Entrepreneurship Education and New Venture Creation among Serving Corps Members in North Central, Nigeria

[1] Lilian Chinedum Igbo, [2] Dr. Paiko Isah Imam, [3] Prof. Ijaiya Mukaila Adebisi

[1] Entrepreneurship, Student, Doctoral Programme, Department Of Entrepreneurship, Federal University Of Technology, Minna Niger State, Nigeria

[2] Phd Senior Lecturer, Department Of Entrepreneurship, Federa University Of Technology, Minna Niger State, Nigeria

[3] Lecturer And Head Of Department Of Entrepreneurship, Federa University Of Technology, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The rate of graduate unemployment in Nigeria has been increasing. This was attributed to a lack of entrepreneurial skills and knowledge that would enable them to be self-reliant and self-employed. This prompted the introduction of a policy that led to the compulsory entrepreneurship education in all tertiary institutions across Nigeria. This study, therefore, examined the effects of entrepreneurship education on new venture creation among serving corps members in North-Central Nigeria (NCN). A cross-sectional research design was employed to collect data from 36,513 serving corps members in the NCN using a Likert-scale questionnaire. A sample size of 398 was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The analysis indicated a positive and significant effect of the entrepreneurship curriculum and educator competence, a negative and significant effect of the pedagogy approach, and a negative but insignificant effect of the learning environment on new venture creation. Additionally, a positive and significant mediating effect of entrepreneurship education policy on NVC is observed. The study recommends reform of the teaching methods used in entrepreneurship education by shifting from traditional lecture-based approaches to more interactive, experiential, and student-centered methods. Additionally, there should be effective implementation and monitoring of the EE policy to achieve the expected outcome.

Keywords: *Educator competence, Entrepreneurship curriculum, Entrepreneurship education, new venture creation, Pedagogy approach.*

Introduction

New venture creation (NVC) is widely recognized as a critical driver of economic growth, employment generation, innovation, and social inclusion, particularly in emerging economies (Olawale & Agboola, 2023). Globally, entrepreneurship-driven private sector development has been promoted as a strategic response to rising unemployment, poverty, and overdependence on paid employment(Adewumi, 2021).Significantly, new venture creation contributes to national and regional economic performance, for instance, in Nigeria, it could be attributed to 46-48% of itsGross Domestic Products (GDP),and job creation for unemployed youth (Adu & Mensah, 2023; Ibrahim & Dada, 2025), technological advancement, and improved living standards (Prelipcean& Ungureanu, 2023; Zhou & Li, 2024).

Successive Nigerian governments have introduced numerous entrepreneurship-related policies and programmers aimed at fostering self-employment, reducing unemployment, and improving socio-economic outcomes (Ukachukwu & Naetor, 2020). Despite these interventions, unemployment among graduates has continued to rise, suggesting limited success of these initiatives(Ukachukwu & Naetor, 2020).The rising trend of the unemployment rate in Nigeria from 2014 to 2020 showed that it rose from 6.4% in Q4 2014, to 33.3% in Q4 2020 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Also, weak coordination, policy overlap, corruption, and inefficiencies have been identified as major constraints to their effectiveness (Salami, 2013).

Entrepreneurship education (EE) has emerged globally as a sustainable mechanism for empowering youth with entrepreneurial competencies and reducing graduate unemployment (Oluwaseun & Gbenga, 2020; Fadzilah & Hussain, 2021). In Nigeria, the policy on compulsory entrepreneurship education into tertiary institution curricula bythe regulatory bodies, the National Universities Commission (NUC) in 2007 and the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) in 2008, was enacted to equip graduates with skills for self-reliance and venture creation (Otache*et al.*, 2020). The effectiveness of this policy, however, depends on the appropriateness of the critical dimensions of entrepreneurship education, including curriculum, pedagogical approach, educator competency, and the learning environment (Nana & Muhammad, 2017; Peter *et al.,* 2021; Hagg & Gabrielsson, 2020).

Whileempirical studies generally report that EE has a positive influence on entrepreneurial intentions (Boahemaah*et al.*, 2020; Peter *et al.*, 2021), evidence regarding EE impact on new venture creation remains mixed(Fenton & Barry, 2014; Abdulrahaman, 2014). Scholars attribute these inconsistencies to deficiencies in curriculum relevance, predominantly theoretical teaching methods, limited practical exposure, inadequate infrastructure, and a shortage

of educators with real-world entrepreneurial experience. These challenges suggest a disconnect between the objectives of entrepreneurship education policy (Rideout & Gray, 2013; Fayolle & Gailly, 2015). This raises critical concerns regarding the effectiveness and quality of EE delivery. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by holistic examination of the effect of EE on new venture creationamong serving corps members in North Central, Nigeria. Specifically examined the:

- Effect of the entrepreneurship curriculum content on new venture creation.
- Effect of the pedagogy approach on new venture creation.
- Effect of entrepreneurship educator competence on new venture creation.
- Effect of the learning environment on new venture creation.
- Mediating effect of entrepreneurship education policy on entrepreneurship education and new venture creation.

Literature Review

Entrepreneurship education in Nigeria

Entrepreneurship is as old as humanity; it was first taught as a course at Harvard Business School, USA, in the Department of Business Administration in 1947 by Myles Mace (Amiel *et al.*, 2021). Over the decades, entrepreneurship education (EE) has been gradually being added into the curricula of other disciplines outside business schools (Jardim *et al.*, 2021; Amiel *et al.*, 2021). In Nigeria, entrepreneurship education has evolved from skills-oriented training initiatives to the introduction of entrepreneurship-related courses and enterprise centers as acompulsory component of tertiary education. This policy is formulated by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) with directives from the Ministry of Education and is implemented through the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE)(Onyesom, 2017; Sulaimon, 2020; Brimah, 2021). EE is delivered in tertiary institutions through General Studies and discipline-specific courses in universities and polytechnics, guided by Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards.In most tertiary institutions, EE is taught concurrently with traditional educational programmers (Hahn *et al.*, 2019).It aims to equip students to tackle professional challenges, establish businesses, create jobs, and provide solutions to emerging economic and social problems (Jardim *et al.*, 2021).

Entrepreneurship education

Entrepreneurship education is conceptualized as a structured educational process aimed at developing entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, attitudes, and mindsets that enable individuals to recognize opportunities, innovate, and

create new ventures (Fadzilah & Hussain, 2021). It is a tool that offers students the ability to think creatively, analyze business ideas objectively, solve problems effectively, and evaluate a given project optimally (Gyan *et al.*, 2015; Msughter & Ahon, 2020). EE fosters creativity, problem-solving, risk-taking, and leadership competencies necessary for self-employment and job creation. In developing economies, EE is regarded as a strategic mechanism for addressing graduate unemployment and stimulating economic growth(Obong & Okoroma, 2021).

The key dimensions of EE include curriculum, pedagogy approach, educator competency, and learning environment. The content of the EE curriculum should have the ability to stimulate and enable students to think critically and develop novel business ideas that would help them create new ventures (Olokundun*et al.*, 2018; Peter *et al.*, 2021). It should consist of the ability of the recipient to manage resources, be creative and innovative, recognize opportunities, create ideas, manage and grow a business, take risks, and plan and market a business (Daneshjoovash & Hosseini, 2019). EE curricula should integrate theory and practice; reflect contemporary economic realities, and support opportunity recognition, business planning, and venture growth (Murray *et al.*, 2018).

The pedagogy approach in EE though slightly differs from other subjects encompasses innovative strategies and methods in teaching entrepreneurship and involves formal and informal activities designed to achieve the course's objectives (Moses *et al.*, 2015). However, there is no specific universally accepted method of delivering EE;but several approaches can be applied depending on the curriculum content, learning outcome, and limitations imposed by the institutional environment (Tony, 2016). Pedagogical approaches that emphasize experiential and action-oriented learning—such as problem-based learning, simulations, mentoring, and real-world projects—are widely regarded as more effective than traditional lecture-based methods (Moses *et al.*, 2015; Sirelkhatim & Gangi, 2015; Rodrigues, 2023).

Entrepreneurship educator competency emerges as a critical success factor, as instructors' qualifications, pedagogical skills, and practical entrepreneurial experience significantly influence students' learning outcomes(Bell & Bell, 2016; Tony, 2016). Similarly, the learning environment has been acknowledged as one of the important factors to consider in the development of learning and achievement of the goals and objectives of entrepreneurship education (Bell & Bell, 2016). A supportive learning environment, characterised by access to entrepreneurship centres, incubation facilities, funding opportunities, and industry linkages,is essential for translating entrepreneurial learning into

venture creation (Okeke & Edikpa, 2014; Olorundare& Kayode, 2014; Bell & Bell, 2016).

New venture creation

New venture creation is conceptualized as a multidimensional entrepreneurial process encompassing ideation, planning, and execution (Kariv, 2013; Salamzadeh & Kirby, 2017; Trabskaia & Mets, 2021; Emezi & Emele, 2021). It represents a progression from opportunity recognition and idea generation to structured planning and market entry (Salamzadeh & Kirby, 2017). As one of the objective outcomes of entrepreneurship education, NVC reflects the extent to which acquired competencies are transformed into tangible entrepreneurial activity (Otache, 2019).

Entrepreneurship Education Policy (EEP) shapes the structure, implementation, and effectiveness of EE by regulating curriculum standards, supporting institutional infrastructure, fostering partnerships, and providing enabling conditions for venture creation (Ikonne*et al.*, 2020). Although Nigeria has implemented numerous entrepreneurship-related policies and programmers, their effectiveness has been constrained by weak implementation, policy inconsistency, and systemic challenges (Agwu, 2019).

Methodology

The study area is North-Central Nigeria. It is one of the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. It consists of six states, including Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Niger, Nasarawa, Plateau, and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. This study adopted a cross-sectional research design and a survey approach to achieve the research objectives. The population is 63,513 corps members who made up the Batch A streams 1 and 2 of 2023, carrying out their National Youth Service Corps in the six states and the FCT of the North-Central, Nigeria. The sample size is398, obtained from the population using Taro Yamane's statistical formula. The instrument for data collection isa Likert-scale questionnaire consisting of 56 items. The study employed both descriptive and inferential statistics in its data analysis. A simple percentage was used to calculate the respondents' demographic characteristics, and Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) for research questions and hypotheses. The model specification for PLS-SEMon entrepreneurship education and new venture creation is operationalized by adapting the models used by Peter *et al.* (2021) in their study. The adaptation is due to the common features the two studies share. Functionally, the relationship among the variables is expressed thus:

Results and Discussions

The results show the response rate, the demographic composition of the respondents, the assessment of the measurement and structural models for the tested hypothesis, and the discussion of results.

Table1: Rate of Response for the Study

State	Benue	FCT	Kogi	Kwara	Nasarawa	Niger	Plateau	Total
Distributed	28	161	23	53	72	22	39	398
Retrieved	28	159	23	53	72	22	39	396
Rate of Response	100%	99%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Authors' Computation (2024)

Table 1 presents the description of the copies of the questionnaire distributed and retrieved across the six states and the FCT. All the distributed copies of the questionnaire for each state were fully retrieved, except for the FCT Abuja, which had the highest number of distributed copies—161—but 159 (99%) were collected. The total number of copies distributed across the six states and the FCT was 398, with 396 copies retrieved, resulting in an overall response rate of 99%.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Corps Members by Gender

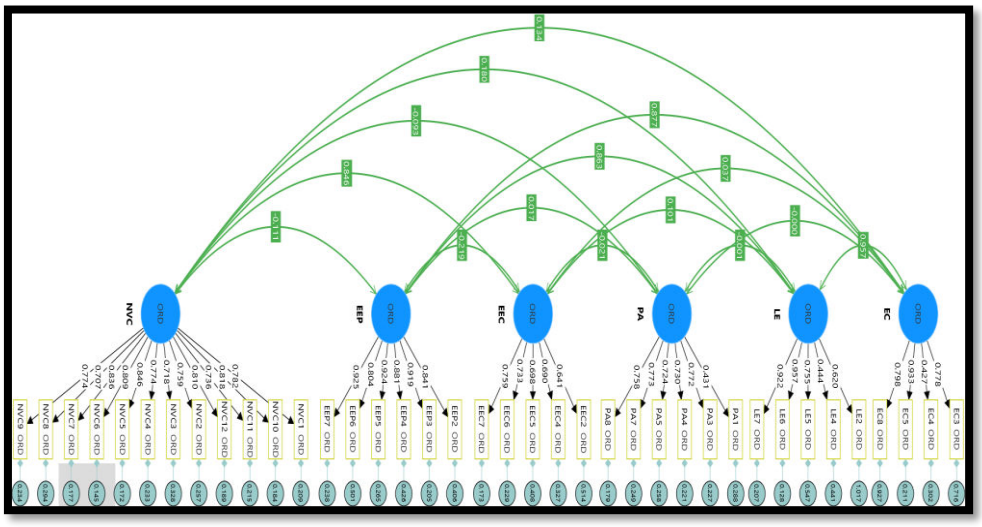
State of Service	Number	Male (%)	Female (%)
Benue	28	54% (15)	46% (13)
FCT	159	64% (102)	36% (57)
Kogi	23	55% (13)	45% (10)
Kwara	53	57% (30)	43% (23)
Nasarawa	72	54% (39)	46% (33)
Niger	22	50% (11)	50% (11)
Plateau	39	49% (18)	51% (20)

Source: Authors' Computation (2024).

Table 2 presents the demographic characteristics of the serving corps members who responded to the study's survey. This is based on their gender in state of service.

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics by the Type of Institutions Attended

State of Service	University (%)	Polytechnic (%)	Monotechnic (%)
Benue (n=28)	61% (17)	37% (10)	2% (1)



FCT (n=159)	68% (108)	27% (43)	5% (8)
Kogi (n=23)	60% (14)	40% (9)	
Kwara (n=53)	68% (36)	32% (17)	
Nasarawa (n=72)	70% (50)	30% (22)	
Niger (n=22)	65% (14)	35% (8)	
Plateau (n=39)	72% (28)	20% (8)	8% (3)

Source: Authors' Computation (2024)

In terms of the type of tertiary institutions attended, Table 3 shows that the respondents were predominantly graduates from universities. The respondents from the University graduates range from 70% to 61% across the six states and the FCT. The relatively high representation of university graduates suggests a

growing trend of University-educated youths participating in the NYSC programmed. Polytechnic graduates, though significantly fewer, still represent a substantial portion of the sample, ranging from20% to 40%. The number of graduates from monotechnic institutions is relatively small, reflecting a niche educational pathway that, while valuable, produces fewer corps members.

Hypotheses Testing

Figure2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Pooled Method
Source: Authors' Schematic Diagram (2024).

Figure 2 presents the Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for the measurement model. This approach enables the statistical evaluation of the overall quality criteria of the measurement model, including good factor loadings, reliability, and validity of the constructs within the model. It serves as a foundation for testing the structural model, which is essential for hypothesis testing (Afthanorhan*et al.*, 2020).

Table 4: Summary of Reliability and Convergent Validity for the Measurement Models

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Comment
EC	0.867	0.901	0.754	Good
EEC	0.832	0.881	0.597	Good
EEP	0.955	0.962	0.809	Good
LE	0.893	0.918	0.739	Good
NVC	0.949	0.956	0.642	Good
PA	0.866	0.891	0.623	Good

Source: Authors' Computation (2024).

Table 4 presents the metrics for determining reliability and convergent validity. All constructs under Cronbach's alpha range from 0.832 to 0.955, exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.7, suggesting good internal consistency (Usakli & Rasoolimanesh, 2023).Similarly, composite reliability values range from 0.881 to 0.962, further supporting the reliability of the measurement model. All constructs demonstrate strong composite reliability, with values well above the recommended threshold of 0.7. (Andayani*et al.*, 2024). Additionally, the AVE values, ranging from 0.597 to 0.809, show that most constructs met or exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.5 (Siregar *et al.*, 2024), indicating

good convergent validity. Overall, the measurement model demonstrates strong reliability and convergent validity, making the constructs well defined and suitable for hypothesis testing in the structural model.

Table 5: Summary of Discriminant Validity between Constructs of the Study

	EC	EEC	EEP	LE	NVC	PA
EC						
EEC	0.788					
EEP	0.702	0.307				
LE	0.729	0.244	0.856			
NVC	0.172	0.847	0.143	0.183		
PA	0.040	0.081	0.043	0.052	0.107	

Source: Authors' Computation (2024).

Table 5 presents the assessment of discriminant validity using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). It confirms that the study's constructs are empirically distinct, as all values fall within the recommended thresholds. Acceptable HTMT thresholds are below 0.85 for a strict criterion and below 0.90 for a more liberal criterion. Table 5 shows that the highest HTMT value is between LE and EEP (0.856), which is slightly above the conservative limit but still within the liberal threshold, indicating no serious concerns regarding discriminant validity. However, these results collectively confirm that the constructs of EE are conceptually and statistically distinct, satisfying modern discriminant validity standards for PLS-SEM analysis.

Table 6: Summary of Multicollinearity for the Constructs in the Study

Constructs	VIF	Comments
EC -> NVC	3.413	Acceptable
EEC -> NVC	1.340	Acceptable
EEP -> NVC	4.001	Acceptable
LE -> NVC	3.939	Acceptable
PA -> NVC	1.005	Acceptable

Source: Authors' computation (2024).

Table 6shows that all VIF values are well below the threshold of 10, indicating the absence of multicollinearity, supports the validity of the model and strengthens the reliability of the findings in the study.

Figure 3: Structural Model for the Study

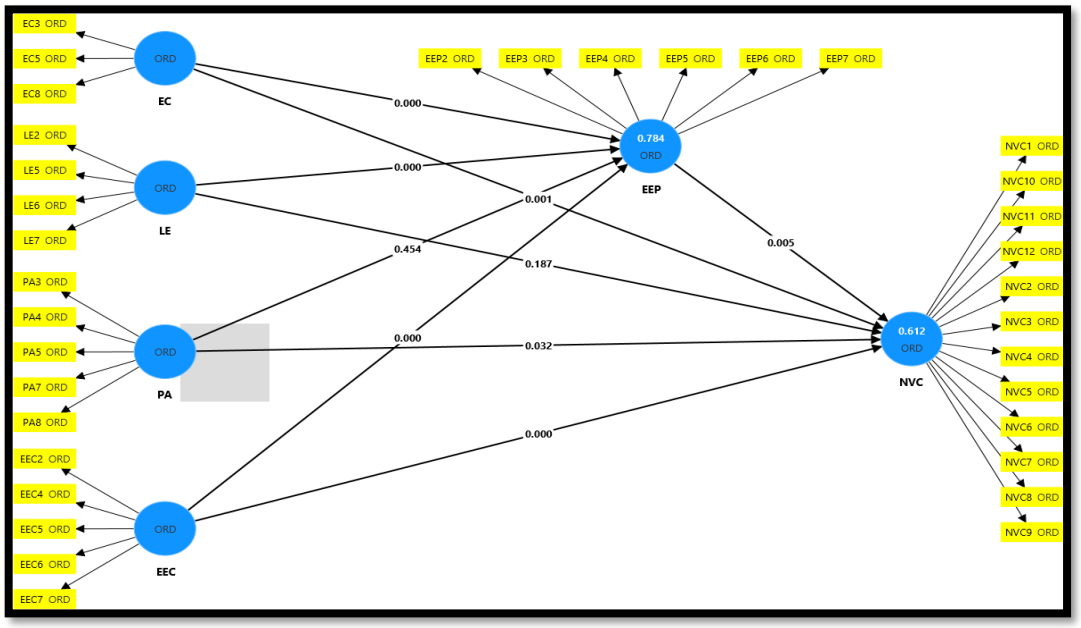


Table 7: Summary of Path and Significance of Path Coefficients

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	Standard deviation (STDEV)	P values	Result
Direct Effect				
EC -> NVC	0.139	0.055	0.013	**Rejected**
EEC -> NVC	0.763	0.027	0.000	**Rejected**
LE -> NVC	-0.008	0.049	0.897	**Accepted**
PA -> NVC	-0.076	0.034	0.030	**Rejected**
EEP -> NVC	0.173	0.062	0.005	**Rejected**
Indirect Effect				
EC -> EEP -> NVC	0.077	0.029	0.007	**Rejected**
EEC -> EEP -> NVC	0.044	0.017	0.009	**Rejected**
LE -> EEP -> NVC	0.077	0.028	0.005	**Rejected**
PA -> EEP -> NVC	-0.002	0.003	0.485	**Accepted**

Source: Authors' computation (2024).

Table 7 shows that the effect of entrepreneurship curriculum on new venture creation is positive and significant with a path coefficient (β) of 0.139 and a p-value of 0.013 ($p \leq 0.05$). Entrepreneurship educator competence demonstrates a strong positive and significant effect on new venture creation, with a β of

0.763 and a p-value of 0.000, reinforcing the critical role of competent educators in fostering entrepreneurial ventures. However, the learning environment shows a negative and insignificant effect on new venture creation, with a β of -0.008 and a p-value of 0.897. Pedagogy approach indicates a negative but significant effect, with a βof -0.076 and a p-value of 0.030 ($p \leq 0.05$). Entrepreneurship education policy as the mediator reveals a positive and significant effect on new venture creation, with a β of 0.173 and a p-value of 0.005. The indirect effect, entrepreneurship curriculum content shows partial mediation through EEP, with a β of 0.077 and a p-value of 0.07 ($p \leq 0.05$). Entrepreneurship educators' competence also exhibits partial mediation through EEP, with a β of 0.044 and a p-value of 0.009, highlighting the complementary role of policy in leveraging educator competence to promote new ventures. For the learning environment, EEP fully mediates its relationship with new venture creation, as indicated by a β of 0.077 and a p-value of 0.005, suggesting that while the learning environment may not directly affect venture creation, its impact is realized through effective policy mediation. The mediation analysis for the pedagogical approach reveals a β of -0.002 and a p-value of 0.485, indicating a negative and insignificant mediating effect.

Discussion

The result revealed that entrepreneurship education significantly influences new venture creation, though the strength of the effects varies across constructs. Specifically, the entrepreneurship curriculum positively and significantly contributes to NVC. This supports the findings ofNana & Muhammad (2017) and Soegoto (2018) that the entrepreneurship-based curriculum of Higher Education Institutions has a significant and positive influence on NVC and students' entrepreneurial interests. Another finding shows a negative but significant effect of pedagogical approachon NVC. This suggests that dominant traditional, lecture-based, and theory-heavy teaching methods in Nigerian tertiary institutions may discourage venture creation. This is supported by the findings of Alinno (2020), which revealed that the method of teaching entrepreneurship education in Nigerian tertiary institutions is not effective in developing the students' entrepreneurial mindsets. However, experiential, problem-based, and blended pedagogies can reverse this effect by fostering entrepreneurial mindsets and self-efficacy.

The study also found that entrepreneurship educator competence is the most influential predictor of NVC, as it demonstrates a strong positive and significant effect on new venture creation. This supports the finding of Wraae and Walmsley (2020) that the role of the entrepreneurship educator is

important and significant in adialogic relationship between the students, curriculum content, applied pedagogy, and the institution.

The result of the study shows that the learning environment does not directly affect NVC. Contrary to the findings of this study, Haddad & Benne (2021) and Abubakars & Garba (2021). Also, the findings of the study revealed that effective entrepreneurship education policy is important in strengthening the effect of curriculum content, educator competence, and the learning environment on new venture creation. However, it also reveals the need for a more strategic, practice-oriented pedagogical approach that aligns teaching methods with policy goals to fully realize the potential of entrepreneurship education.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

This study examined the effect of entrepreneurship education on new venture creation among serving corps members in North Central Nigeria. It carried out the analysis of four core dimensions of entrepreneurship education - entrepreneurship curriculum, pedagogical approach, entrepreneurship educator competence, and learning environment - together with the mediating role of entrepreneurship education policy. The study concludes that entrepreneurship curriculum has a positive and significant effect on new venture creation. Pedagogical approach shows a negative but significant effect on new venture creation. The study further establishes that entrepreneurship educator competence has a strong, positive, and significant effect on new venture creation. However, learning environment has a negative and insignificant effect on new venture creation. The mediation effect of entrepreneurship education policy on NVC reveals a positive and significant effect; however, on the components of entrepreneurship education it shows (partial mediation for entrepreneurship curriculum and entrepreneurship educators' competence, full mediation for learning environment, negative and insignificant mediating effect on pedagogy) on new venture creation.

Based on the conclusion drawn from the study, policymakers and regulatory bodies such as the NUC, and NBTE should ensure regular review and update of entrepreneurship curricula to ensure stronger integration of practical components, digital entrepreneurship, innovation, and sector-specific opportunities. Curricula should be aligned with national economic priorities and youth employment strategies. There is a need for pedagogical transformation by formulating policies that clearly mandate and support the use of experiential, problem-based, and practice-oriented pedagogical methods in teaching entrepreneurship education. There should be effective implementation, monitoring and coordination of the EEP to achieve the

expected effect by strategically aligning it with curriculum content, educator competence, pedagogical approach, and institutional support systems.

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