

## IMPERATIVES OF LEARNING FOR YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUCCESS IN NIGERIA: A CONCEPTUAL DESIGN

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### Abstract

*Pursuing successful entrepreneurship remains a big challenge to broad spectrum of youth in Nigeria. In spite of stock of policies, programmes and established agencies for the promotion of youth entrepreneurship in the country. Thereby, worsening the socioeconomic predicaments. Therefore, this study seeks to inspire remedy via attitudinal changes in the 'aspiring' youth entrepreneurs. The study is conceptual, relying solely on extant literature. To achieve its aim, the study assumes learning as imperative to the change. Reading, Observation, Listening, Asking and Sharing (ROLAS), are discovered by the study as the factors leading to learning entrepreneurship. However, none of them is effectively fixed in the Nigeria's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Hence, affecting the youth entrepreneurship. To overcome the challenge, this study strongly recommends young aspiring entrepreneurs in Nigeria, to attach much significance to readings particularly, the non-fiction books. Meanwhile, they should never go and operate alone in entrepreneurial pursuit; at all costs, they should avoid 'keeping it to myself' attitude. And, they should strive to utilise mentorship and role modelling. If the duo is unavailable simultaneously, never hesitate to have a mentor; mentorship is paramount. It is highly eminence for successful entrepreneurial journey. Finally, the study suggests empirical study to examine statistically, the extent to which each of the factors leading to learning entrepreneurship contributes to the challenge of successful youth entrepreneurship in Nigeria.*

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**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Knowledge, Learning, Success, Youth Entrepreneurship.

### 1. Introduction

Globally, youth entrepreneurship is the key to growth and development. It stimulates stability and the urge for competitiveness (Ibraheem & Alshuraym, 2021). It involves utmost youth engagement in nation's spectrum of economic system. Consequently, leveraging developmental objectives, by way of effective utilisation of both physical and non-physical capacities of the youth (Erondu & Erondu, 2023; Sani, 2019). Therefore, poorly harnessed youth entrepreneurship exacerbates poverty,

stagnation and backwardness in a society (Sani, 2019). In view of this, significance of youth entrepreneurship is socioeconomically never overemphasised.

However, despite reported passions for entrepreneurship among the youth in Nigeria, pursuing entrepreneurship to success remains a challenge to broad spectrum of the youth (Madu & Okechi, 2017; Sani, 2018). Albeit stock of policies, programmes and established agencies for the promotion of youth entrepreneurship in the

country (Tende, 2014; Salami et al, 2023; Ubogu, 2023). Evidently, worsening the rates of the socioeconomic predicaments (Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG), 2024; Bello et al, 2025). Statistics suggests 35% to 53% of the Nigerian youth are unemployed (Virk et al, 2023; ActionAid Nigeria, 2025). Situation believed to have aggravated the already country's misery index (National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2022). Worrisomely, the index persistently ravages multifacetedly (Bot et al, 2024).

Therefore, this study seeks to inspire remedy via the attitudinal changes in the 'aspiring' youth entrepreneurs. This is because, 80% of success is individual (Tracy & Tracy, 2014). Impliedly, youth themselves are 80% responsible to be successful in the pursuit of entrepreneurship. Due to influence of learning on business decisions and actions (Sani, 2022), the study viewed learning as the complement of the change.

The paper adopts conceptual design approach, relying solely on extant literature. It seeks to conceptually examine a link between the state of the youth entrepreneurship and youth attitude to learning entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

## 2. Conceptualisation

- i. **Learning:** learning is a dynamic process of adaptation to circumstances. It leads to acquisition of knowledge, skills and competency development (UNESCO, 2026). It is influenced by interplay of complex factors including

physiological, environmental and social factors (Schneider, 2024). Nonetheless, active engagement and considerable practices are vital for effective learning (Baume & Scanlon, 2018).

Learning is evidenced by retention of acquired skill or knowledge, preparation for deeper exploration and the application of the learning in relatively-similar situations (Straumanis, 2011). Thus, it is preparatory to performance. Hence, decisions to take and actions to implement are both products of learning (Sani, 2022).

Therefore, learning is the process of knowledge and skills acquisition that results to changes in learner's psychophysical and social dimensions, often through instruction and or experience. As such, unless change occurs learning has not taken place (Nix, 2026).

- ii. **Youth Entrepreneurship:** the term is composite, made-up of youth and entrepreneurship. Though, youth inherently signify transition from childhood to adulthood, nonetheless, it is contextualised variedly. Differing from country to country, region to region or organisation to organisation.

Mostly, age is considered the parameter for the variation. For instance, United Nations consider youth as persons between the ages of 15-24 (UNESCO, 2016). But, to Commonwealth Youth Programme, it is a period ranging from 15-29 years (The Commonwealth, 2016). While African Youth Charter, views youth as the age range bracket of 15-35 years (UNESCO, 2016). In Nigeria, Youth Policy Development defines youth as period between 18-35 years (Federal Ministry of Health, 2009).

Based on the objective of the study, the perspective of the African Youth Charter is adopted. That is, the paper considers youth as individuals within the age range of 15 and 35 years. It is adopted due to number of factors, including:

**a. Compulsory Education in Nigeria.** Nigerian education policy mandated the acquisition of basic education through the age of 15, via uninterrupted nine-year basic schooling. Part of the aim is the promotion of inclusivity, acquaintance of life skills and overall national development (Amoge, 2016). Thus, at age 15 basic life skills can be acquired and contributions be

made to economic endeavours.

**b. Youth Bulginess and Unemployment in Nigeria.**

Over 60%-70% of Nigeria's projected population of 234,573,603 (2025 estimation) is youth (ActionAid Nigeria, 2025; Development Research & Projects Centres, 2024). And, 35% to 53% of it is unemployed (Virk et al, 2023; ActionAid Nigeria, 2025). Thereby, exacerbating poverty crisis and its resultant repercussions. Based on this, understanding entrepreneurial tenets at earlier youthful age, would yield the desired change.

**c. Significant Stage for Physical, Cognitive and Psychosocial Growth.**

Age 15 is a critical period in life developmental stages. Averagely, individuals at this stage experience changes that enable initiation and carrying out tasks, search career possibilities, develop abstract thinking, express acquired knowledge and tend to have variety of perspectives on given issue (Stewart, 2013). Therefore, exposure to entrepreneurial learning at 15 is crucial to learner future.

**d. Heightened vulnerability.**

Age 15 is typically in the predictive range of longer-term effects in adulthood and old ages. Hence, learning competences at such age was found to have significant influences on economic success in adulthood (Banati et al, 2025). Thence, it is coherent to the goal of youth entrepreneurship.

**e. Member of the African Youth Charter.** After all, Nigeria is a member state of the African Union (AU), that validates and concedes the existence and operations of the African Youth Charter.

### **2.1 Underpinning Theory: Entrepreneurial Learning Theory**

This theory is not developed by single individual rather, evolved from the contributions of scholars particularly, those attach prominence to experiential and cognitive approaches to business creation. The theory views experiential, cognitive and transformational processes the underlying variables to entrepreneurial success. It links experience, thoughts and abilities in opportunity transformations to viable venture creation. Therefore, the theory underpins this study by substantiating the study's argument that poorly pursued youth entrepreneurship in Nigeria relates to inadequate learning among the youth.

### **3. Methodology**

As shown earlier, this study adopts conceptual design approach. It conceptually examines relatedness between youth entrepreneurship and youth attitude to learning entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

### **4. Results and Discussions**

Extant literature indicates learning entrepreneurship occurs via practices, cognition and environmental interactions (Politis, 2005; Rae, 2005). Thence, successful entrepreneurship results from either doing it overtime, being taught about it and/or living in entrepreneurship friendly ecosystem. However, after literature scrutiny, this study discovers **Reading, Observation, Listening, Asking and Sharing (ROLAS)**, are the obvious exposure to the process of learning entrepreneurship. This means, the more a person is acquainted to **ROLAS**, the higher the probability the person's ability to learn entrepreneurship.

- a. Reading as Exposure to the Process of Learning Entrepreneurship. Reading involves derivation of meaning from the decode of written or printed symbols. The symbols cover timeworn pictographs through the contemporary alphabetical systems (Campo, 2003). Whose function is communication, mental enhancement and thought provocation (Vallotton & Ayoub, 2010; Manning & Stokes, 2019). Thus, reading enviably conditions attitude, empowers mind and broadens vision (Ani, UD). Hence, it

serves various purposes (Aminu, 2025). This makes it the foundation of knowledge across endeavours.

Entrepreneurially, reading is crucial in building resilience, composite intelligence and response capacities to inherent entrepreneurial crises and challenges (Manning et al, 2019). Consequently, reading and entrepreneurship development are inseparable particularly, in the current era of knowledge economy dispensation.

Therefore, reading is a foundational exposé to cognitive process of learning entrepreneurship. It enables the acquisition of specialised knowledge, mental model development, actionable insights and avoidance of costly trial-and-error. Furthermore, it endows critical, analytical and strategic thinking, which are all essential in successful entrepreneurship pursuit (Vallotton & Ayoub, 2010; Manning & Stokes, 2019).

Regrettably, reading attitude is alarmingly dismal in Nigeria (Aminu, 2025). 40% of adult Nigerians never read a whole non-fiction book in their life-time; an average Nigerian reads less than a book per year; only 1% of successful people-men and women-read one non-fiction book per month. Further, 67.3% of Nigeria's youth rarely visit

library (Yunus, 2023; Grace, UD; Anyira & Udem, 2020). Thereby, negatively affecting national economic development (Aminu, 2025). Undoubtedly, negative national economic development connotes negative national entrepreneurship development.

- b. Observation as Exposure to the Process of Learning Entrepreneurship. Observation involves active and purposeful monitoring and examination of events, persons or behaviours for knowledge or information gathering. It is the starting stage of learning (Johnston, 2009). Humans first observe to develop cognitive, social and emotional skills (Greenspan & Breinbauer, 2007).

However, observation is in various forms. Broadly, it arises spontaneously or intently (Mosquera et al, 2022). In either case, entrepreneurial learning is influenced by observational learning, which is often intentional. It is a life course qualitative approach whereby, models are purposely observed to 'entrepreneurially' develop efficacies and enhance intentions (Zozimo et al, 2017). Thus, aspiring entrepreneur can be cognitively shaped by observing entrepreneurial models (Bosma et al, 2011).

Observational learning starts from observer notice of attribute, such as a model's behaviour; then the attachment of credence to the attribute for retention; followed by attribute prototype in relative circumstance; and finally, derivation of satisfaction from the process (Fryling et al, 2011).

Therefore, observation particularly the learning type, is an exposure to successful entrepreneurship learning practice. It pervades the cognitive skills to start and perform, by means of imitating entrepreneurial compatible behaviour.

However, in Nigeria, observational learning has not received the owed prominence. Curriculum itself focuses more on traditional methods of teacher-centered instructional methods (Alabi & Adesoji, 2016). As a result, negating learner-mostly youth-from developing the attitude of learning outside the school curriculum. Hence, while most young adults lack information regarding entrepreneurial characteristics (Nwosu, 2019), learning from the wealth of experiences of successful entrepreneurs is as well a challenge to most youth (Erondu & Erondu, 2023). Moreover, the culture does not support close monitoring and examination of others.

- c. Listening as Exposure to the Process of Learning Entrepreneurship. Listening pertains deliberate reception, evaluation and understanding of a sound or spoken words. It is a desire to understand by way of combining hearing and psychological involvement (Tyagi, 2013). Hence, it involves cognitive and behavioural processes (Shepherd & Pollack, 2025). On the other hand, listening is all-encompassing; thereby, serves as the bedrock of knowledge and skill acquisition of all kinds (Loan et al, 2024).

However, listening is multifarious (Tyagi, 2013). Nonetheless, out of its multidimensionality, informational listening is the most suitable to learning new concepts (Bruce & Hughes, 2010). It requires high level of intent, willingness, concentration and energy to understand others' views and perspectives (Tyagi, 2013). It is a kind of learning, relevant to all human endeavours. In current dispensation, where information is the tool for achieving socioeconomic development objectives (Sani, 2022), informational listening is indispensable. It posits simultaneous attention to information use and learning, where both are considered relational (Bruce & Hughes, 2010). Therefore, informational listening skill is the best option for young aspiring entrepreneurs. It is an

innovative lifelong learning culture that enables continuous exploration of new informational and knowledge frontiers, and subsequent generation of new opportunities (Hernandez-Serrano & Jones, 2010). In view of this, listening-informational-is an effective mechanism of cognitive exposure to learning entrepreneurship.

On this note, while mentorship is crucial source of informational listening, its practice is poor across Nigeria. Aspiring youth entrepreneurs boycott and abscond mentorship to start personal venture (Ifeoma, 2019). Consequently, 70-80% of the Nigerian entrepreneurial population lacks structured mentorship and invariably, contributes to poor business performance in the country (Virk, 2023; Ifeoma, 2019).

- d. Asking as Exposure to the Process of Learning Entrepreneurship. Contextually, asking is the act of information seeking. The aim of which is to create awareness and facilitate informed decision. It is the core aspect of communication, cognitive development and learning (Raz & Kenett, 2024). Asking-attitude-is described as the drive to creativity and for that, an important component of creative process (Acar et al, 2023). Surely, indispensable to contemporary entrepreneurship

pursuit. Nonetheless, it requires skillfulness in creative thinking, critical thinking and cognitive flexibility (Lazovsky et al, 2024).

Entrepreneurial asking occurs in form of introspection and inquiry. Introspection involves self-posed questioning, to acquire information about oneself. It consists inward looking to conscious thoughts, feelings, motives and intentions (Pronin, 2009). Application of introspection unto the journey of entrepreneurship is vital. The universal goal of entrepreneurial undertaking is sustenance (Sani, 2022). Sustenance in entrepreneurship is attainable only through cognitive consonance that produces composite drives and energies to derive satisfaction (Mirzakhanyan et al, 2019). Absence of consonance gives room for cognitive dissonance (Robbins & Judge, 2007). By its nature, dissonance demoralises, demotivates and negatively affects emotions and satisfactions.

Therefore, removing dissonance and embracing consonance require compatibility between self-personality characteristics and peculiar characteristics of the intending pursuit. To achieve that, asking self around passion for the peculiar pursuit, possession of the necessary skill to conduct the pursuit

and the network that could help promote the pursuit is essential and a step forward to entrepreneurial sustenance (Sani, 2022).

On the other hand, inquiry relates to dynamic process of seeking deeper information from someone, in relatively structured manner. It is often used for crucial decision making, such as complex problem solving (Tawfik et al, 2020); and, entrepreneurially, understand entrepreneurial processes (Pittaway, 2009). Furthermore, it is used in the reinforcement of mindsets and or attitudes of young entrepreneurs, via appreciative inquiry (Robbins & Judge, 2007). Inquiry form of asking concretises the relevance of mentorship in youth entrepreneurship development.

Mentorship is the outstandingly source of entrepreneurial inquiry (Virk, 2023; Ifeoma, 2019). It bridges theory and practice gap, guides, establishes networks and provides career development opportunities to aspiring entrepreneurs (Lein, 2024). That is why, mentorship contributes 92% to business success (TheCable, 2021). Nonetheless, mentors need cognitive, emotional and social competences (Wang et al, 2025).

However, in Nigeria, across all skills, disciplines and professions,

mentorship culture has eroded. For instance, survey of young nurses indicates 80% have not gone through any mentorship programme (Adejumo et al, 2023). Unerringly, this significantly retards growth and productivity in all sectors, youth entrepreneurship inclusive.

- e. Sharing Exposure to the Process of Learning Entrepreneurship. Sharing denotes spread of benefits and or gains with others. Contextually, it involves actions or expressions. It is a distribution mechanism that encourages collaboration (Maxwell, 2003). Collaboration posits mutual relation that consequently, enables entrepreneur overcomes limitations with regards to resource and other technical insufficiencies (Olusola, 2012; Tracy & Chee, 2013). Success is seldom a solo affair. Accordingly, shared thinking is considered the best approach for business conduct (Maxwell, 2003). Therefore, sharing principle denounces solo thinking, and attitude of ‘keeping it to myself’.

Entrepreneurial sharing ranges from simple resource sharing to complex knowledge and skill exchanges (Schnell & Berger, 2025). It is crucial for entrepreneurial practices that build competitive abilities particularly, for young aspiring entrepreneurs, due to narrower internal knowledge bases (Ebersberger & Herstad,

2012). This is why over 50% of North American based corporations consider it as growth driven mechanism (Sagagi et al, 2012).

However, entrepreneurial sharing culture is poor in Nigeria. It relates to scarcity driven challenges (Hendrixson & Hartmann, 2019). Whereby, entrepreneur's mindset focuses on short term gains rather than long term effects, due to induced pressure on the entrepreneur's resources.

### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings of the study, the challenge of youth entrepreneurship success in Nigeria conceptually relates to youth's inept acquaintance to the factors that lead to learning entrepreneurship. Reading, Observation, Listening, Asking and Sharing (ROLAS), are the factors through which the learning takes effect. Consequently, imposing **BIG** challenge to the broad spectrum of youth, in attaining entrepreneurial success.

Therefore, to overcome the challenge, this study strongly recommends young aspiring entrepreneurs in Nigeria, to never go and operate alone in entrepreneurial pursuit, by adhering to:

- i. Attach serious significance to reading. Entrepreneurship journey is filled with daunting challenges. However, the good news is, there is no entrepreneurially related

challenge whose solution is not being documented. Therefore, young aspiring entrepreneurs need to invigorate reading culture and make it part and parcel of their life. Reading super-charges mental capacities for actionable insights and effective problem-solving abilities. The reading should focus on non-fiction business related, personal and self-development, finance and history books. This is what prompts Okogwu and Akidi (2020) to suggest reinvigorating reading attitude among the youth, to bridge the deepening gap between Nigeria and other developed economies. Wide reading enhances intellectual capacity for sustained growth and development of individuals and societies (Oladejo, 2021).

- ii. At all costs, aspiring youth entrepreneurs should avoid '*keeping it to myself*' attitude. It is a predisposition of feeling a sense of self-sufficiency. Leading to concealment of practice or idea disclosure. It hinders growth by limiting other perspectives. Entrepreneurship prospers on inputs, networking, openness and substantiation. None is possible without idea sharing with trusted persons. It corroborates the saying of *collective effort is necessary for significant success*. In addition, it is what Maxwell

- (2003), describes as *include the heads of others to help you think “over your head” and attain compounding results.*
- iii. Strive to find a mentor and role model. If the duo cannot be found and utilised simultaneously, never hesitate to have a mentor. Mentorship is paramount; it is highly eminent for successful entrepreneurial journey. While mentorship involves known established relationship between mentor and mentee for guidance, role modelling may not require established relationship. Young aspiring entrepreneur may locate ‘perceived’ successful entrepreneur whom he/she envies and admires to be like. Observe

and study the person-even remotely, with his consent or otherwise-and imitate the features that make him/her successful. Besides, young entrepreneurs can select mentors from either the academics (those with theoretical knowledge), witnesses (those who closely work with successful entrepreneurs) and actors (the practitioners) or some combinations.

### Suggestion for further study

This study suggests empirical investigation, to examine statistically, the extent to which each variable of the ROLAS contributes to the challenge of successful youth entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

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