliability coefficient was calculated using the Cronbach Alpha method, yielding a score of 0.74. The questionnaire was distributed to respondents with the assistance of research assistants. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the research questions. Mean scores above the cut-off value of 2.50 indicated agreement, while scores below 2.50 indicated disagreement. Additionally, the t-test statistic was applied to test the null hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance. The hypothesis was not rejected if the calculated t-value was equal to or greater than the critical t-value.

## Research Question 1

What are the curriculum enhancement and industry alignment for improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria?

**Table 1: Mean responses of male and female technical students on the curriculum enhancement and industry alignment for improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria. N=1500**

S/N	Items on Curriculum Enhancement and Industry Alignment	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	The curriculum should includes current entrepreneurial concepts aligned with industry standards	3.41	0.83	Agreed
2	The courses should focus on critical entrepreneurial skills like innovation and adaptability	2.87	0.75	Agreed
3	The content should aligns with job market skill demands	3.56	0.81	Agreed
4	The Industry experts should contribute real-world insights to course delivery.	3.34	0.78	Agreed
5	Students should be engaged in projects reflecting real-world entrepreneurial challenges	2.98	0.77	Agreed
6	The Curriculum should be regularly updated to incorporate industry trends.	2.78	0.94	Agreed

<b>Cluster Mean</b>	<b>3.15</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Agreed</b>
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The results of the analysis in Table 1 reveal a strong consensus among respondents on the significance of curriculum enhancement and industry alignment for fostering entrepreneurial skills development among university students. Respondents agreed that the curriculum should incorporate current entrepreneurial concepts that are aligned with industry standards, as reflected by a mean score of 3.41. This alignment is seen as crucial for equipping students with relevant knowledge that can be directly applied in the entrepreneurial landscape.

Additionally, respondents endorsed the importance of focusing on critical entrepreneurial skills such as innovation and adaptability, with a mean score of 2.87. While this score is slightly lower, it still suggests that developing these competencies is perceived as a vital component of an effective entrepreneurial education. Similarly, there was strong agreement (mean score of 3.56) that course content should align with the skill demands of the job market. This finding highlights the importance of preparing students with practical, market-oriented skills that increase their employability and entrepreneurial potential.

Further, respondents supported the involvement of industry experts in course delivery, which achieved a mean score of 3.34. This inclusion of real-world insights is valued for its ability to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and industry realities. Engagement in projects that mirror real-world entrepreneurial challenges was also favored, with a mean score of 2.98, indicating that practical experience is regarded as essential for skill acquisition. Finally, there was agreement, albeit weaker (mean score of 2.78), on the need to regularly update the curriculum to keep up with industry trends. Overall, with a cluster mean of 3.15, the results suggest a general consensus that curriculum enhancement and industry alignment are essential measures for developing entrepreneurial skills among students. The standard deviation of 0.81 reflects a moderate level of consistency in responses.

### Research Question 2

What are the access to practical training and mentorship programme for improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria?

**Table 2: Mean response of male and female students on the practical training and mentorship programme for improving the entrepreneurial skills development of University students in Nigeria. N=1500**

S/N o.	Items on Access to Practical Training and Mentorship Program	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	The students should have access to internships that provide hands-on entrepreneurial experience	2.98	0.77	Agreed
2	The university should offers practical workshops focused on entrepreneurship skills.	3.38	0.88	Agreed
3	Mentorship programs should pair students with experienced entrepreneurs for guidance.	3.56	0.94	Agreed
4	Business incubators or start-up labs should be available to support student projects.	3.78	0.92	Agreed

5	Students should receive feedback from mentors to improve their entrepreneurial skills.	2.79	0.71	Agreed
6	Networking opportunities with industry professionals should be provided to students.	3.09	0.75	Agreed
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>3.26</b>	<b>0.82</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

The data in Table 2 indicate a strong agreement among respondents on the importance of practical training and mentorship programs as critical measures for enhancing entrepreneurial skills development among university students. Specifically, there is consensus (mean score of 2.98) that students should have access to internships that offer hands-on entrepreneurial experience, highlighting the perceived value of real-world exposure in preparing students for entrepreneurship. The results show even stronger support (mean score of 3.38) for universities to offer practical workshops focused on developing entrepreneurship skills. Workshops are seen as vital in providing structured learning experiences that directly address the competencies needed for entrepreneurship. Additionally, mentorship programs that pair students with experienced entrepreneurs received high agreement, with a mean score of 3.56, underscoring the belief that guidance from seasoned professionals can significantly enhance students' entrepreneurial abilities.

There was also substantial agreement (mean score of 3.78) on the need for business incubators or start-up labs to support student projects, which suggests a recognition of the role that such facilities play in fostering innovation and providing resources for student-led initiatives. Receiving feedback from mentors was agreed upon with a mean score of 2.79, indicating that regular feedback is seen as beneficial for skill improvement, though with slightly lower emphasis compared to other items. Lastly, networking opportunities with industry professionals were also endorsed (mean score of 3.09), as these connections are believed to expand students' perspectives and potential for collaboration.

Overall, with a cluster mean of 3.26 and a standard deviation of 0.82, the responses show consistent support for the integration of practical training and mentorship programs in entrepreneurship education. The findings highlight a clear consensus that these elements are instrumental in enhancing students' entrepreneurial readiness.

### Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female students on the curriculum enhancement and industry alignment for improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria

**Table 3: Summary of t-test analysis of mean responses of students on curriculum enhancement and industry alignment for improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria based on gender.**

Gender	N	t	df	Sig.	Mean Diff.	SE dif.	Decision
Male	820						
		1.876	1.498	0.892	2.785	1.564	NS
Female	680						

*N=Number of respondents, NS=Not Significant.*

The study aimed to assess the differences in mean responses between male and female students regarding the impact of Curriculum Enhancement and Industry Alignment on improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria. The analysis involved a total of 1,500 students, with 820 males and 680 females participating in the survey. The results indicated a t-value of 1.876, with degrees of freedom calculated as 1.498. The significance level was found to be 0.892, which is well above the conventional threshold of 0.05. The mean difference in responses between male and female students was recorded at 2.785, suggesting a numerical disparity in their perceptions. However, given the high p-value of 0.892, the difference was determined to be statistically insignificant.

Consequently, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, concluding that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female students regarding the Curriculum Enhancement and Industry Alignment for enhancing entrepreneurial skills development. This indicates that both male and female students share similar views on the importance of these educational strategies in fostering their entrepreneurial competencies.

**Hypothesis 2:**

Significant difference does not exist in the mean responses of male and female students on the access to practical training and mentorship program for improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria.

**Table 4: Summary of t- test analysis of mean scores of students on the access to practical training and mentorship program for improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria based on gender.**

Gender	N	t	df	Sig.	Mean Diff.	SE diff	Decision
Male	820						
		1.735	1.312	0.786	2.675	1,456	NS
Female	680						

*N= Number of respondents, NS= Not significant*

The result of t-test analysis in Table 4 showed that there is a significant difference in the mean responses of male and female students regarding access to practical training and mentorship programs and their impact on improving entrepreneurial skills development among university students in Nigeria. The analysis included a sample of 1,500 students, with 820



males and 680 females providing their insights. The results showed a t-value of 1.735 and degrees of freedom of 1.312. The significance level was calculated to be 0.786, which exceeds the conventional alpha level of 0.05.

The mean difference between the responses of male and female students was recorded at 2.675, indicating a numerical disparity in their perceptions of the importance of practical training and mentorship programs. Despite this mean difference, the significance level of 0.786 suggests that the difference is not statistically significant.

As a result, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, concluding that no significant difference exists in the mean responses of male and female students concerning Access to Practical Training and Mentorship Programs for enhancing entrepreneurial skills development. This finding implies that both male and female students perceive these programs similarly in their potential to support their entrepreneurial skill development.

### **Discussion of Findings**

#### *Curriculum Enhancement and Industry Alignment for improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria,*

The finding of the study revealed that curriculum enhancement and industry alignment improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria, The findings highlight the significant potential of Curriculum Enhancement and Industry Alignment in improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria. This assertion is reinforced by several empirical studies, which collectively advocate for the integration of practical training, mentorship, and real-world experiences into educational programs. Support for these findings is evident in the research conducted by Khan, Abdullah, and Omar (2021), who explored the effectiveness of a revised entrepreneurship curriculum designed to align more closely with industry needs. Their study revealed that such a curriculum significantly improved students' entrepreneurial skills, particularly in areas like business planning and market analysis. This aligns well with the current study's conclusion that curriculum alignment with industry demands enhances students' preparedness for future entrepreneurial endeavors. By incorporating industry feedback and real-world experiences, educational programs can equip students with the relevant skills necessary for a competitive job market.

Additionally, the work of Farooq, Farooq, and Khan (2022) emphasizes the importance of university-industry partnerships in enhancing curriculum relevance. Their research found that students involved in collaborative projects with industry partners demonstrated improved entrepreneurial competencies. This underscores the necessity of creating an educational environment that fosters collaboration between academic institutions and industries, further supporting the notion that curriculum enhancement and industry alignment are critical for the development of entrepreneurial skills.

The study by Adekola, Osabohien, and Olubunmi (2020) also contributes to this discourse by examining the relationship between practical training initiatives and the development of entrepreneurial skills. Their findings indicated a strong correlation between access to practical training and enhancements in key entrepreneurial skills, such as innovation and financial

literacy. This reinforces the argument that integrating practical training into the curriculum is essential for equipping students with the skills they need to succeed in entrepreneurship.

However, it is important to acknowledge some counterarguments. While the findings suggest that curriculum enhancement and industry alignment are beneficial, there are challenges associated with implementing such initiatives. Institutions may face difficulties in forming effective partnerships with industry, which can include misaligned objectives, limited resources, or inadequate infrastructure. These obstacles can hinder the successful integration of practical training and real-world experiences, potentially limiting the positive impact on students' entrepreneurial skill development. Moreover, the variability in student outcomes must be considered. While empirical studies show generally positive results, the effectiveness of curriculum enhancement and industry alignment may differ among student populations. Factors such as socioeconomic background, access to resources, and individual motivation can influence how much students benefit from these initiatives. Thus, although the overarching argument supports the findings, not all students may experience the same level of skill development through enhanced curricula. Another point of contention is the potential overemphasis on practical skills at the expense of theoretical knowledge. While practical training and industry alignment are crucial, a balanced curriculum that also prioritizes foundational theoretical concepts is necessary for comprehensive entrepreneurial education. An imbalance could lead to graduates who possess hands-on experience but lack the theoretical understanding needed to navigate complex entrepreneurial challenges effectively.

In conclusion, the findings of the current study align with the empirical works of Khan, Abdullah, and Omar (2021), Farooq, Farooq, and Khan (2022), and Adekola, Osabohien, and Olubunmi (2020), collectively supporting the idea that curriculum enhancement and industry alignment are vital for improving the entrepreneurial skills of university students in Nigeria. While the arguments in favor of these initiatives are compelling, it is crucial to recognize the challenges and nuances associated with their implementation. A balanced approach that combines practical training, theoretical knowledge, and collaboration with industry stakeholders is likely to yield the best outcomes for developing students' entrepreneurial competencies. The result of the hypothesis revealed that, there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female students on the Curriculum Enhancement and Industry Alignment for improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria

*Access to Practical Training and Mentorship Program for improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria.*

The finding of the study revealed that access to practical training and mentorship programme improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria. This conclusion is supported by various empirical studies that underscore the critical role of mentorship and practical training in enhancing students' entrepreneurial competencies. In their study, Dyer and Handler (2021) examine the impact of mentorship on entrepreneurial competence among university students. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the researchers gathered data through surveys and interviews with students and their mentors from different institutions. Their findings demonstrate that mentorship positively influences various entrepreneurial skills, including opportunity recognition, risk management, and innovation. The authors highlight that structured mentorship programs, which provide ongoing support and

guidance, are vital for fostering the necessary skills for entrepreneurial success. This aligns with the current study's assertion that mentorship plays a crucial role in developing students' entrepreneurial capabilities.

Supporting this perspective, Olawale and Garba (2022) conducted a study focusing on the role of practical training in enhancing entrepreneurial skills among students in Nigerian universities. Their research employed a quantitative design to assess students' experiences with practical training programs. The results revealed a strong correlation between participation in practical training and improvements in entrepreneurial competencies, particularly in business planning, marketing strategies, and financial management. The authors concluded that integrating practical training into the curriculum is essential for equipping students with the skills needed to thrive in entrepreneurial endeavors. This reinforces the current study's finding that access to practical training is instrumental in developing entrepreneurial skills.

Additionally, Adeyemi and Abubakar (2020) explored the effectiveness of mentorship and practical training programs, further emphasizing their importance. Their research employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather insights from students involved in mentorship and training initiatives. The findings highlighted that access to these programs significantly enhances students' entrepreneurial skills, especially in real-world applications. The study recommends that universities strengthen their entrepreneurial support systems by fostering partnerships with industry stakeholders to offer more comprehensive training and mentorship opportunities. This recommendation resonates with the current study's findings and suggests that a more structured approach to mentorship and training could yield better outcomes for students.

Despite these compelling arguments in favor of mentorship and practical training, it is essential to consider potential counterarguments. One challenge is the variability in the quality and accessibility of mentorship programs across different institutions. Not all universities may have the resources or structures in place to provide effective mentorship, which could lead to disparities in student outcomes. This inconsistency raises questions about the overall effectiveness of mentorship initiatives and their ability to uniformly enhance entrepreneurial skills.

Furthermore, while practical training is beneficial, it is important to consider whether all students may have equal access to these opportunities. Factors such as socioeconomic background and geographical location can impact students' ability to engage in practical training programs. If access to these opportunities is limited, the potential for enhancing entrepreneurial skills could be unevenly distributed among students, leading to an inequitable educational experience. Another consideration is the balance between practical training and theoretical knowledge. While practical experiences are crucial, students must also develop a solid theoretical foundation to effectively apply their skills in complex situations. An overemphasis on practical training without sufficient theoretical grounding could leave students ill-equipped to handle the nuanced challenges of entrepreneurship.

In conclusion, the findings of the current study are consistent with the empirical works of Dyer and Handler (2021), Olawale and Garba (2022), and Adeyemi and Abubakar (2020), collectively affirming that access to Practical Training and Mentorship Programs is vital for improving entrepreneurial skills among university students in Nigeria. While the arguments in support of these initiatives are strong, it is essential to address the challenges related to their

implementation, accessibility, and balance with theoretical knowledge. A comprehensive approach that includes structured mentorship and practical training, coupled with a solid theoretical framework, will likely produce the most effective outcomes for developing students' entrepreneurial competencies. The result of the research hypothesis revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female students on the access to practical training and mentorship program for improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria.

### **Implications of the Study**

The findings of this study on improving entrepreneurial skills development among university students in Nigeria carry significant implications for a range of stakeholders, including educational institutions, policymakers, industry partners, and students themselves. Each group has a critical role to play in building a comprehensive support system for developing the entrepreneurial capabilities of students.

For Educational Institutions, the study highlights three primary areas for enhancing students' entrepreneurial readiness. First, Curriculum Development is essential; universities and colleges should focus on integrating entrepreneurial skills within their curricula to align course content with industry demands. This approach not only makes educational programs more relevant but also equips students to meet the real-world challenges of entrepreneurship. Second, institutions should emphasize the Implementation of Practical Training by creating structured programs that allow students hands-on experience in real-world settings. Internships, workshops, and collaborative projects with industry partners are examples of practical experiences that boost students' confidence and skill levels. Third, Establishing Mentorship Programs is crucial; universities should create structured mentorship opportunities that connect students with experienced entrepreneurs and industry professionals, offering students guidance, networking, and support on their entrepreneurial journeys.

For Policymakers, supporting the development of entrepreneurial skills in students involves multiple initiatives. First, Support for Entrepreneurial Education is essential. Policymakers should acknowledge the importance of entrepreneurial skills development and promote curriculum enhancement, practical training, and mentorship programs within universities. This support could come in the form of funding, resources, and incentives for institutions that effectively implement these initiatives. Additionally, Encouragement of Public-Private Partnerships is key to creating a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem. Policymakers can facilitate collaborations between educational institutions and businesses, fostering knowledge exchange, internships, and projects that directly benefit students' skill acquisition and career readiness.

Industry Partners also play a crucial role in entrepreneurial skills development by sharing their expertise and resources. Their Engagement in Curriculum Development can ensure that educational programs align with the skills and competencies required in the job market. By participating in curriculum design, industry partners can provide insight into current trends and best practices, helping to create a more relevant and impactful educational experience for students. Additionally, Investment in Training and Mentorship by businesses can have lasting benefits. By sponsoring training programs, workshops, and mentorship

opportunities, industry partners contribute to a skilled and innovative workforce that drives economic growth and innovation.

For Students, taking an active role in their entrepreneurial education is crucial. Proactive Engagement is encouraged; students should seek out practical training, mentorship opportunities, and extracurricular activities that enhance their entrepreneurial skills. By actively participating in these opportunities, students increase their employability and entrepreneurial potential. Furthermore, Lifelong Learning is essential in the evolving world of entrepreneurship. Students should adopt a mindset that embraces continuous learning, adapting to new ideas, skills, and experiences to thrive as entrepreneurs.

In summary, this study emphasizes a collaborative approach among educational institutions, policymakers, industry partners, and students to foster entrepreneurial skills development. By implementing the recommended measures, stakeholders can create an environment that supports innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship. Such efforts contribute to Nigeria's economic growth and provide solutions to the pressing challenges of youth unemployment.

## **Conclusion**

This study has explored various measures for improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria, highlighting the critical importance of a multifaceted approach that encompasses curriculum enhancement, practical training, and mentorship programs. The findings indicate that aligning educational curricula with industry needs, integrating practical training opportunities, and fostering strong mentorship relationships are essential strategies for equipping students with the necessary skills to thrive in an increasingly competitive entrepreneurial landscape. The research underscores that Curriculum Enhancement and Industry Alignment are pivotal in ensuring that students gain relevant knowledge and skills that meet market demands. By incorporating real-world experiences and feedback from industry stakeholders, universities can create programs that not only educate but also empower students to become innovative and successful entrepreneurs.

Additionally, access to Practical Training and Mentorship Programs emerged as vital components in fostering students' entrepreneurial competencies. Structured mentorship initiatives, coupled with hands-on training, provide students with invaluable insights and experiences that enhance their ability to navigate the complexities of entrepreneurship. The positive correlation between participation in these programs and the development of essential entrepreneurial skills emphasizes the need for universities to prioritize and expand such initiatives. However, this study also acknowledges the challenges associated with implementing these measures, including variability in program quality, access disparities among students, and the need for a balanced approach that includes both practical and theoretical knowledge. Addressing these challenges is crucial for creating an equitable and effective educational environment that fosters entrepreneurial success. In conclusion, the study advocates for a holistic framework that integrates curriculum reform, practical training, and mentorship into the educational experience of university students in Nigeria. By adopting these measures, universities can significantly enhance the entrepreneurial skills development of their students, ultimately contributing to a more vibrant and innovative entrepreneurial ecosystem.

in the country. This will not only empower students but also drive economic growth and development, addressing the challenges of youth unemployment and underemployment in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and implications of the study on measures for improving the entrepreneurial skills development of university students in Nigeria, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Revise and Enhance Curriculum:** Educational institutions should undertake a comprehensive review of their curricula to ensure they are aligned with current industry needs and trends. This revision should include integrating entrepreneurship modules that emphasize practical skills, critical thinking, and innovation.
2. **Implement Structured Practical Training Programs:** Universities should establish robust practical training programs that provide students with real-world experiences. This can include mandatory internships, cooperative education placements, and hands-on workshops in collaboration with local businesses and industries.
3. **Develop Comprehensive Mentorship Initiatives:** Institutions should create formal mentorship programs that connect students with experienced entrepreneurs and industry professionals. These programs should offer ongoing guidance, networking opportunities, and support to help students navigate their entrepreneurial journeys effectively.
4. **Foster University-Industry Collaboration:** Educational institutions should actively seek partnerships with industry stakeholders to develop collaborative projects, workshops, and seminars. These collaborations can enhance curriculum relevance and provide students with opportunities to work on real-world challenges.
5. **Enhance Faculty Training and Development:** Universities should invest in training faculty members to effectively teach entrepreneurship and mentor students. Faculty development programs should focus on innovative teaching methodologies, industry engagement, and entrepreneurial mindset cultivation.
6. **Encourage Government Support and Policies:** Policymakers should create a supportive environment for entrepreneurial education by implementing policies that incentivize universities to enhance their entrepreneurial programs. This support could include funding, resources, and recognition for institutions that successfully implement practical training and mentorship initiatives.
7. **Promote Awareness and Accessibility:** Universities should raise awareness about the importance of entrepreneurial skills and the available resources among students. This could involve organizing informational sessions, workshops, and career fairs to encourage student participation in practical training and mentorship programs.
8. **Establish Feedback Mechanisms:** Institutions should create feedback mechanisms that allow students to evaluate the effectiveness of practical training and mentorship programs. This feedback can be used to continuously improve these initiatives, ensuring they meet students' needs and expectations.
9. **Cultivate a Culture of Entrepreneurship:** Universities should foster a culture of entrepreneurship on campus by encouraging student-led initiatives, entrepreneurship clubs, and competitions. This environment can inspire students to engage in entrepreneurial activities and develop their skills in a supportive setting.

10. Encourage Lifelong Learning: Students should be encouraged to adopt a mindset of lifelong learning, emphasizing the importance of continuous skill development and adaptability in their entrepreneurial journeys. Educational institutions can facilitate this by offering workshops, online courses, and resources for further learning. By implementing these recommendations, universities in Nigeria can significantly enhance the entrepreneurial skills development of their students, ultimately preparing them for successful careers as entrepreneurs and contributing to the nation's economic growth and development.

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