

**COUNTER-CYCLICAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION: OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DURING ECONOMIC DOWNTURNS IN  
NIGERIA**

**Dr. Nwankwo, Philip A.**

**Dept. of Commerce and Cooperative Edu., School of Business Education,  
Federal College of Education (Tech), Umunze**

**and**

**Ebigwu, Kerry Ijeoma.**

**Dept. of Entrepreneurship and Business Innovation, University of Delta,  
Agbor.**

**Abstract**

Nigeria's repeated cycles of economic recession have led to widespread unemployment, declining living standards, and a fragile labour market. However, these downturns also present opportunities to reposition entrepreneurship education as a catalyst for sustainable development. This paper discussed the concept of counter-cyclical entrepreneurship education - training individuals to initiate ventures during economic downturns when traditional employment opportunities shrink. Using historical data, policy analysis, and literature review, the study discussed how recessions increase entrepreneurial motivation, reduce opportunity costs, and open avenues for innovation and self-reliance. It also examined how targeted funding, curriculum reform, and multi-sector collaboration can transform economic adversity into learning opportunities. The study recommended that government, academic institutions, the private sector, and communities work together to institutionalize responsive, practical, and sustainability-driven entrepreneurship

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education. It concluded that recessions should not be feared but rather leveraged as windows for national renewal through innovation, local enterprise, and inclusive economic participation.

**Keywords:** Economic Recession, Entrepreneurship Education, Counter-Cyclical Strategy, Sustainable Development, Nigeria

## Introduction

Nigeria has experienced repeated cycles of economic downturns, marked by declining GDP, rising inflation, and persistent unemployment. These recessions have revealed structural weaknesses in the economy and exposed the fragility of the nation's labor market, particularly for youth and graduates. While economic crises are generally perceived as periods of decline, they can also serve as powerful catalysts for transformative learning especially in entrepreneurship education (Fairlie & Fossen, 2019; UNICEF, 2019).

Entrepreneurship education, when strategically aligned with economic realities, has the potential to equip individuals with the skills and mindset necessary to create value, generate employment, and drive inclusive growth. In periods of recession, the urgency for individuals to seek alternative income streams increases, making entrepreneurship not only desirable but essential. This shift creates a unique learning environment where motivation is heightened, opportunity costs are reduced, and the necessity for sustainable innovation becomes more pronounced.

This paper argued that economic recessions, often seen solely as threats, can be repositioned as opportunities to strengthen entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. By adopting a counter-cyclical approach, educators and policymakers can respond to economic crises with targeted educational interventions that promote self-reliance, problem-solving, and sustainability. In doing so, Nigeria can harness the momentum of downturns to cultivate a generation of resilient, socially responsible entrepreneurs who are prepared to address the complex challenges of sustainable development.

## Theoretical Review

### The theory of counter-cyclicalities

This theory is not attributed to a single originator like classical theories (e.g., Schumpeter, Keynes). Instead, it emerged within business cycle theory and entrepreneurship studies as economists began analyzing how economic activities behave across boom and recession periods. However, the intellectual foundation of counter-cyclical thinking is largely traced to Joseph Schumpeter (1939). He developed the theory of business cycles, showing that economic activities move in waves driven by innovation and disruption. The theory of counter-cyclicalities explains that certain economic activities, particularly entrepreneurship, tend to increase during periods of economic downturn. Contrary to the expectation that recessions suppress economic participation, studies show that business creation often rises due to necessity-driven motives. Fairlie and Fossen (2018) and Fossen (2019) argue that entrepreneurship consists of two components—opportunity and necessity—where necessity entrepreneurship is strongly counter-cyclical, increasing as unemployment rises and wage opportunities decline. Similarly, Parker (2018) notes that macroeconomic constraints and labour market disruptions significantly influence individuals' transition into self-employment during recessions.

This theory provides a strong foundation for the study on counter-cyclical entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. Given the structural weaknesses in Nigeria's economy and high youth unemployment during recessions, economic downturns can serve as catalysts for entrepreneurial learning and adaptation. Rather than periods of stagnation, crises create opportunities for entrepreneurship education to equip learners with skills for self-reliance, innovation, and sustainable development. Thus, counter-cyclicalities supports the view that entrepreneurship education becomes more relevant and impactful during economic downturns, transforming economic challenges into opportunities for long-term development.

### Understanding Counter-Cyclical Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship, as a process of creativity and innovation, involves the ability to see opportunities amidst challenges and risks (Suryadi et al., 2024). It involves identifying unmet markets, developing new ideas and managing risks. In entrepreneurship, students are taught to be able to identify unmet markets, develop new ideas and find novel opportunities even in economic downturns. They are taught to use certain counter-cyclical strategies to their advantages. Counter-cyclical strategies are economic policies or actions that move in the opposite direction of the business cycle, aiming to stabilize the economy (Wu, 2021). During economic downturns, these strategies involve increasing government spending or cutting taxes to stimulate demand and growth. Conversely, during economic upswings, they involve decreasing government spending or raising taxes to cool down the economy and prevent overheating. Entrepreneurship can be counter-cyclical due to the influence of start-up subsidies. Specifically, when subsidies are available during economic downturns, they can attract individuals who might otherwise remain unemployed, leading to a higher number of startups being established during recessions. During economic downturns, traditionally, fewer people start businesses due to factors like reduced access to capital and increased risk aversion (Moller et al., 2020). However, when start-up subsidies are available, they can incentivize individuals, especially those facing limited job prospects, to launch their own businesses. This leads to a counter-cyclical pattern where entrepreneurship actually increases during recessions.

Counter-cyclical entrepreneurship education refers to educational initiatives that encourage entrepreneurial activity during economic downturns, particularly when unemployment is high (Dyantyi et al., 2024). This contrasts with pro-cyclical approaches that might focus on entrepreneurship during economic booms. The idea is to provide individuals with skills and support to start businesses when job prospects are limited, potentially mitigating the negative impacts of recessions. Counter-cyclical entrepreneurship education focuses on fostering entrepreneurial skills and mindsets during economic downturns, contrasting with traditional

approaches that often concentrate on established businesses and economic booms (Marino et al., 2024). While traditional entrepreneurship education might emphasize formal business practices and structured learning, counter-cyclical approaches prioritize adaptability, resilience, and problem-solving in challenging economic conditions.

### **The Dynamics of Economic Recession in Nigeria**

Nigeria has experienced a cyclical pattern of economic recessions throughout its post-independence history, with eight documented recessions occurring between 1960 and 2020. Economic recession means a significant decline in economic activities across all sectors of the economy and usually last more than a few months (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2015). The first recession occurred in 1967 when Nigeria's GDP growth rate fell by a cumulative -15.74 percent, primarily due to the government's decision to abandon agriculture for rapid large-scale industrialization without adequate capital and skills (Mba, 2021). Subsequent recessions in 1975 (-5.23%), 1978 (-5.76%), 1981 (-13.13%), 1982 (-10.92%), and 1983 followed a similar pattern triggered by oil price volatility and over-dependence on petroleum revenues (National Bureau of Statistics 2016). The most recent recessions occurred in 2016, when Nigeria recorded negative economic growth rates of -0.36% and -2.06% for the first and second quarters respectively, and again in 2020 when GDP contracted by -2.48% in the first nine months, largely attributed to the collapse in oil prices and the COVID-19 pandemic (Bamidele, 2020). These recessions consistently demonstrate what economists refer to as Dutch Disease, where the oil boom led to neglect of other sectors, particularly agriculture, transforming Nigeria from a food-exporting nation to one of the world's largest importers of rice and cassava (Ugonabo & Okoro, 2025).

The economic recessions in Nigeria have had devastating impacts on employment, income distribution, and social systems, creating widespread hardship across all socioeconomic classes (Edewhor, et al., 2025). Urban unemployment rose dramatically to 28 percent in 1992, while poverty rates increased to 31.4 percent in the 1990s as basic social services collapsed and rural consumption declined despite the nation's oil wealth (Mohammed, et al., 2018). The recession periods have been characterized by significant retrenchment of workers as manufacturing firms

struggled to cover production costs due to falling revenues, leading to automatic increases in unemployment rates (Omolua & Adeyemo, 2021). The social fabric has been severely strained, with approximately 85% of Nigerians unable to afford basic necessities during the current economic crisis, while children's rights to quality education and affordable healthcare have been compromised (Mba, 2021). The recessions have also increased social tensions and political instability, contributing to conflicts such as the Niger-Delta militancy, herdsmen-farmer clashes, and the rise of Boko Haram, which have further disrupted agricultural production and trade, creating a vicious cycle of economic decline and social unrest (Mohammed, et al., 2018; Mba, 2021).

Economic recessions fundamentally alter the opportunity landscape, making entrepreneurship increasingly attractive as traditional employment opportunities diminish and survival necessitates alternative income generation strategies. During recession periods, when established firms engage in mass retrenchment and unemployment rates soar, individuals are compelled to seek self-employment as a means of economic survival (Odey, et al., 2025). The collapse of formal sector employment, as evidenced by the 28% urban unemployment rate during Nigeria's 1992 recession, creates a push factor that drives individuals toward entrepreneurial activities out of necessity rather than opportunity (Omolua & Adeyemo, 2021). Additionally, recessions often reveal market gaps and inefficiencies that entrepreneurs can exploit, particularly in essential sectors like agriculture and manufacturing that have been neglected due to oil dependence (Shido-Ikwu, 2017). The government's recognition of the need for economic diversification during recession periods, as demonstrated by initiatives like "Operation Feed the Nation" launched during the 1978 recession, creates policy environments that may be more supportive of entrepreneurial ventures in non-oil sectors (Mba, 2021). Furthermore, the reduced cost of business inputs, including labor and sometimes raw materials, during recessions can lower barriers to entry for new enterprises, making entrepreneurship more accessible to those with limited capital resources.

### **Why Economic Recession is a Fertile Ground for Entrepreneurship Education**

Economic recession fosters Entrepreneurship education by:

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- (1) Increasing motivation due to unemployment and uncertainty: Economic recessions, such as those experienced by Nigeria in 1983, 2016, and 2020, often result in mass retrenchment, business closures, and rising unemployment (Bamidele, 2020; Omolua & Adeyemo, 2021). These outcomes leave many people especially youths with fewer options for traditional employment, thus heightening their motivation to seek alternative means of livelihood. For instance, the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and subsequent economic downturns led to factory shutdowns and job losses, pushing citizens toward self-reliant activities (Deji, 2019). This climate of uncertainty creates a sense of urgency and necessity that fuels interest in entrepreneurship. By equipping individuals with skills to create and sustain their own ventures, entrepreneurship education becomes not only relevant but crucial in cushioning the effects of economic instability.
- (2) Creating lower opportunity costs (e.g., fewer salaried jobs to give up): Recessions lower the opportunity cost of pursuing entrepreneurial ventures because traditional employment opportunities diminish. In periods where Nigeria's GDP contracted severely such as in 1983 (-10.93%), 1981 (-13.13%), and 2020 (-2.48%) formal job markets shrank, and salaries were either cut or frozen (CBN, 2019; Kale, 2020). Consequently, individuals face fewer risks when venturing into entrepreneurship since they are not leaving behind stable, well-paying jobs. This environment opens the door for more people to consider entrepreneurship as a viable and competitive option. When job security no longer exists, starting a business becomes a compelling alternative, making entrepreneurship education a necessity rather than an elective.
- (3) More openness to innovation, self-reliance, and risk-taking: Economic recessions push individuals and societies to become more innovative and self-reliant. During downturns, people are often forced to develop creative solutions to sustain themselves, their families, and their communities. The 2016 and 2020 recessions in Nigeria, for example, exposed the fragility of over-dependence on oil and called for diversification into sectors like agriculture, entertainment, and manufacturing - sectors ripe for entrepreneurial innovation (Agri et al., 2017). As traditional safety nets collapse, people become more willing to take

calculated risks, adapt new technologies, and challenge the status quo. Entrepreneurship education can harness this shift in mindset, equipping learners with the tools to identify problems, think critically, and take bold steps toward sustainable solutions.

- (4) Creating societal pressure to find solutions to real-life problems: Economic recessions expose deep social and infrastructural gaps, from food insecurity to power shortages and inadequate healthcare. As noted in the study, the collapse of key services during recession periods, including widespread poverty, hunger, and poor access to basic amenities, creates public demand for practical, homegrown solutions (Agri et al., 2017; Deji, 2019). This societal pressure urges individuals and communities to look inward for solutions to their pressing needs. Entrepreneurship education, in this light, serves as a catalyst that equips learners to identify problems in their environment and transform them into business opportunities. By fostering design thinking, value creation, and resource mobilization, entrepreneurship education directly answers the call for local solutions to national challenges.

### **Entrepreneurship Education as a Tool for Sustainable Development**

Entrepreneurship education is a potent tool for achieving sustainable development. This it does by:

- Fostering the achievement of SDGs (Especially SDG 4, 8 and 9): Entrepreneurship serves as a fundamental driver for achieving Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure). The entrepreneurial process inherently creates employment opportunities while fostering innovation, directly addressing the core objectives of these goals. Research demonstrates that entrepreneurship education has a favorable impact on entrepreneurship engagement, which promotes economic development and growth (Kurotimi et al., 2017). Nations that embraced entrepreneurship education earlier than others are more developed and have more innovations influenced by entrepreneurs, suggesting a strong correlation between entrepreneurial activity and sustainable economic progress. Entrepreneurs function as risk-

takers who balance supply and demand in the market, with their activities focused on maximizing venture profits while creating employment opportunities (Cantillon's theory as cited in Dyantyi et al., 2024). The entrepreneurial mindset encourages individuals to identify business opportunities, organize resources, and start new ventures that contribute to economic transformation. By empowering individuals to create businesses and generate employment, entrepreneurship directly addresses unemployment challenges while driving innovation that builds resilient infrastructure. This dual impact makes entrepreneurship education a viable instrument for achieving both economic growth and sustainable development objectives.

- Ensuring the emergence of sustainability-focused Entrepreneurship during crises: Crisis situations often create fertile ground for sustainability-focused entrepreneurship to emerge as innovative solutions to pressing challenges. During periods of economic uncertainty, environmental degradation, or social instability, entrepreneurs are compelled to develop business models that address multiple stakeholder needs simultaneously. The theory of "creative destruction" suggests that established organizations, institutions, and business models must be disrupted to make room for innovation and new ventures (Hart & Milstein, 1999). This process becomes particularly relevant during crises when traditional approaches prove inadequate, forcing entrepreneurs to seek sustainable alternatives. Youth entrepreneurs possess greater awareness of sustainability concerns compared to the senior population, making them natural champions for sustainability-focused ventures during challenging times (Ofosu-Appiah et al., 2025). Crisis periods also foster collaborative approaches, as entrepreneurs seek partnerships with government agencies, educational institutions, and community organizations to address complex challenges. The urgency created by crisis situations often accelerates the development of innovative solutions that integrate environmental, social, and economic considerations. Additionally, crises can shift consumer preferences toward more sustainable products and services, creating market opportunities for sustainability-focused entrepreneurs to thrive.

- Embedding sustainable thinking in entrepreneurship curricula: Integrating sustainable thinking into entrepreneurship curricula requires a fundamental shift from traditional profit-first mentalities to approaches that consider environmental and social impacts alongside economic returns. Higher education institutions must prioritize the integration of entrepreneurship education across various disciplines, not limiting it to business-related courses but extending it to cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset among students from diverse backgrounds (Adeleke et al., 2025). Business schools should advocate for sustainable development from an entrepreneurial and opportunity-identification perspective to increase students' comprehension of the advantages of sustainable entrepreneurship. Experiential learning opportunities such as internships, apprenticeships, and entrepreneurial projects within the curriculum provide students with practical skills and real-world exposure to sustainable business practices. Faculty development programs are essential to enhance educators' capacity to effectively teach entrepreneurship education that incorporates sustainability principles and pedagogical strategies. Collaborative partnerships between higher education institutions, government agencies, industry stakeholders, and community organizations create supportive ecosystems for sustainability-focused entrepreneurship education. Curricula should be continuously evaluated and revised to align with emerging trends, industry needs, and sustainability goals, incorporating feedback from multiple stakeholders. Access to resources and support services such as mentorship, incubation facilities, funding opportunities, and networking events enables students to develop and grow their sustainable entrepreneurial ventures effectively.

### **Opportunities for Curriculum Innovation in Recession Periods**

They include:

- (1) Integrating real-world economic challenges into teaching: Entrepreneurship education curricula must evolve to address contemporary economic challenges by incorporating real-

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world scenarios that students will encounter in their professional lives. The curriculum should provide comprehensive understanding of the business world while equipping students with relevant knowledge and skills to navigate economic uncertainties (Esene, 2012). During periods of economic recession, characterized by reduced GDP, increased unemployment, and declining consumer confidence, entrepreneurship education becomes even more critical in preparing graduates who can contribute to economic recovery (Farabiyi, 2016). Educational institutions must ensure that their curricula reflect current economic realities, including factors such as inflation, high interest rates, and reduced real wages that characterize recessionary periods. The curriculum should emphasize the development of entrepreneurial skills that enable graduates to establish and manage their own businesses rather than solely seeking traditional employment (Agbola, 2015). Regular curriculum reviews are essential to maintain relevance and ensure that students are prepared to address evolving economic challenges. The integration of economic problem-solving approaches helps students develop critical thinking skills necessary for business success. This approach ensures that entrepreneurship education graduates can actively contribute to reducing unemployment and supporting economic growth through their entrepreneurial ventures.

- (2) Case-Based Learning, Local Context, and Problem-Solving Approaches: Effective entrepreneurship education requires the adoption of experiential learning methods that connect theoretical knowledge with practical application through case-based learning approaches. The curriculum must incorporate problem-solving methodologies that allow students to analyze real business scenarios and develop viable solutions. Local context becomes particularly important in ensuring that entrepreneurship education is relevant to the specific economic environment where graduates will operate. Field-testing of new practices and educational innovations should be integrated into the curriculum to ensure that teaching methods remain current and effective (Ughamadu, 2006). The individualization of instruction allows educators to tailor learning experiences to meet diverse student needs and learning styles (Esene, 2012). Workshops and conferences

should be organized to provide opportunities for both lecturers and students to engage with current business practices and emerging trends. The curriculum should facilitate correlation of subjects within the same field to provide students with a holistic understanding of business operations. Feedback mechanisms must be incorporated to continuously improve teaching methods and ensure that the curriculum remains responsive to changing business environments.

- (3) Promoting Green, Digital, and Inclusive Entrepreneurship: Modern entrepreneurship education curricula must evolve to address contemporary entrepreneurial paradigms that emphasize sustainability, digital innovation, and inclusive business practices. The curriculum should provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to establish businesses that contribute positively to environmental sustainability and social responsibility. Digital literacy and technological competency must be integrated into entrepreneurship education to prepare graduates for the increasingly digital business landscape. The curriculum should emphasize the importance of creating businesses that provide equal opportunities and serve diverse communities, promoting inclusive economic growth. Adequate equipment and technological resources are essential for maximum productivity and to ensure students can effectively engage with modern business tools and platforms (Esene, 2012). The curriculum must include provisions for students to gain practical experience through fieldwork and industry exposure that demonstrates sustainable and inclusive business practices. Training programs should be organized to help students understand how to integrate environmental and social considerations into their business planning and operations (Fabunmi & Isah, 2009). This comprehensive approach ensures that entrepreneurship education graduates are prepared to establish enterprises that contribute to sustainable economic development while addressing contemporary societal challenges.

### **Policy Implications and Stakeholder Roles**

1. Role of government, institutions, and the private sector: The government, universities, and private enterprises all play crucial roles in advancing entrepreneurship education as a tool

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for sustainable development during economic recessions. According to Ofor-Douglas (2024), the government has fallen short in providing basic education, functional infrastructure, and youth empowerment programs, thereby weakening the foundation needed for youth-driven innovation. Institutions, especially universities, need to prioritize curriculum reforms that focus on skill development, real-life problem solving, and entrepreneurial thinking (Mahaja & Yunus, 2013, as cited in Ofor-Douglas, 2022). Private sector involvement is equally essential; collaborations with industries can provide mentorship, internships, and funding opportunities that bridge the gap between theoretical learning and practical business experience. When these three sectors work together, they create a supportive ecosystem that fosters creativity, reduces unemployment, and stimulates grassroots enterprise. Such synergy can convert economic downturns into springboards for national renewal through entrepreneurial innovation.

2. Need for targeted funding and incentives during downturns: In times of recession, strategic investment in entrepreneurship education becomes imperative. The paper highlights that lack of infrastructure, poor planning, and inadequate funding are critical impediments to entrepreneurial development in Nigeria (Ekpiken & Ukpabio, 2015; Saleh et al., 2020). Targeted funding by government bodies such as TETFUND, as recommended by Akpochafo (2017), can sustain entrepreneurship centers and programs, especially in public universities. Moreover, financial incentives like grants for student startups, subsidized workshops, and seed funding competitions can motivate learners to develop viable business ideas despite economic uncertainties. The private sector can also contribute through CSR initiatives that support skill acquisition and business incubation programs within educational institutions. These targeted investments help not only in job creation but also in cultivating a generation that views economic adversity as an opportunity for innovation and self-reliance.
3. Collaborations between education providers and local communities: Strengthening the link between universities and local communities enhances the relevance and impact of entrepreneurship education. The document asserts that many graduates remain unemployed

because their education lacks practical relevance (Ogwu et al., 2017; Saleh et al., 2020). Engaging local communities in the entrepreneurial curriculum by tapping into local needs, markets, and resources can lead to the creation of community-based enterprises that are both sustainable and inclusive. Collaborative ventures, such as community entrepreneurship hubs, skill development outreach programs, and local mentorship schemes, can provide students with real-world experience while addressing grassroots challenges. According to Ofor-Douglas (2022), such collaborations can help reduce dependency on white-collar jobs and stimulate inclusive economic growth. By aligning academic learning with local economic realities, education becomes a tool for societal transformation even in times of economic stress.

### Challenges and Risks

Some of the challenges include:

- **Poor infrastructure:** Entrepreneurship education in Nigeria faces serious setbacks due to poor infrastructure, especially during economic recessions. Underfunded institutions often lack basic teaching and learning facilities such as functional equipment, ICT tools, and updated instructional materials. Budget shortfalls have forced departments to cut costs by reducing staff, delaying equipment maintenance, and limiting hands-on training opportunities (Ahmed, 2017). Since entrepreneurship education relies heavily on practical, skill-based learning, these infrastructure gaps weaken its effectiveness. Without access to well-equipped learning environments, students are left with mainly theoretical knowledge, which hinders their ability to apply what they learn in real-world business contexts (Yahaya, 2017).
- **Limited access to finance:** Access to funding is another major obstacle to effective entrepreneurship education in a recessionary economy. Economic downturns make it harder for both individuals and institutions to access financial resources. Students struggle to secure start-up capital for business ideas, while institutions face reduced government

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allocations, limiting their ability to invest in staff training, research materials, and curriculum development (Amina & Prisca, 2014; Ibrahim, 2017). With fewer grants, delayed payments, and slashed budgets, entrepreneurship education is weakened just when it is most needed. Yet, as Ibrahim (2017) emphasizes, investing in education during tough times is crucial, as it builds a skilled, productive population capable of driving recovery and sustainable development.

- Curriculum rigidity or disconnect from real-world needs: One of the most significant challenges facing entrepreneurship education for sustainable development is the rigidity of curricula that fail to align with contemporary real-world demands. As Adeleke et al., (2025) highlighted that the existing curriculum in Nigeria may not be relevant to the current needs of society, the job market, and global trends, necessitating curriculum innovation to ensure students are equipped with knowledge and skills truly needed in today's world. The disconnect becomes particularly evident when traditional educational frameworks continue to produce graduates who are "found to be grossly inadequate in practical and professional capabilities," resulting in "half-baked, ill-trained, and occasionally confused graduates" who cannot effectively contribute to the emerging global economy (Adeleke et al., 2025). This rigidity manifests in curricula that emphasize theoretical knowledge over practical application, failing to incorporate emerging concepts, technologies, and methodologies that are essential for entrepreneurial success. The lack of stakeholder engagement in curriculum development further exacerbates this problem, as educational programs fail to address the needs and realities of local contexts where entrepreneurship must thrive. Without addressing this fundamental disconnect, entrepreneurship education risks producing graduates who are unprepared for the dynamic challenges of sustainable development in the 21st century.
- Risk of temporary interventions without long-term impact: Another critical challenge is the prevalence of temporary interventions that lack the sustained commitment necessary for long-term impact in entrepreneurship education. Curriculum innovation is not a one-time event but rather an ongoing process that needs constant review and updating to remain

effective. However, the educational system often suffers from "incessant changes in government policies" that hinder the implementation of sustainable curriculum innovations, creating a cycle of short-term interventions that fail to establish lasting change (Adeleke et al., 2025). The problem is compounded by inadequate funding and resources allocated to curriculum innovation initiatives, which undermines efforts to introduce new teaching methods, technologies, and updated content that could enhance student learning outcomes. Resistance to change among educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders further perpetuates this challenge, as the lack of buy-in from key actors in the education system results in slow or ineffective adoption of new curriculum frameworks (Nwogu & Igwe, 2023). Without sustained commitment and long-term strategic planning, entrepreneurship education interventions risk becoming superficial additions that fail to transform the fundamental approaches to teaching and learning necessary for sustainable development.

## **Conclusion**

This study has shown that economic recessions, though often viewed as setbacks, can serve as powerful catalysts for reimagining entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. Recessionary periods create an urgent demand for alternative livelihoods, encouraging innovation, self-reliance, and a shift in mindset that favours entrepreneurial thinking. By strategically aligning entrepreneurship education with the dynamics of economic downturns, Nigeria can build a generation of resilient, sustainability-minded entrepreneurs equipped to address real societal problems and drive inclusive development. Educators must embrace curriculum innovation, policymakers must provide enabling frameworks, and the youth must rise to see adversity as a springboard for transformative action.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made:

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1. Federal Government (Ministry of Education & Ministry of Finance) should develop and implement counter-cyclical entrepreneurship education policies by funding entrepreneurship centres in tertiary institutions, particularly during economic recessions. Special intervention funds through TETFund and Central Bank stimulus packages should be directed toward youth-focused enterprise programs that promote innovation and job creation during downturns.
2. Universities and Higher Education Institutions should restructure entrepreneurship curricula to embed sustainable thinking, real-world problem solving, and recession-contextualised business case studies. Institutions should invest in faculty training, promote interdisciplinary collaboration, and provide experiential learning opportunities such as incubation hubs, apprenticeships, and sustainability-focused projects.
3. Private Sector and Industry Stakeholders should form strategic partnerships with educational institutions to co-develop entrepreneurship training modules, sponsor student startups, and offer mentorship programs. These collaborations should align business interests with social impact, especially during economic downturns when innovative community-based solutions are in high demand.
4. Local Communities and Non-Governmental Organizations should be engaged as co-educators and practical learning ecosystems by co-hosting entrepreneurship workshops and skills development programs tailored to local challenges. Community hubs can serve as laboratories for testing student-led sustainable ventures, especially in agriculture, energy, and local manufacturing.

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