



## Guidance and Counselling as a Pedagogical Tool for Developing Entrepreneurial Acumen in Nigerian Youths

### Abstract

Nigeria is facing a contradictory crisis where growing graduate unemployment coincides with an entrepreneurship education curriculum mandated in all tertiary institutions. The study suggested that the missing link in entrepreneurship education is not the information, but rather the students' psychological and emotional unpreparedness. Drawing on recent empirical evidence and theoretical insights from counselling psychology, this paper maintained that guidance and counselling techniques, particularly personal and social counselling, career guidance, and solution-focused coaching, provides a pedagogical link between entrepreneurial knowledge and entrepreneurial action. The study made specific curriculum revision proposals, such as the inclusion of counselling-led experiential modules, counsellor training in entrepreneurial psychology, and the construction of school-based entrepreneurship clinics. It concluded that without incorporating guidance and counselling into the implementation architecture of entrepreneurship education curriculum, Nigeria risks sustaining a curriculum that would inform students on entrepreneurship rather than transform them into entrepreneurs to drive the economy.

**Keywords:** Guidance and counselling, entrepreneurship education, youth unemployment, curriculum review, Nigerian tertiary institutions, entrepreneurial acumen.

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### Introduction

Every year, Nigerian tertiary institutions release hundreds of thousands of graduates into an economy that simply cannot absorb them. The National Bureau of Statistics regularly reports youth unemployment figures that would be considered a national emergency in any developed economy. In response, successive governments have embraced entrepreneurship education as a policy panacea. Since the early 2000s, entrepreneurship education has been made compulsory across Nigerian universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education, with the explicit goal of producing job creators rather

than job seekers (Ayo-Sobowale & Oyeyemi, 2024).

A systematic review of Nigerian entrepreneurship education research concluded that while the curriculum exists on paper, significant gaps persist between academic instruction and practical implementation, particularly in the development of operational efficiency and financial decision-making skills (Itar & Akinbamilowo, 2025). In other words, students are receiving instruction about entrepreneurship without acquiring the psychological and behavioural capacities to actually become entrepreneurial. A research on

entrepreneurship education management in Enugu State revealed significant implementation gaps, including outdated curricular approaches and insufficient practical engagement, which undermine students' ability to translate knowledge into entrepreneurial action (Chukwu & Eze, 2021). The failure of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria is not solely a curriculum issue. It is a problem with student readiness, which falls squarely under the purview of guidance and counselling.

In Nigerian educational settings, guidance and counselling have traditionally been limited to crisis intervention, dealing with disciplinary concerns, career confusion, or examination anxiety. However, new research indicates that when used appropriately, counselling techniques would cultivate exactly the qualities that characterize entrepreneurial success, self-efficacy, resilience, creative problem-solving, and the ability to endure ambiguity (Hapsari *et al.*, 2025). Guidance and counselling must thus be fundamentally repositioned from the periphery of Nigerian education to the core of entrepreneurial pedagogy.

### **The Entrepreneurship Education Landscape in Nigeria**

To grasp what is missing, there must be the recognition of what has been accomplished. Since the implementation of mandatory entrepreneurship courses, Nigerian tertiary institutions have graduated students who have at least been exposed to business plan drafting, basic financial literacy, and case studies

of successful Nigerian entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship education has had a significant favourable impact on students' inclinations to pursue entrepreneurial endeavours (Itar & Akinbamilowo, 2025). Students who complete these programmes express a deeper understanding of self-employment as a career route.

A study of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Ogun State revealed that business acumen had significant beneficial effects on entrepreneurial performance. This simply proves that business knowledge significantly boosts business performance, and researchers are 95% certain that this is not a coincidence. In plain terms, if you learn how to run a business well, you are far more likely to succeed. Innovation and business acumen collectively showed a substantial cumulative relationship with entrepreneurial success. This proves that combining innovation with business knowledge creates a very strong formula for entrepreneurial success, and researchers are confident this is a real effect. A great idea alone is not enough, you also need to know how to run a business. (Adebayo *et al.*, 2025). This demonstrates that the capacities that entrepreneurship education aims to create have a genuine impact on real-world business outcomes.

According to research on curriculum development in Nigerian universities, while graduates have strong cognitive and theoretical knowledge, they consistently lack the applied competencies required for innovation and entrepreneurship, resulting in a significant gap between what is taught

in classrooms and what is required for real-world business creation (Metuonu *et al.*, 2025). Perhaps most crucially, entrepreneurial education in Nigeria remains mostly cognitive, focusing on what students should know rather than who they should become. This is where guidance and counselling techniques come into play.

### **The Role of Guidance and Counselling Beyond Entrepreneurship Education**

Entrepreneurship is more than just understanding how to create a business strategy or to calculate profit margins, but it is about who a person evolves into over a period of time. A study of small business owners in Lagos State revealed that creativity and entrepreneurial self-efficacy significantly improve innovation, adaptability, and business profitability, whereas personal initiative and risk-taking propensity contribute to long-term performance (Osuolale *et al.*, 2025). None of these characteristics can be imparted to pupils through a lecture or learned from a textbook, they must be developed from the inside out, through honest reflection, hands-on learning that may include failure, and, most crucially, the consistent support of someone who believes in them before they believe in themselves.

Guidance and counselling techniques are uniquely positioned to cultivate these dispositions. A study conducted in Bauchi State, Nigeria, found that counselling approaches had a significant influence on senior secondary school students' skills acquisition, with clear implications for entrepreneurial development (Danladi *et al.*, 2025). The

counselling interaction characterised by active listening, goal-setting, and the co-construction of action plans, proved more effective than didactic instruction alone in helping students translate knowledge into practical competence.

A study on personal and social guidance programmes for junior high school students in Indonesia found that such programmes could systematically foster social entrepreneurship by mapping students' personal and social problems, identifying their strengths, and providing targeted assistance according to individual characteristics (Hapsari *et al.*, 2025). The researchers developed a framework centred on social values, community environment, innovation, and economic activities. The implication is clear, counselling techniques can be structured to produce entrepreneurial outcomes.

"What do you know about business?" is the question posed by traditional entrepreneurship education. "What are your fears about failure?" is a question posed by guidance and counselling. What financial tales do you tell yourself? What kind of assistance are you in need of to start? These are fundamental questions in entrepreneurship, not incidental. Among the most powerful obstacles to entrepreneurial activity are poor self-efficacy, fear of failure, and the internalized notion that business is "not for people like me." These obstacles are directly addressed by counselling.

## Theoretical Framework

### Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986)

Social Cognitive Theory, developed by Albert Bandura, posits that human functioning is the product of a dynamic and reciprocal interaction among personal factors, behavioural patterns, and environmental influences. This triadic reciprocal determinism suggests that individuals are not merely products of their environment but also active agents who can influence their circumstances through their actions and beliefs. Central to the theory is the concept of self-efficacy, defined as individuals' beliefs in their capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments. Self-efficacy influences the choices people make, the effort they expend, and their persistence in the face of obstacles.

Bandura also emphasised observational learning, whereby individuals acquire new behaviours and attitudes by observing others, particularly those they perceive as role models. This learning process involves four key components: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. Additionally, the theory highlights the role of self-regulation, the capacity to set goals, monitor progress, and adjust behaviour in pursuit of desired outcomes. These mechanisms collectively explain how individuals develop the psychological and behavioural capacities necessary for successful functioning in various domains, including entrepreneurship.

Social Cognitive Theory provides a robust theoretical framework for understanding the central argument of this paper, that entrepreneurship education in Nigeria has failed to produce entrepreneurs because it has neglected the psychological and emotional dimensions of entrepreneurial development. The theory explains the gap between entrepreneurial knowledge and entrepreneurial action through several interconnected mechanisms. The theory illuminates why students who complete entrepreneurship courses may still fail to launch businesses. Self-efficacy is a critical determinant of whether individuals will translate knowledge into action. Students may possess business knowledge but lack the confidence in their ability to successfully navigate the uncertainties of starting and running a business. As the paper notes, "students are receiving instruction about entrepreneurship without acquiring the psychological and behavioural capacities to actually become entrepreneurial." Self-efficacy beliefs, according to Bandura, are developed through four sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. Traditional entrepreneurship education relies almost exclusively on cognitive instruction, which provides information but does not systematically build self-efficacy through the other three sources. The theory also explains the importance of role models and observational learning in entrepreneurial development. The paper highlights that entrepreneurship is "about who a

person evolves into," requiring qualities such as resilience, creativity, and tolerance for ambiguity that cannot be taught through lectures alone. Observational learning, facilitated by counsellors and coaches who model entrepreneurial thinking and behaviour, would provide students with vicarious experiences of success, strengthening their beliefs in their own capabilities. The paper's proposal for counsellor-led "coaching developing potential, rather than treating disorder" aligns with Bandura's emphasis on modelling and guided mastery.

### **Learning from Practice**

The best counseling for entrepreneurs might be more like coaching than formal treatment. Practical insights are provided by a recent coaching project with youth ventures in the Benin Republic. According to the coach, the best tactics were to guide instead than provide solutions, engage in active listening, and remain humble and curious when faced with new obstacles (Africa Career Networks, 2025). Notably, the businesses that prospered had CEOs who showed flexibility, tenacity, and a strong sense of community commitment, qualities that counseling may methodically cultivate.

This proposes a concept for Nigerian educational settings where counsellors should act as coaches developing potential, rather than as therapists addressing disorder. The counsellor takes on the role of a reflective partner who assists students in recognizing their entrepreneurial talents, facing their limiting beliefs, and creating practical

strategies that connect classroom instruction with practical application.

### **Implications for Curriculum Review**

The Nigerian educational curriculum must be reviewed in at least four distinct ways in order to incorporate guidance and counseling into entrepreneurship education:

1. Entrepreneurship education needs to be rethought as a series that includes a required diagnostic phase lead by counsellors. Students should undergo systematic career and personal-social counselling prior to receiving technical business training. This counselling is intended to evaluate their entrepreneurial aptitude, pinpoint their individual talents, and address psychological obstacles to firm development. Individualized development plans that guide later instruction would be produced during this time. Such diagnostic techniques have been demonstrated to detect individual social issues that would otherwise prevent the development of new skills (Hapsari *et al.*, 2025; Danladi *et al.*, 2025).
2. Basic coaching and counselling skills must be taught to entrepreneurship instructors. The way business educators currently teach entrepreneurship without receiving psychological training is inadequate. A curriculum revision should require entrepreneurial educators to

obtain certification in motivational interviewing, solution-focused coaching, or similar counselling techniques.

3. Assessment models need to incorporate behavioural and dispositional outcomes in addition to cognitive testing. The effectiveness of comprehensive evaluation methods, such as the Kirkpatrick model, in gauging the acquisition of entrepreneurial abilities has been shown in recent research conducted in Nigerian polytechnics (Abdulkadir *et al.*, 2025). These models can be modified to assess outcomes connected to counselling: Do the pupil exhibit higher levels of self-efficacy? Decreased anxiety about failing? Increased readiness to accept uncertainty when making business decisions? These are quantifiable constructs that need to be assessed methodically.
4. Each tertiary institution should set up an Enterprise Clinic staffed by trained counsellors. This clinic would offer ongoing support to students at every stage of their entrepreneurial journey, from idea generation to business launch to post-failure recovery. The clinic would also function as a research center for understanding the psychological aspects of Nigerian entrepreneurship, creating context-specific insights that could be used to drive future curriculum development.

### Challenges and Cautions

Any curriculum reform proposal must consider the challenges of implementation. Nigeria's higher institutions are underfunded and understaffed with counsellor-to-student ratios that are already woefully inadequate for basic mental health requirements.

Adding entrepreneurship-related counselling obligations to already overworked counsellors is unrealistic without major investment.

This paper consequently advocates a staggered adoption, beginning with counsellor training programmes at federal institutions and eventually expanding to polytechnics and colleges of education, as proposed by feasibility studies on entrepreneurial curriculum reforms. In addition, cultural issues must be considered as Nigerian students may be hesitant to seek counselling because of stigma or cultural ideas regarding mental health. Entrepreneurship counselling must thus be portrayed positively, as coaching for success rather than treatment for issues, and incorporated into existing institutions (such as mandated entrepreneurship courses) rather than marketed as a distinct, optional service.

### Conclusion/Recommendations

Nigeria has invested two decades developing its entrepreneurship education infrastructure. It has developed curricula, trained educators, and implemented mandatory courses. However, the unemployment crisis persists since the curriculum mainly emphasizes the cognitive aspect of entrepreneurship, ignoring the

psychological. Guidance and counselling provide a path ahead, not as a replacement for business education, but as a pedagogical framework that makes business education more practical. The implications for curriculum review are evident and suggested thus:

1. The National University Commission should embed counselling at every stage of entrepreneurship education, from diagnostic intake through skills development to post-graduation support.
2. The National Universities Commission (NUC) should mandate all tertiary educators across every discipline, including arts, sciences, social sciences, engineering, and vocational studies to undergo compulsory retraining on how to infuse entrepreneurial thinking, skills, and values into their lecture delivery. This retraining should shift the focus of entrepreneurship education from cognitive knowledge alone to also addressing who students must become as entrepreneurial individuals.
3. Tertiary institutions should establish Entrepreneurship Education Resource Centres staffed with trained counsellors and entrepreneurship educators who provide ongoing support to lecturers implementing entrepreneurial approaches in their classrooms.
4. Funding should be allocated by the Tertiary Education Trust

Fund (TETFund) specifically for the design, delivery, and evaluation of these retraining programmes across federal, state, and private institutions.

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