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# RE-CONCEPTUALIZING HISTORY EDUCATION FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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## Abstract

This paper re-conceptualizes history education as a strategic pathway for entrepreneurship development in Nigeria, in response to the persistent challenge of graduate unemployment and the declining relevance of humanities disciplines. Grounded in the theoretical perspectives of Joseph Schumpeter, John Dewey, and Lev Vygotsky, the study adopts a qualitative, theory-based approach to interrogate the nexus between historical knowledge and entrepreneurial capacity. The paper argues that history education is not merely concerned with the study of past events but serves as a medium for developing critical thinking, analytical reasoning, creativity, communication, and problem-solving skills essential for entrepreneurial success. It further explores practical domains such as cultural heritage management, historical tourism, digital storytelling, archival enterprise, and content development as viable opportunities for self-reliance among history graduates. Central to the discourse is the formulation of a conceptual framework that illustrates the



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progression from historical knowledge acquisition to entrepreneurial skill formation and ultimately to enterprise creation. The framework underscores the relevance of experiential learning, learner-centered pedagogy, and the integration of indigenous knowledge systems. The paper concludes that repositioning history education within an entrepreneurial paradigm enhances its socio-economic relevance and contributes meaningfully to sustainable development in Nigeria. It therefore recommends curriculum restructuring, pedagogical innovation, and policy support as essential mechanisms for maximizing the entrepreneurial potential of history education.

# Introduction

In recent decades, the question of graduate employability has become a central concern in Nigeria's educational discourse, particularly in the humanities. Among the disciplines most affected is History, a field traditionally associated with critical inquiry, cultural preservation, and civic education. Despite its intellectual value, history education in Nigeria has increasingly been criticized for its limited alignment with contemporary labour market demands. Consequently, many graduates of history struggle with unemployment and underemployment, a situation that reflects broader structural challenges within the Nigerian economy and educational system (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2022).

Unemployment among university graduates in Nigeria has reached alarming levels, with youth unemployment and underemployment rates consistently exceeding 30% in recent years (NBS, 2022). Within this context, graduates of non-professional and humanities-based disciplines, including history, are often disproportionately affected due to the perceived lack of direct vocational or technical skills. Employers frequently prioritize candidates with competencies in science, technology, engineering, and business-related fields, leaving history graduates at a disadvantage in a highly competitive job market (Okolie, Igwe, & Elom, 2019). This mismatch between academic training and labour market expectations has led to growing concerns about the relevance and practicality of history education in contemporary Nigeria.

Historically, the teaching of history in Nigerian institutions has emphasized the transmission of knowledge about past events, personalities, and processes, with less attention given to the development of transferable skills such as innovation, critical thinking for problem-solving, and entrepreneurial capacity. While these traditional objectives remain important, they are no longer sufficient in a rapidly changing global economy characterized by technological advancement, economic uncertainty, and the need for self-reliance (Adebisi & Oni, 2012). As a result, there is an urgent need to rethink



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and transform the objectives, content, and pedagogy of history education to make it more responsive to present-day realities.

Entrepreneurship education has emerged as a key strategy for addressing graduate unemployment and fostering economic development in Nigeria. The Federal Government of Nigeria has, over the years, introduced entrepreneurship courses into tertiary education curricula with the aim of equipping students with skills for self-employment and wealth creation (Yusuf & Albanawi, 2016). However, the implementation of entrepreneurship education has often been generic and disconnected from specific disciplinary contexts. In the case of history education, entrepreneurship is rarely integrated in a meaningful way that reflects the unique competencies and opportunities inherent in the discipline. This disconnect limits the potential of history graduates to leverage their knowledge and skills in entrepreneurial ventures such as heritage tourism, archival management, cultural consultancy, publishing, and digital content creation.

The concept of reconceptualizing history education, therefore, becomes critical. Reconceptualization involves a fundamental rethinking of the aims, methods, and outcomes of history education to align it with contemporary socio-economic needs. It requires moving beyond the traditional focus on historical knowledge acquisition to a more dynamic model that integrates entrepreneurial thinking, innovation, and practical skill development. Such an approach recognizes that history is not merely about the past but also a resource for understanding and shaping the present and future (Wineburg, 2001).

Despite the growing recognition of the need for educational reform, there remains a significant gap in the literature and practice regarding the integration of entrepreneurship into history education in Nigeria. Existing studies on entrepreneurship education have largely focused on business, engineering, and vocational disciplines, with limited attention given to the humanities (Oviawe, 2010; Okolie et al., 2019). Similarly, research on history education has tended to emphasize curriculum content, teaching methods, and its role in nation-building, without adequately addressing its potential for economic empowerment and entrepreneurship development. This gap highlights the need for a theoretical framework that explicitly connects history education with entrepreneurial outcomes.

Furthermore, the current structure of history programmes in Nigerian universities often lacks practical components that could facilitate experiential learning and skill acquisition. Teaching methods are predominantly lecture-based, with minimal opportunities for students to engage in hands-on activities, project-based learning, or industry collaboration. This limits students' ability to apply historical knowledge in real-world contexts and to develop the confidence and competence required for entrepreneurial ventures (Kolawole & Arikewuyo, 2018). In addition, there is insufficient emphasis on



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interdisciplinary learning, which could enable history students to combine their knowledge with skills from other fields such as business, information technology, and media studies.

The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to develop a theoretical framework for reconceptualizing history education as a tool for entrepreneurship development in Nigeria. Specifically, the paper seeks to: (1) examine the challenges associated with unemployment among history graduates; (2) identify the limitations of the current history education curriculum in relation to entrepreneurial development; and (3) propose a reconceptualized model of history education that integrates entrepreneurial competencies, innovative pedagogies, and practical skill acquisition. By doing so, the paper aims to contribute to ongoing efforts to reform education in Nigeria and to enhance the relevance and employability of history graduates.

This study is significant in several ways. First, it addresses a critical gap in both history education and entrepreneurship education literature by providing a conceptual linkage between the two fields. Second, it offers a framework that policymakers, curriculum developers, and educators can use to redesign history programmes in Nigerian universities. Third, it highlights the untapped potential of history as a discipline that can contribute not only to intellectual development but also to economic empowerment and national development. Ultimately, reconceptualizing history education for entrepreneurship development represents a strategic approach to tackling graduate unemployment and fostering a more inclusive and sustainable economy in Nigeria. The paper is divided into the following sections: introduction, conceptual clarification, theoretical Framework, opportunities of Entrepreneurship education to graduates of History, recommendations and conclusion.

**Conceptual Clarification**

A clear understanding of the core concepts—history education, entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurial skills—is essential for situating this study within a coherent theoretical and practical framework. These concepts are interrelated in ways that illuminate how knowledge of the past can be harnessed to foster innovation, self-reliance, and economic productivity among graduates.

**History Education**

History education refers to the structured teaching and learning of past human experiences with the aim of developing critical thinking, civic competence, and an understanding of societal change over time. It goes beyond the mere memorization of dates and events to include the interpretation of historical evidence, analysis of cause-and-effect relationships, and the development of reflective judgment (Wineburg, 2001).



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In contemporary educational discourse, history education is increasingly viewed as a transformative discipline capable of equipping learners with transferable skills such as analytical reasoning, problem-solving, and communication (Seixas & Morton, 2013).

In the Nigerian context, history education has traditionally been oriented toward nation-building, identity formation, and cultural preservation (Ajayi, 2009). However, its relevance in the modern labour market has been questioned due to the perceived disconnect between historical knowledge and employability. This perception has contributed to the marginalization of history as a discipline, particularly when compared to science and technology-oriented fields (Alabi, 2012). Despite this, scholars argue that history education possesses inherent potentials for fostering creativity and innovation when reconceptualized to align with contemporary socio-economic realities (Osokoya, 2010).

Thus, history education in this study is conceptualized not only as a humanities discipline but also as a dynamic field capable of contributing to entrepreneurial development through the cultivation of critical and adaptive thinking.

**Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship is defined as the process of identifying opportunities, mobilizing resources, and creating value through innovation and risk-taking (Hisrich, Peters, & Shepherd, 2017). It involves the ability to transform ideas into viable economic or social ventures. Entrepreneurship is not limited to business creation; it also encompasses a mindset characterized by initiative, creativity, resilience, and the capacity to navigate uncertainty (Drucker, 1985).

In the context of national development, entrepreneurship is widely recognized as a key driver of economic growth, job creation, and poverty reduction (Acs, Desai, & Hessels, 2008). For countries like Nigeria, where graduate unemployment remains a persistent challenge, entrepreneurship is increasingly promoted as an alternative pathway to self-employment and economic empowerment (Nwafor, 2007).

Within educational systems, entrepreneurship is conceptualized both as a subject of study and as a pedagogical approach aimed at developing entrepreneurial attitudes and competencies among students. This aligns with the global shift toward competency-based education, where learners are prepared not only for employment but also for self-reliance and innovation (European Commission, 2016).

In relation to this study, entrepreneurship is viewed as a transformative process that can be integrated into history education to enable graduates to apply historical knowledge in creating economic opportunities.



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**Entrepreneurial Skills**

Entrepreneurial skills refer to the set of abilities, competencies, and attributes that enable individuals to successfully initiate, manage, and sustain entrepreneurial ventures. These skills include, but are not limited to, opportunity recognition, creativity, critical thinking, risk management, decision-making, communication, leadership, and financial literacy (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2010).

Entrepreneurial skills are often categorized into three broad domains:

Cognitive skills (e.g., problem-solving, analytical thinking),

Personal skills (e.g., self-confidence, resilience, motivation), and

Interpersonal skills (e.g., networking, teamwork, negotiation) (Man, Lau, & Chan, 2002).

In the context of education, the development of entrepreneurial skills is seen as a crucial outcome that prepares learners for both formal employment and self-employment. These skills are not confined to business disciplines; they can be cultivated across various fields, including the humanities. For instance, history students can develop research skills, critical analysis, storytelling, and contextual interpretation—competencies that are highly relevant in entrepreneurial activities such as consulting, content creation, tourism, and cultural resource management. Therefore, entrepreneurial skills in this study are conceptualized as transferable competencies that can be embedded within history education to enhance the employability and self-reliance of graduates.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the contributions of Joseph Schumpeter, John Dewey, and Lev Vygotsky. The contributions by these scholars provide complementary perspectives on innovation, experiential learning, and social cognition, which are essential for reconceptualizing history education toward entrepreneurship development.

**Joseph Schumpeter's Theory of Innovation (1934)**

Joseph Schumpeter, in his seminal work The Theory of Economic Development (1934), conceptualized entrepreneurship as a process of "creative destruction," where entrepreneurs disrupt existing economic structures through innovation. According to Schumpeter, entrepreneurs are change agents who introduce new products, processes, markets, or organizational forms (Schumpeter, 1934). The meaning of this theory lies in its emphasis on innovation as the driving force of economic growth and societal transformation.

The relevance of Schumpeter's theory to this study is significant because it positions entrepreneurship not merely as business creation but as a mindset involving creativity, problem-solving, and adaptability. In the context of history education, this theory suggests that students should be trained to reinterpret historical knowledge innovatively,



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identify patterns of change, and apply such insights to contemporary socio-economic challenges. By embedding entrepreneurial thinking into history curricula, graduates can develop skills that enable them to create opportunities rather than depend solely on formal employment.

**John Dewey's Experiential Learning Theory (1938)**

As an educational philosopher, John Dewey argued that education should be grounded in experience, where learners actively engage with their environment and construct meaning through reflection (Dewey, 1938). The core meaning of this theory is that learning is most effective when it is participatory, practical, and connected to real-life situations.

The relevance of Dewey's theory to this study lies in its advocacy for "learning by doing," which aligns closely with entrepreneurship education. Applying this to history education implies shifting from rote memorization of historical facts to interactive pedagogies such as project-based learning, simulations, and community-based historical inquiry. These approaches can equip students with practical skills such as critical thinking, decision-making, and initiative, all of which are essential for entrepreneurial success.

**Lev Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory (1978)**

Lev Vygotsky's social constructivist theory emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural context in cognitive development. Vygotsky introduced key concepts such as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding, which explain how learners acquire knowledge through guided interaction with more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1978). The meaning of this theory centers on the idea that learning is a collaborative process shaped by social and cultural influences.

The relevance of Vygotsky's theory to this study is evident in its support for collaborative and dialogic learning environments. In history education, this translates to group discussions, peer learning, and mentorship, where students co-construct knowledge and develop communication and teamwork skills. These competencies are crucial for entrepreneurship, which often involves networking, collaboration, and shared problem-solving.

While all the three theories are relevant, Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory emerges as the most suitable for this study. This is because entrepreneurship development in history education is inherently a social process that requires interaction, collaboration, and contextual understanding. Vygotsky's emphasis on guided learning and cultural context aligns closely with the Nigerian educational environment, where communal values and social learning play a significant role. Furthermore, the theory supports

pedagogical strategies that foster entrepreneurial skills such as communication, teamwork, and adaptive thinking.

However, it is important to note that an integrated framework combining Schumpeter's innovation perspective and Dewey's experiential approach alongside Vygotsky's social constructivism provides a more holistic foundation. Schumpeter explains why entrepreneurship is important (innovation and economic transformation), Dewey explains how it should be taught (experience-based learning), and Vygotsky explains how learning occurs (social interaction and scaffolding).

**Opportunities of Entrepreneurship education to graduates of History**

Entrepreneurship education presents significant opportunities for History graduates by equipping them with practical, transferable, and innovative skills that extend beyond the traditional perception of History as a purely academic discipline. In contemporary economies characterized by high unemployment rates—particularly among humanities graduates in countries like Nigeria—entrepreneurship education serves as a strategic pathway for self-reliance, job creation, and socio-economic development. Rather than limiting History graduates to teaching and archival professions, entrepreneurship education broadens their career horizons by fostering creativity, critical thinking, and the ability to identify and exploit opportunities within historical knowledge and cultural resources.

One of the foremost opportunities lies in the development of critical and analytical thinking skills. History as a discipline inherently trains students to analyze sources, interpret events, and construct coherent narratives about past societies. Entrepreneurship education builds on these competencies by teaching graduates how to apply analytical reasoning to real-world problems, assess risks, and make informed business decisions. According to Joseph Schumpeter (1934), entrepreneurship is fundamentally about innovation and the ability to combine resources in new ways. History graduates, with their deep understanding of societal change and patterns, are uniquely positioned to identify emerging trends and create innovative ventures rooted in cultural and historical contexts.

Furthermore, entrepreneurship education enables History graduates to explore opportunities in cultural and heritage industries. Nigeria, for instance, is rich in historical sites, artifacts, festivals, and oral traditions that remain underutilized economically. With entrepreneurial training, History graduates can establish businesses such as heritage tourism services, museum consultancy, historical documentation firms, and cultural event management enterprises. These ventures not only generate income but also contribute to the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage. This aligns with the experiential learning perspective of John Dewey (1938), who emphasized learning through experience



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and practical engagement. Entrepreneurship education provides History graduates with the platform to transform theoretical historical knowledge into practical, income-generating activities.

Another key opportunity is the enhancement of digital and creative economy participation. In the 21st century, the digital space offers vast possibilities for History graduates to monetize their expertise through blogging, podcasting, documentary production, online courses, and historical content creation for media platforms. Entrepreneurship education equips graduates with digital literacy, marketing skills, and business strategies necessary to succeed in these areas. By leveraging technology, History graduates can reach global audiences, thereby expanding their economic potential beyond local limitations.

Entrepreneurship education also promotes self-employment and reduces dependence on scarce government jobs. In Nigeria, the oversupply of graduates relative to available formal sector employment has made entrepreneurship a necessity rather than an option (Acs et al., 2018). Through business planning, financial management, and innovation training, History graduates can establish small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) in diverse sectors such as publishing, consultancy, education services, and research. This not only addresses personal unemployment but also contributes to national economic growth through job creation.

In addition, entrepreneurship education fosters adaptability and lifelong learning among History graduates. The dynamic nature of modern economies requires individuals to continuously update their skills and adapt to changing circumstances. Drawing from the social constructivist ideas of Lev Vygotsky (1978), learning is seen as a socially mediated process that evolves through interaction and experience. Entrepreneurship education encourages collaborative learning, networking, and mentorship, enabling History graduates to continuously refine their ideas and business models in response to societal needs.

Moreover, History graduates can leverage entrepreneurship education to engage in policy analysis and consultancy. Their understanding of historical trends, governance systems, and societal development positions them as valuable contributors to policy formulation and advisory services. Entrepreneurial skills enable them to package this expertise into viable consultancy businesses that serve government agencies, NGOs, and private organizations.

In conclusion, entrepreneurship education transforms the prospects of History graduates by shifting their orientation from job seekers to job creators. It harnesses their analytical, interpretive, and communicative strengths while equipping them with practical business skills necessary for success in diverse economic sectors. By integrating entrepreneurship

into History education, graduates are empowered to contribute meaningfully to economic development, cultural preservation, and innovation in the modern world.

**Conclusion**

This study has established that the persistent unemployment and underemployment of history graduates in Nigeria are largely linked to the traditional, theory-oriented structure of history education, which inadequately prepares students for the dynamic demands of the modern economy. By reconceptualizing history education through an entrepreneurial lens, the discipline can transcend its conventional boundaries and become a viable tool for economic empowerment and national development.

The integration of entrepreneurship into history education is not merely an academic reform but a strategic necessity in addressing the broader challenges of youth unemployment and skills mismatch. When effectively implemented, such integration fosters critical thinking, creativity, adaptability, and innovation—qualities essential for self-reliance and sustainable development. Therefore, reconceptualizing history education for entrepreneurship development represents a pathway for producing graduates who are not only knowledgeable about the past but are also equipped to shape the future through innovation, enterprise, and self-sufficiency.

**Recommendations**

Based on conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The curriculum of history education at all levels of education in Nigeria should be systematically restructured to incorporate entrepreneurship education. This integration will enable students to connect historical knowledge with practical economic opportunities such as innovation, problem-solving, and business creation rooted in historical and cultural realities.
2. History educators should adopt experiential and learner-centred pedagogical approaches that encourage active participation. Methods such as simulations, project-based learning, field excursions, and community-based historical investigations should be emphasized to develop practical entrepreneurial competencies among students.
3. There is a strong need for continuous capacity building and retraining of history teachers in entrepreneurial pedagogy. This will equip them with the skills required to effectively infuse entrepreneurship concepts into historical content delivery and to mentor students towards self-reliance.
4. Government and relevant educational authorities should formulate and implement supportive policies that explicitly encourage entrepreneurship integration within humanities disciplines, particularly history. Adequate funding

should also be provided to support innovation-driven learning environments such as history innovation labs, cultural hubs, and entrepreneurship centres.

5. Indigenous knowledge systems and cultural heritage should be deliberately promoted within history education as viable sources of entrepreneurship. Areas such as traditional crafts, tourism, oral history documentation, and heritage preservation should be repositioned as economic assets for students.
6. Strong collaboration should be established between academic institutions and external stakeholders such as museums, cultural organizations, tourism boards, and local entrepreneurs. This partnership will provide students with practical exposure, mentorship, and real-world entrepreneurial experiences.
7. Digital literacy and technological skills should be integrated into history education to expand students' entrepreneurial horizons. Skills such as digital storytelling, historical content creation, online archiving, and documentary production will enable graduates to participate in modern creative and knowledge-based economies.
8. Career guidance and entrepreneurship orientation programmes should be strengthened within institutions of learning. Regular seminars, workshops, and incubation programmes should be organized to expose history students to diverse entrepreneurial career paths beyond traditional teaching roles.

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