

## Comparative Study of Effectiveness of Entrepreneurship Education in Malaysian and Nigerian Universities as Perceived by Lecturers

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### Abstract

*The educational systems of Malaysia and Nigeria, as two developing nations, have experienced a significant transformation through the adoption of an entrepreneurship programme as an innovation in their university curricula. This programme is designed to inculcate an entrepreneurial spirit among graduates. Nevertheless, it has been observed that a significant number of university graduates in these two countries remain bereft of this crucial mindset. This discrepancy is likely due to the obstacles that arise during the implementation process, which this current study tries to investigate based on the views of the lecturers. Employing a qualitative methodology and utilizing a rigorous interview protocol, data were gathered from purposively selected ten (10) lecturers from two prestigious public universities in both Malaysia and Nigeria. Again, this number, as well was considered as the sample size of the study. Through a meticulous thematic analysis, the findings on the challenges include, lack of students' interest, lack of parents' support, lack of adequate facilities, large number of students, limitation of skills, lack of sufficient funds, students' not sufficient in communication skills and lack of lecturers' expertise. Again, on the suggestion to improve the implementation, the findings include, providing preferential treatment to interested students, expansion of skills, increasing the programme's credit units, prioritizing experiential activities, and providing financial support to students. Therefore, it is recommended for the university to consider these suggestions in reshaping the implementation practices of entrepreneurship education.*

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship education; Perceived views; Implementation; Constraints; University

### Introduction

The university stands as a hallmark of societal advancement, particularly in fostering innovation and enriching individuals' intellectual, social, and economic assets. It represents a pivotal institution driving significant transformations in society by proposing and implementing solutions (Alexander, 2012). While traditionally perceived primarily as centers for teaching and research, universities, as noted by Kerr (2002), now also play a crucial economic role. This

expanded role involves equipping students with business insight, aligning with the concept of a "knowledge-driven economy." In this framework, universities are not merely disseminators of knowledge but also creators of new knowledge domains, prioritizing the cultivation of skilled individuals who can effectively contribute to a nation's economic progress (Galloway & Brown, 2002).

Sequel to the above, Malaysia, and Nigeria, both categorized as developing nations, have recently encountered a concerning rise in graduate unemployment, hindering their economic progress (Abd Rahman et al., 2020; Olorunfemi, 2021). Consequently, the educational focus in these countries has shifted towards enhancing graduates' employability, emphasizing the cultivation of soft skills and fostering self-reliance (Nadarajah, 2021; Okolie, 2020) This shift has led to the introduction of entrepreneurship education in university curricula, as many employers recognizing that graduates equipped with entrepreneurial training and mindset tend to demonstrate higher levels of creativity and proficiency (Pickernell et al., 2011). Both Malaysia and Nigeria have implemented various strategies to strengthen and support the incorporation of entrepreneurship programs at the university level, aiming to promote entrepreneurial activities among students (Kaur & Noman, 2019; Ojotu et al., 2022). For instance, starting from early 2012, the Malaysian government has allocated RM 100,000,000 annually as soft loans accessible to university graduates to encourage business establishment (Ooi & Ahmad, 2012).

In parallel, numerous entrepreneurship workshops, seminars, and programs organized by the Malaysia Ministry of Higher Education have been conducted to instill an entrepreneurial spirit among graduates (Ooi & Ahmad, 2012). Similarly, in Nigeria, several government agencies such as the Small Medium Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDEN) have been established to support the creation of small businesses and provide loans for university graduates (Adelaja & Minai, 2018). Despite these concerted efforts, it is disheartening to note that a considerable number of university graduates in both countries prefer seeking government jobs over entrepreneurship. Additionally, in Malaysia, the low attendance at organized workshops and seminars further underscores the lack of entrepreneurial spirit among students, raising questions about the effectiveness of implementing entrepreneurship education in these countries (Yusof et al., 2019).

### **Purpose of the Study**

To unfold reasons behind the students' lack of entrepreneurial intention, it is essentially paramount to understand the challenges observed during the implementation of the university entrepreneurship; and ways to overcome those challenges. This can be well digested from the outlooks of the lecturers teaching the entrepreneurship program; as they are the primary implementers of the curriculum, and their beliefs, attitudes, and experiences can influence how they implement the curriculum in the classroom. Hence, the following research questions guide the study:

- i. What are the lecturers' perceived views on the challenges that hinder the attainment of the program's goal?
- ii. What are the lecturers' suggestions to improve entrepreneurial mindset among the university students?

## **Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative approach to gain a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of entrepreneurship programs in selected universities in Malaysia and Nigeria. The research utilizes interviews to gather detailed insights into the implementation practices of these programs, focusing specifically on lecturers responsible for delivering the curriculum. The target population consists of ten lecturers across two universities, with seven lecturers at Umaru Musa Yar'adua University—five teaching the theoretical aspects and two handling practical components. At Universiti Sains Malaysia, there are three lecturers, bringing the total to ten. Thematic analysis is employed as the method of data analysis. To ensure a thorough qualitative analysis, it is crucial for the researcher to be intimately familiar with the data at all stages, including conducting interviews, transcribing, and coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, the researcher personally conducted the interviews, transcribed them, and carried out the coding procedures.

## **Interview Analysis Technique**

### *Identification of themes for the study*

Qualitative thematic analysis involves identifying and categorizing themes from interview data, aligning with the study's research question. The researcher utilizes responses as coding units, assigning categories based on recurring concepts or subjects. Selected quotations provide depth to

participant perspectives, supporting each theme's elaboration and relevance to the investigation's subject matter.

*The Process of Sorting the Themes and Developing the Codes*

The interview transcript was initially organized into sections corresponding to specific research inquiries or variables under study. Following the recording and transcription of the interviews, thematic categorization of the transcripts was carried out, often aided by organizing them into thematic columns for coding purposes. This study adopted open coding, a method outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), which involves digesting and conceptualizing data to identify and manage key elements to facilitate a better understanding of respondents' viewpoints. Thematic analysis focuses on explicit words or phrases from interviewees, helping analysts identify areas of convergence where responses align across participants for relevant questions posed. In this context, the researcher completed the initial coding stage and subsequently grouped together concepts or codes that shared similar characteristics, forming categories or themes within the data. Consequently, nine categories were established to represent the first research question, while eight categories were devised to represent the second research question. Essentially, each category encompasses sub-categories, representing significant issues or themes emerging from the data. This is illustrated in table 1 & 2 below:

**Categories of themes and Sub-themes for data analysis**

**Table I: Themes Categories for data analysis for Malaysian Participants**

S/N	Concept of the research question	Main Theme	Sub-Themes
1	Challenges Observed from Malaysian Lecturers	lack of students' interest  Lack of parents' support	Students not sufficient in communication skills
2	Recommendations/Suggestions	Special treatment for interested students.  Set intervention programs.	Expand the products.  Improve students' communication skills
3	Challenges Observed from Nigerian Lecturers	University lacks adequate facilities.	

S/N	Concept of the research question	Main Theme	Sub-Themes
		Lack of finance	
		Large number of students affects learning.	
		Limitation of skills	
		Lack of interest	
		Teachers Lack support and motivation from the university.	
4	Recommendations/Suggestions	lack of expertise	
		Expansion of skills	
		Increase credit units.	
		More rigorous in the experiential aspect	
		Emphasize on experiential activity.	
		Provide financial support.	
		Increase the time span to learn the skills.	

To ensure validity and reliability, the approach recommended by Cohen (2000) was adhered to for the validation process. This involved providing the interview result transcripts to experts, including university lecturers with extensive teaching and research backgrounds, for validation. These experts identified substantive statements and eliminated any redundant or irrelevant statements

until all relevant themes were clearly identified. Additionally, the inter-rater reliability among the panel members regarding the themes was assessed using the Cohen Kappa coefficient. (Karpudewan, 2009).

**Table II: Guide to Interpret Kappa value.**

Kappa Value	Degree of Agreement
< .00	Less than chance agreement
.00 - .20	Slightly agreement
.21 - .40	Fair agreement
.41 - .60	Moderate agreement
.61 - .80	Substantial agreement
.08 – 1.00	Almost perfect agreement

**Results and Discussion**

**What are the lecturers’ perceived views on the challenges that hinder the attainment of the program’s goal and suggestions to improve it?**

**Table III: Inter Rater Measure of Agreement**

	Value	Asymptotic Standard Error <sup>a</sup>	Approximate T <sup>b</sup>	Approximate Significance
Measure of Kappa Agreement	0.811	0.179	3.090	0.002
N of Valid Cases	14			

The value presented in Table III above indicates a coefficient of .811. According to the criteria derived from Landis and Koch (1977), a Kappa (K) value of .811 signifies substantial agreement. Moreover, as P = 0.002 (indicating p < 0.05), the Kappa (K) coefficient is deemed statistically significant and valid. The obtained result of 0.811 from this process confirms its validity. Table 4 displays the level of agreement among the raters.

**Table IV: Interview Codes for Lecturers**

Interview	
<b>Malaysian University Lecturers’ Interview</b>	<b>Nigerian University Lecturers’ Interview</b>
-LM1-Lecturer-I	-LN1-Lecturer-I
-LM2-Lecturer-I	-LN2-Lecturer-I
-LM3-Lecturer-I	-LN3-Lecturer-I
	-LN4-Lecturer-I
	-LN5-Lecturer-I
	-LN6-Lecturer-I
	-LN7-Lecturer-I

The table IV above portrays the codes assigned to the interview. The column for the interview data coded as ‘I’, since the study is a comparative study between two countries – Malaysia and Nigeria that comprises, lecturers teaching the entrepreneurship program, the participants were coded as

‘LM1-Lecturer-I’ up to ‘LM3- Lecturer-I’, signifies that these are interview responses from Malaysian Lecturers. On the contrary, participants from Nigeria were coded as LN1-Lecturer-I’ up to ‘LN7- Lecturer-I, indicating responses from Nigerian lecturers.

### **What are the lecturers’ perceived view on the challenges that hinder the attainment of the program’s goal?**

#### *Interview Findings on the Challenges*

This section addresses the first research question, which the focus is on discussing the challenges that hinder the achievement of objectives in entrepreneurship programs, as perceived by lecturers in Malaysian and Nigerian universities. The primary objective is to identify similarities and differences in their perspectives. From the interview data collected, several common and distinct themes emerged from the responses of participants. These themes include lack of student interest, insufficient parental support, inadequate facilities, financial constraints, high student enrollment, limited skills, lack of expertise, and inadequate communication skills among students. These themes are elaborated upon below:

#### ***Lack of Students’ interest***

According to insights from lecturers in Malaysia and Nigeria, it is evident that various challenges have been identified by both groups. In a comparative analysis, both sets of lecturers agree that the primary challenge lies in the lack of student interest in entrepreneurship education. Consequently, this factor has significantly hindered the development of an entrepreneurial mindset among students. As expresses below in the view of Malaysian lecturer:

*So, we force them, some of them like it, while most of them do not like it. But in order to pass the course, then they have to do that.*

LM11/SecA/line649-651)

Accordingly, LNI3 expresses that students in Nigeria have also demonstrated lack of interest in the entrepreneurship program. Majority of them admire to become job seekers, instead of job creators – entrepreneurs:

*So, at the end of the day, they think they may end up getting a white-collar job. So, they are not really interested and that is the problem.*

LNI3/SecC/line1438-1444).

In terms of challenges for implementing the entrepreneurship university program by the lecturers, it is evident that they are struggling to drive means for fostering entrepreneurial mindset and interest among the students. Notably, interest is a fundamental element that sustains the whole process of teaching and learning. Teachers who are passionate about teaching profession devote their energy, resources, and commitment to deliver by stimulating students' interest. (Maria Joao & Miguel Silva, 2020). Interest makes students to exhibit curiosity while learning; it also prompts them to be punctual in a classroom, become attentive, and dedicative (Saptono et al., 2020). It can be noticed that both lecturers in Malaysian and Nigerian university had been battling with the issue of students' lack of interest in learning entrepreneurship. This is portrayed in the students' negligible behavior in attending the classes, and their admiration for the seek for white-collar job, instead of becoming self-employers.

### ***Lack of Parents' Support***

Specifically, Malaysian lecturers are the only ones who express concern about the lack of parental support as an additional obstacle impeding entrepreneurial education at the university. This sentiment is reinforced by LMI1, who states, "Over the twenty years, there are some parents who come and say the students in the university are not here to do business; they are here to learn." This sentiment is echoed by LMI2, who also emphasizes:

*Not only the young adult students, but even many parents were not happy that their children were forced to undertake a course in entrepreneurship.*

LMI2/SecC/line1397-1401)

Parents play a crucial role in inspiring students to learn, serving as their initial educators who instill moral values and provide various forms of support—financial, moral, and intellectual (Sukron Djazilan & Darmawan, 2022). They also encourage and assist children in pursuing their areas of interest and expertise. In the context of entrepreneurship education, the family background and support from parents significantly influence students' decisions. Families without prior business experience may inadvertently discourage their children from considering entrepreneurship as a career path (Georgescu & Herman, 2020; Nguyen, 2020). For instance, parents of Malaysian university students may not actively encourage their children to pursue entrepreneurship programs, potentially contributing to the challenge of students lacking an entrepreneurial mindset.

### ***Lack of adequate facilities***



Exclusively, Nigerian entrepreneurship lecturers stress that the university is lacking in terms of adequate facilities for proper entrepreneurship training. For example, in the opinion of LNI7:

*We don't have enough facilities to produce the fish and to teach*

LNI7/SecA/line421-424)

Adequate and efficient learning facilities are an essential requirement in learning and serve two important roles. One, it enables teachers to communicate the learning objectives easily and successfully. Two, it helps learners to understand the learning content, visualize it; and it facilitates remembering (Kusumojanto et al., 2020). Similarly, in entrepreneurship education, efficient teaching and learning facilities are rudiments that support smooth entrepreneurial mindset set inculcation (Denanyoh et al., 2015); these include the conduciveness of a classroom, equipment for experiential activities, and effective entrepreneurship center (Widjaja et al., 2022). Despite this distinctive relevance of having effective teaching and learning facilities for entrepreneurship education, lecturers at a Nigerian university lamented the lack of supportive tools for the practical component of the course that necessitates experiential activities.

### ***Large number of Students***

Precisely, for Nigerian universities, larger number of students in the entrepreneurship classroom is identified as another challenge that deter successful teaching of the program. For instance, in the opinion of LNI3 below:

*I think the university should limit the number of students taking the entrepreneurship course in a session.*

LNI3/SecB/line1182-1186).

Undoubtedly, manageable classroom size facilitates teaching and learning process. In it, teachers find it easy to understand the emotional intelligence of quite number of students (Cheng et al., 2019). Again, such classroom enables teachers to identify individual difference among students and treat them accordingly (Khajavy et al., 2018). Equally, effective entrepreneurship education requires a well-managed classroom to create a conducive learning environment. This also helps to improve students' engagement, productivity and reduces stress levels. In this context, teachers are prompted to develop their classroom management skills and strategies, provide clear instructions and expectations. These as well, enable students to learn effectively, become confident as a prerequisite in entrepreneurship (Ratten & Usmanij, 2020).

### ***Limitation of Skills***

In Nigerian universities, the teaching of entrepreneurship programs prioritizes skill development. This focus involves imparting training in specific areas such as tie and dye, computer repair, soap making, and fish farming. Lecturers in the program perceive this emphasis on limited skills as a challenge that hinders the cultivation of an entrepreneurial mindset among students, as elaborated by LNI4:

*The challenge as I said is the limited skills that we have. We don't have many skills.*

LNI4/SecC/line1451-1452).

Knowing and considering students' passion and interest serve as opening step to accomplish effective instructional delivery. Initially, when students are interested in whatever they learn, they normally become more engaged and actively learn in the classroom. Relatively, this engagement leads teachers to achieve better learning outcomes and for students, it helps them to have more positive learning experience (Zainuddin et al., 2019). Equally, in entrepreneurship training, students are more likely to see the relevance of entrepreneurship skills when they align with their interest. This connection prompts students to see the application of the skills to their lives and future career (Doan & Phan, 2020). Hence, restriction in number of skills to be learned in entrepreneurship signifies unrecognition of students' passion and interest; it emphasizes a teacher-centered instead of students' centered approach of teaching.

### ***Insufficient of Finance***

Similarly, lack of finance is tremendously mentioned as a major challenge that Nigerian universities face in entrepreneurship training. Like LNI5, expresses in the following that:

*Funds, finance, these are the fundamental challenges in university.*

LNI5/SecC/line1462-1465)

Finance is a critical factor in all aspects of curriculum development, including planning, design, implementation, innovation, and evaluation. Furthermore, any planned activity becomes futile without adequate funds to acquire the necessary resources for its execution (Albareda-Tiana et al., 2018; Voogt et al., 2016). For instance, entrepreneurship education demands practical experience, necessitating facilities and resources to create an optimal learning environment conducive to such

activities (Nowiński et al., 2019). However, lecturers teaching entrepreneurship in Nigerian universities have identified "lack of funding" as a significant challenge faced by the university, greatly hindering its ability to instill an entrepreneurial mindset among students.

### ***Inadequacy of Expertise***

In today's world, having expertise is essential in every aspect of life. It's important to remember that each field of study has its unique content, which requires specific training for effective delivery (Seikkula-Leino et al., 2015). Expertise is an integral feature in teaching entrepreneurship education. Teachers with expertise accumulate deep knowledge and practical experiences that lead to effective classroom instruction. Expertise resembles a reservoir that encompasses knowledge, experience, problem-solving skills, creativity, communication skills, and critical thinking capacity (Wilkin, 2015). Thus, having a teacher with expertise in entrepreneurship training will help students understand the steps for the entrepreneurship journey, including identifying and evaluating business opportunities, developing business plans, and managing finances effectively (Foliard et al., 2018). In line with this, the Nigerian university limited its students to learn certain skills; and yet did not have the expertise to teach the skills. Instead, it outsources experts to teach the student some of those skills, as in the expression of LNI7:

*I personally expect the university to prioritize entrepreneurial skills that the university has staff who can handle the skills,*

LNI7/SecA/line1106-1109)

### ***Limited Communication Skills of the Students***

In Malaysia, the entrepreneurship program places a strong emphasis on improving students' communication abilities, aiming to develop their proficiency in speaking fluently, writing coherently, and building confidence to effectively interact with others. However, it has been observed that university students often exhibit shortcomings in their communication skills, as highlighted by LMI3:

*It is no longer a secret that our students are lacking in the area of language competence. So, it should be improved.*

LMI3/SecC/line1106-1109)

**What are the lecturers' suggestions to improve entrepreneurial mindset among the university students?**

### *Interview Findings on suggestion for Improvement*

Based on the perspectives of lecturers from Malaysia and Nigeria, there are identified strategies and methods to enhance the implementation of entrepreneurship education at the university level. These strategies are considered significant solutions that can foster students' entrepreneurial intentions. From the interview data gathered regarding the challenges observed by the lecturers, six distinct major themes and one additional sub-theme have emerged from the study. These include: - Offering specialized support for interested students; broadening skill sets; augmenting credit units; prioritizing experiential learning activities; providing financial assistance; extending the duration for skill acquisition; and enhancing students' communication skills.

### *Provide special treatment for Interested Students*

In line with this, lecturers in Malaysian university, recommended for 'special treatment for those interested students in entrepreneurship. This can be fathomed in the view of LMI3 below:

*There is also the need to identify more serious students to give them thorough and intensive training.*

LMI3/SecC/line1649-1654)

### *Expansion of Skills*

As previously discussed, entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities focuses on acquiring practical skills. Nonetheless, lecturers at these institutions have emphasized the necessity of eliminating this restriction and have proposed the following recommendations:

*So, number one is to introduce different skills within the entrepreneurship studies center,*

LNI6/SecC/line1577-1578)

### *Increase Credit Units*

In Nigerian universities, instructors who teach entrepreneurship programs perceive the current credit unit allocation as inadequate, which they view as a factor influencing students' entrepreneurial aspirations. Therefore, they propose increasing the credit units allocated to the program:

*So, there is need to also increase the credits units of the program.*

LNI5/SecC/line1569-1573)

***Emphasize experiential activity.***

Earlier, entrepreneurship lecturers at a Nigerian university identified several challenges that hindered their ability to cultivate entrepreneurial graduates. Among these challenges was the predominance of theoretical teaching methods over practical, experiential activities. Consequently, LNI5 suggests the following solution:

*We need to provide our students with hand-on deck.*

LNI5/SecC/line1705-1713)

***Provide financial support.***

As highlighted by entrepreneurship lecturers in Nigeria, the university faces financial constraints in terms of adequately resourcing the program. Additionally, the lecturers expressed concern that students with an interest in entrepreneurship do not receive financial assistance from either the university or the government. Therefore, LNI4 suggests the following:

*such students should be given support in the form of equipment and finance to support their entrepreneurial journey.'*

LNI4/SecC/line1544-1557).

***Improve students' communication skills.***

To emphasize once more, the primary objective of the Malaysian entrepreneurial university program is to improve students' communication skills. However, despite the program's implementation, students demonstrate significant deficiencies in speaking skills, lack confidence, and feel hesitant to engage with others. Considering this, LMI2 proposes enhancing this aspect. Additionally, LMI3 explicitly stated:

*engaging students into several programs that deal with learning how to build confidence, and mastery of communication skill.*

LMI3/SecC/line1510-1514)

**Conclusion**

The qualitative findings indicate that entrepreneurship lecturers in both universities share a similar concern regarding the lack of students' interest in entrepreneurship education, which poses a significant challenge to its successful implementation. However, there are several areas of

challenge in teaching the program where the lecturers from the Nigerian university reported more complaints that may hinder the program's success. In addition to the lack of students' interest, Malaysian lecturers identified two fundamental challenges, namely the lack of parents' support and students' deficient communication skills. Conversely, Nigerian lecturers highlighted several challenges that escalate to include the lack of adequate facilities, large class sizes, limited skills, insufficient financing, and a shortage of expertise. From the lecturers' perspectives, these challenges require improvements in entrepreneurship education. Nevertheless, the Malaysian and Nigerian lecturers' views on ways to improve the entrepreneurship program differ, reflecting the unique challenges in their respective universities. Malaysian lecturers suggested that providing special treatment to students and improving their communication skills are two areas that can promote students' entrepreneurial intention. In contrast, Nigerian lecturers recommended expanding students' skills, increasing credit units, and providing financial support to ensure the successful implementation of entrepreneurship education at the university.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the perceived views of the lecturers teaching the university entrepreneurship education on the challenges observed the following recommendations are essential:

1. In the case of Malaysia, universities are duty bound to organize sensitization workshops for parents to orient them on the rationale behind teaching entrepreneurship education at the university level.
2. In both countries, there is need to split entrepreneurship classroom into manageable size for proper control and effective communication.
3. Likewise, students should be given opportunities to choose skills of their interest to learn, as interest serves a major key that stimulates learning.
4. Again, resources for teaching entrepreneurship education ranging from physical to manpower should be made adequate, efficient; and expertise should also be considered for teaching entrepreneurship education.

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