

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND SELF-RELIANCE IN AROCHUKWU LGA OF ABIA STATE

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Abstract

This paper investigated the entrepreneurship education as a tool for youth empowerment and self-reliance in Arochukwu LGA of Abia State. Two research questions guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised 7,812 youths in Arochukwu. The sample size of the study was 1,200 respondents. This figure was obtained through simple random sampling technique using balloting without replacement from the total population. Structured questionnaire titled Entrepreneurship Education Questionnaire for Youth Empowerment and Self-Reliance (EEQYESR) was used for data collection. It was face validated by three experts, two from the Department of Entrepreneurship Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka and one from Measurement and Evaluation Unit, Department of Science Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The overall reliability of the instrument was 0.73. Mean and standard deviation were used for answering the research questions. The findings of the study revealed that entrepreneurship education significantly contributes to youth empowerment by developing vocational skills, promoting creativity and innovation, and encouraging self-reliance among youths. The findings of the study also revealed that inadequate funding, lack of training facilities, and insufficient practical exposure hinder the effective implementation of entrepreneurship education programmes. The study recommended among others that government and educational institutions should provide adequate funding, modern training facilities, and qualified instructors to improve entrepreneurship education.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education, youth, youth empowerment, self-reliance

Introduction

Youth underemployment and unemployment are among the most pressing socio-economic challenges confronting Arochukwu Local Government Area in Abia State specifically and in Nigeria generally. Despite various government interventions aimed at promoting economic development and poverty reduction. Entrepreneurship education has emerged as a strategic instrument for equipping young people with entrepreneurial knowledge, practical skills, innovative thinking, and business competencies necessary for self-employment and wealth creation. Entrepreneurship is the dynamic process of creating incremental wealth. Entrepreneurship education has emerged as an innovative strategy for addressing youth unemployment, poverty, and economic dependence in many developing countries, especially Nigeria and Arochukwu Local Government Area of Abia State inclusive. According to Gutterman (2020), entrepreneurship is the creation of a new business and the bearing of the risk associated with that business in exchange for profits derived from exploiting opportunities in the marketplace. Also, Chakuzira, Okoche, and Mkansi (2024) explained entrepreneurship as a context-based activity involving innovation, opportunity identification, and value creation that differs across societies and economies, especially in Africa. The relevance of Entrepreneurship has necessitated the need for the study of Entrepreneurship Education.

Entrepreneurship education refers to the teaching and training process that prepares individuals to identify business opportunities, establish enterprises, and manage businesses successfully. Entrepreneurship education is viewed as a learning process that equips individuals with the knowledge, skills, and experiences needed to recognize opportunities, develop entrepreneurial thinking, and create value through entrepreneurial activities (Bell & Bell, 2023). Also, Athiende and Johnston (2026) sees entrepreneurship education as the application of enterprise behaviours, attributes and competencies into the creation of cultural, social or economic value. It focuses on developing entrepreneurial knowledge, vocational skills, creativity, and innovative thinking. Entrepreneurship education encourages learners to transform ideas into productive ventures. Studies have shown that entrepreneurship education helps students (youths) develop confidence and the ability to become job creators rather than job seekers. It goes beyond theoretical learning by emphasizing creativity, innovation, problem-solving, leadership, and risk-taking abilities. Entrepreneurship education refers to the process of teaching individuals the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies required for identifying business opportunities, creating enterprises, and managing businesses successfully (Idowu, Adedini & Folaranmi, 2025).

Entrepreneurship education has so many importance to the development of any economy. The importance includes Reduction of Unemployment, Promotion of Self-Reliance, Development of Entrepreneurial Skills, Poverty Reduction, Encouragement of Innovation and Creativity among other importance. Entrepreneurship education develops essential skills such as leadership, communication, financial management, creativity, innovation, and decision-making. These skills are necessary for successful business operations and career advancement (Omeje, Jideofor, & Ugwu, 2020). Vocational and technical education programs also contribute significantly to entrepreneurship capacity development by equipping youths with practical competencies required for self-employment (Lamidi, Abdulkadir & Ayika, 2025). This is in line with Adelowo & Henrico (2025), who are of the opinion that Entrepreneurship education encourages innovation and creativity among youths. It trains individuals to identify societal problems and develop business solutions. In the digital era, technology-driven entrepreneurship has become increasingly important for economic growth and competitiveness. Digital entrepreneurship programs have empowered many young people through online businesses, software development, digital marketing, and e-commerce activities. One major importance of entrepreneurship education is its ability to reduce unemployment among youths. Many graduates depend heavily on government and private sector jobs that are often unavailable. This is in line with Nelson & Hodu (2025) who are of the view that Entrepreneurship education contributes to poverty reduction by equipping youths with income-generating skills. When young people establish businesses and become self-employed, they can earn sustainable incomes and improve their standard of living. This also reduces the level of social problems associated with poverty, such as crime and insecurity. Entrepreneurship education equips youths/young people with practical skills that enable them to establish small and medium-scale enterprises (Adelowo & Henrico, 2025).

Notwithstanding the numerous importance of entrepreneurship education, it is faced with several challenges that limit its effectiveness in promoting youth empowerment and self-reliance. According to Mutsvairo, Krutrök, and Bosch (2026) youth is described as a developmental stage extending from adolescence into early adulthood, where young people actively engage with and adapt to social, cultural, and digital environments. For youths in Arochukwu to be self-reliant, they need to be empowered. According to

Halvorsen et al. (2020), empowerment is viewed as a process through which individuals gain greater control over decisions, actions, and resources that affect their lives and well-being. Skene (2021) defined empowerment as the liberation and strengthening of individuals, societies, and systems in ways that increase autonomy, participation, and control over life situations. For instance, in Nigeria, especially in Arochukwu Local Government Area of Abia State, the increasing rate of youth unemployment has created social and economic challenges that require practical and sustainable solutions. Entrepreneurship education equips young people with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies needed to create jobs, manage businesses, and become self-reliant rather than depending solely on white-collar employment. Scholars have argued that entrepreneurship education promotes innovation, creativity, and problem-solving abilities among youths, thereby empowering them economically and socially. Hence, it is against this background, that this study is undertaken to determine Entrepreneurship Education as a Tool for Youth Empowerment and Self-Reliance in Arochukwu Local Government Area, Abia State, Nigeria

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine Entrepreneurship Education as a Tool for Youth Empowerment and Self-Reliance in Arochukwu LGA, Abia State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determined how entrepreneurship education enhances entrepreneurial skills acquisition among youths in Arochukwu Local Government Area (LGA)
2. examine the impacts of entrepreneurship education on youth empowerment in Arochukwu LGA.

Research Questions:

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does entrepreneurship education enhance entrepreneurial skills acquisition among youths in Arochukwu Local Government Area (LGA)?
2. What are the impacts of entrepreneurship education on youth empowerment in Arochukwu LGA.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Two purposes and two research questions guided the study. The population of the study comprised of 7,812 youths in Arochukwu. The sample size of the study was 1200 respondents. This figure was obtained through simple random sampling technique using balloting without replacement from the total population. Structured questionnaire titled Entrepreneurship Education Questionnaire for Youth Empowerment and Self-Reliance (EEQYESR) was used for data collection. The questionnaire was face-validation by three experts all from University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The questionnaire was divided into two parts- I and II. Part I provided demographic information about the respondents while part II contained 20-item statements which sought information on to what extent does entrepreneurship education enhance entrepreneurial skills acquisition among youths in Arochukwu Local Government Area (LGA) and what are the impacts of entrepreneurship education on youth empowerment in Arochukwu LGA. It is based on a Likert scale of 5-point which ranges from 5 to 1. (Strongly agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree = 1) respectively. An overall reliability coefficient of 0.73. was obtained for the instrument using Cronbach Alpha method. A total of 1200 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents out of which 97 percent were duly completed and

returned. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent does entrepreneurship education enhance entrepreneurial skills acquisition among youths in Arochukwu Local Government Area (LGA)?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of entrepreneurship education enhancement of entrepreneurial skills acquisition among youths in Arochukwu Local Government Area (LGA).

N/S	Items Statement	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark
1	Entrepreneurship education enhances one's ability to identify viable business opportunities.	3.65	.775	A
2	Entrepreneurship education improves business planning and management skills.	4.21	.666	A
3	Entrepreneurship education, enables one acquire practical skills for establishing a small business.	3.91	.530	A
4	Entrepreneurship education improves creativity and innovation in solving business-related problems	3.89	.465	A
5	Entrepreneurship education enhances financial management and budgeting skills.	3.71	.790	A
6	Effective marketing and customer relationship skills can be developed through entrepreneurship education.	3.71	.687	A
7	Entrepreneurship education improves decision-making abilities in business situations.	3.79	.584	A
8	Entrepreneurship education programme equips one with skills for managing business risks effectively.	3.87	1.102	A
9	Entrepreneurship education increases confidence to start and manage business.	3.82	.867	A
10	Entrepreneurship education improves ability to work independently and become self-employed.	4.085	.530	A
Aggregate Score		3.86	.280	A

Key: N = Population, $\bar{x}$ = mean, SD = standard deviation, A = Agree

Result in Table 1 shows the mean responses of youths on the extent entrepreneurship education enhances entrepreneurial skills acquisition among youths in Arochukwu Local Government Area (LGA). The cluster mean is 3.86. This means that all the respondents (youths) agreed that all the items on entrepreneurship education listed enhances entrepreneurial skills acquisition among youths in Arochukwu Local

Government Area (LGA). The cluster standard deviations (SD) is 0.280. This indicates that the respondents are not very far from the mean or one another in their responses.

Research Question 2: What are the impacts of entrepreneurship education on youth empowerment in Arochukwu LGA.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of the impacts of entrepreneurship education on youth empowerment in Arochukwu LGA.

N/S	Items Statement	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark
1	Entrepreneurship education equips youths in Arochukwu LGA with practical skills needed to become economically productive.	3.89	.330	A
2	Entrepreneurship education enhances the ability of youths in Arochukwu LGA to identify and exploit business opportunities.	3.65	.495	A
3	Entrepreneurship education encourages youths to become self-reliant rather than depending solely on paid employment.	3.42	1.008	A
4	Entrepreneurship education improves youths' capacity to make independent economic decisions.	4.39	.978	A
5	Entrepreneurship education motivates youths to develop innovative products that can generate income.	3.69	.828	A
6	Entrepreneurship education motivates youths to develop innovative services that can increase income generation.	4.08	1.239	A
7	Entrepreneurship education increases youths' readiness to take calculated risks in pursuing legitimate business opportunities.	3.41	0.912	A
8	Entrepreneurship education enables youths to use available local resources to create income-generating ventures.	3.86	.880	A
9	Entrepreneurship education improves youths' problem-solving abilities.	3.90	.682	A
10	Entrepreneurship education enables youths to use available local resources to create income-generating ventures.	3.75	1.006	A
Aggregate Score		3.80	0.493	A

Key: N = Population, $\bar{x}$ = mean, SD = standard deviation, A = Agree

Result in Table 2 shows the mean responses of youths on the impacts of entrepreneurship education on youth empowerment in Arochukwu LGA. The cluster mean is 3.80. This means that all the respondents (youths) agreed that all the items listed have impacts on entrepreneurship education on youth empowerment in Arochukwu LGA. The

cluster standard deviations (SD) is 0.493. This indicates that the respondents are not very far from the mean or one another in their responses.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that respondents agreed that entrepreneurship education enhances entrepreneurial skills acquisition among youths in Arochukwu Local Government Area of Abia State. Specifically, the findings indicated that entrepreneurship education equips youths with practical entrepreneurial skills, strengthens their ability to identify and exploit business opportunities, promotes creativity and innovation, and encourages self-reliance. This finding suggests that entrepreneurship education plays a significant role in developing the knowledge, competencies, and entrepreneurial attitudes required for successful business establishment and management. Through exposure to practical entrepreneurial activities, youths are better positioned to explore available economic opportunities, initiate business ventures, and become economically productive members of society. The finding is consistent with that of Omeje, Jidefor, and Ugwu (2020), who found that entrepreneurship education facilitates the development of essential competencies, including leadership, creativity, innovation, and decision-making skills, which are fundamental to successful business operations and career advancement. The agreement between the present finding and the previous study underscores the importance of entrepreneurship education in preparing youths for productive engagement in entrepreneurial activities.

The findings further revealed that respondents agreed that entrepreneurship education contributes positively to youth empowerment in Arochukwu Local Government Area of Abia State. Specifically, the findings showed that entrepreneurship education provides youths with practical skills necessary for economic productivity, improves their capacity to identify and utilize business opportunities, promotes self-employment, and strengthens their ability to make independent economic decisions. This finding implies that entrepreneurship education serves as an important instrument for empowering youths to become economically independent and less dependent on limited opportunities for paid employment. By developing entrepreneurial competencies and encouraging productive engagement in income-generating activities, entrepreneurship education has the potential to improve the economic well-being of youths and contribute to sustainable community development. The finding corroborates that of Nelson and Hodu (2025), who observed that entrepreneurship education contributes to poverty reduction and youth empowerment by equipping young people with income-generating skills. The authors further emphasized that entrepreneurship education promotes employment generation through the development of creativity, innovation, and business competencies. The consistency between these findings highlights the relevance of entrepreneurship education as a strategy for promoting youth empowerment, economic independence, and sustainable development in Arochukwu Local Government Area.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that entrepreneurship education is an important instrument for enhancing entrepreneurial skills acquisition and promoting youth empowerment in Arochukwu Local Government Area of Abia State. Entrepreneurship education provides youths with the knowledge, practical skills, competencies, and entrepreneurial attitudes necessary for identifying business opportunities, establishing sustainable enterprises, and achieving economic self-reliance. The study established that entrepreneurship education contributes to the development of

entrepreneurial capabilities and strengthens the capacity of youths to participate meaningfully in productive economic activities. Although challenges such as inadequate funding, poor infrastructural facilities, and limited access to business capital may constrain the effective implementation of entrepreneurship education programmes, sustained investment in practical entrepreneurial training and institutional support could improve opportunities for youth empowerment. Therefore, strengthening entrepreneurship education through appropriate government policies, institutional collaboration, and community participation is essential for promoting self-employment, reducing youth unemployment, and enhancing sustainable socioeconomic development in Arochukwu Local Government Area of Abia State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Entrepreneurship education programmes should be strengthened through adequate funding, provision of modern training facilities, and availability of practical entrepreneurial resources to enhance entrepreneurial skills acquisition, promote self-employment, and reduce youth unemployment in Arochukwu Local Government Area of Abia State.
2. Educational institutions, particularly Abia State College of Education, Arochukwu, should establish sustainable partnerships with local entrepreneurs, established business organizations, and relevant community stakeholders to provide youths with practical entrepreneurial training, mentorship, and business development opportunities that would strengthen their entrepreneurial competencies and enhance their capacity to establish and manage sustainable business enterprises.

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