



EVALUATING THE NEW IMPETUS FOR ENTRENCHING ENTREPRENEURSHIP CULTURE IN NIGERIA (2010 AND BEYOND): LESSONS AND FUTURE PUBLIC POLICY DIRECTIONS

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ABSTRACT: Purpose: *This study was designed to evaluate the impact of Nigeria's entrepreneurship development policies on the emergence and performance of entrepreneurship in recent decades from 2010 to date. Methodology/Approach:* *The study adopted the periodisation paradigm to examine entrepreneurship development efforts at crucial turning points in Nigeria's development. Findings:* *The business environment has been hostile to entrepreneurship. However, the ICT and the creative industries sub-sectors recorded some successes. Nevertheless, the power, security, agriculture, and education sub-sectors performed unsatisfactorily. The government's inability to overrun terrorist groups thwarted peace and security upon which development depended. High-level official corruption has been hobbling the implementation of entrepreneurship development policies in Nigeria. Implications:* *The study pointed at general and specific lessons derived from the hostile global and local/national environments for improving on entrepreneurship development policies. Originality value:* *Using a conceptual framework we developed, the study showed that security is an overriding factor in achieving success in entrepreneurship development. Contrary to the claims of some strategy scholars, strategic management is not a panacea for attaining successful entrepreneurship; what is crucially important for success are dynamic capabilities, context-driven public policies, and their competent implementation.*

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurship culture, public policy, social liberalism, entrepreneurship development, paralysis of state, enabling environment, dynamic capability.



INTRODUCTION

Attempts at industrialising Nigeria in recent decades have taken bearing from neoliberal prescriptions to deploy small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as engines of development, which departs from the strategy of the developmental state characterised by state capitalism of the early 1960s (Odozi, 1995; Turner et al., 2013).

Two developments in the 1980s changed the industrialisation philosophy around the world. One of them was the new thinking on industrialisation based on private small-scale entrepreneurship (e.g., Ogun and Anyanwu, 1999; Moruku, 2010), as against dependence on large-scale enterprises or LSEs (Hodder, 1968: 170-177). Critics, policy-makers, and market imperialists from the core capitalist countries with an agenda of the commodification of public assets, successfully blackmailed state-owned enterprises or SOEs (Schmitz, 1994; Mendes et al., 2014; Scambler, 2012), which led to their privatisation in LDCs (Li et al., 2006).

Yet, all 23 Chinese companies in the 2010 Financial Times' listing of the 500 biggest companies in the world by market capitalisation, such as PetroChina, began as SOEs and remain either Chinese state-owned, state-controlled, or owned by local governments (Athey, 2010) and attained global reach as multinational enterprises (Li et al., 2006; Wang et al., 2022). The difference with Nigeria is the corruption or lack of financial transparency of public officers operating the public enterprises. The accounts of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Limited (NNPCL) have not been audited and published for years. Even in recent times, the NNPCL failed to remit N2 trillion to the Treasury Single Account (TSA) of the Federal Government of Nigeria for the period when President Muhammadu Buhari (President Buhari) was in power from 2015 to 2023. Consequently, the House of Representatives muted plans to investigate NNPC's (Omolaoye, 2023).

The second was the concern for the effectiveness and efficiency of public service management of client states of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) expressed after the publication of the *World Development Report of 1997: The State in a Changing World* (Girishankar and De Silva, 1998: V). These neoliberal institutions define problems for LDCs and proffer solutions, which benefit them rather than the LDCs, and set global performance benchmarks and best practices (Broome et al., 2018). Thus, these institutions, rather than LDCs, drive the development process based on the neoliberal development template. They hold that strategic management of government agencies is the approach to achieving performance in public service. Porter (1996) provides intellectual sustenance for this position but strategy needs reimagining (Priem et al., 2013) as it is not the sole determinant of performance.

Thus, drawing inspiration from the World Bank, Nigeria's National Planning Commission (NPC) developed the NEEDS to drive the development process in the country. The key concern in this study is whether strategic management is a panacea for the emergence and performance of entrepreneurship. Consequently, the main objective of this study is to determine the efficacy of the NEEDS and other entrepreneurship development efforts in Nigeria.

The authors made important contributions to the study of entrepreneurship development and its performance in Nigeria and beyond. The contributions include the design and utilisation of a conceptual framework, which pointed to security as an overriding factor in achieving success in the management of an economy. We contributed to arguing against the neoliberal anathematisation of state entrepreneurship and sought a mutual co-existence of SOEs and



private-owned enterprises. From the performances of SOEs in China, we discerned that corruption is the cause of the performance gap between SOEs in China and those in Nigeria.

After this introduction, the paper is structured as follows. Section two takes up social liberalism as the theoretical framework of the study. The conceptual framework of the study is explained in section three. In section four, we applied the periodisation approach to examine the recent efforts made in the development of entrepreneurship from 2010 to the present. We examine the environmental impacts on entrepreneurship performance (2019 – present) in section five. We follow up with the evaluation of entrepreneurship development policies in section six. We draw general lessons in section seven. We point to future public policy directions for entrepreneurship development in section eight. Section nine concludes the paper.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

We drew on social liberalism to frame this study. According to Heywood (2007: 44-52), social liberalism has roots in liberalism, as a political creed, which is the ideology, even meta-ideology, of the industrialised West. Liberalism was the product of the breakdown of feudalism and the growth, in its place, of market capitalism. By the early Nineteenth Century, a distinctively liberal economic creed had developed, which extolled the virtues of *laissez-faire* capitalism and condemned all forms of government intervention in business.

Social liberalism in its updated form as neoliberalism was *imposed* on Nigeria in 1986 through the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). It required Nigeria to implement economic liberalisation and deregulation, privatisation of public assets, commercialisation of public services, export-orientated development, and devaluation and floating of the Naira (see also Andor and Summer, 1998: 3-16). It urged the state to disengage from direct productive activities but provide *an enabling environment for business performance* involving the (i) regulatory processes of macroeconomic stability, (ii) correctives for market failure, (iii) provision of infrastructure services, and (iv) development of human capital (White, 1984: 100; El-Mefleh, 2005). Unfortunately, the Nigerian economy has been dysfunctional since the implementation of SAP.

Conceptual Framework of the study

We drew on Arthurthe (2017), the New Partnership for African Development or NEPAD Secretariat (n. d.), and the African Union Commission (2015) to develop the conceptual framework for this study. This mental causal map (see Loasby 2007: 1744) links the variables crucial to the solution of the problem of the study. Arthur suggested that peace and security often preceded development, which is the basis of the “Agenda 2063: the Africa we want” (African Union Commission, 2015). Such realisation has informed the World Bank to be active in peace-building in post-war and wartime to make businesses thrive (Dolan-Evans, 2022).

The conceptual framework employed here consists of a three-step mental null model for examining the efficacy of NEEDS, consisting of “peace and security” as a joint antecedent variable, “enabling business environment” as an immediate subsequent system variable, and “the emergence and performance of entrepreneurs/entrepreneurship” as an ultimate subsequent variable.



Periodisation of Entrepreneurship Development (circa 2010 to the present)

(i) Entrepreneurship development and the NEEDS

Through the NPC, the Federal Government of Nigeria designed the NEEDS to develop entrepreneurship for the socioeconomic development of the country. The government set objectives and formulated key strategies and interventions to achieve the following objectives.

Objectives to develop the SME sector: Among the objectives were: *deploying the SME sector as the driver of national economic growth and development*; developing a strong, virile, viable, and sustainable SME sector capable of competing globally in terms of qualities and prices of goods and services; developing and improving skills and competencies of entrepreneurs; encouraging the use of improved technology in the production of goods and services; increasing access to funding and financial services; encouraging forward and backward linkages with other sectors of the economy; and growing the domestic market for SMEs.

Strategies and key interventions for achieving the objectives: These included the intensification of public-private-partnership in projects and programmes implementation in key areas such as agriculture, agro-allied industries, tourism, information and communication technology (ICT), transportation, arts and craft; facilitation and encouragement of the private sector to undertake institutional and operational changes that are critical for the growth of SMEs.

Regarding this, attention was focused on access to credit, profitable markets, appropriate technology, and business support services; dedicating the Bank of Industry and the Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank to fund SMEs; collaborating with the private sector to provide the base for a sustainable electricity supply for SMEs; establishing enterprise clusters, industrial parks, and incubation centres; enhancing the capacity of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) to coordinate the various efforts targeted at SMEs' development; enhancing linkages with the agricultural sector to ensure a steady supply of inputs and generating new businesses and employment; deepening the entrepreneurship program of tertiary and other institutions to ensure a large pool of highly-skilled graduates to participate in the sector.

Priority sub-programmes for the SME sub-sector: The government committed itself to investing over NGN19.101 billion in developing entrepreneurial skills (see also Nextier SPD Report, 2020: 6). It prioritised a sub-programme for government and private sector establishing functional SME clusters.

Fiscal environment sub-programme: This comprised reducing tax burden and reviewing guidelines for SMEs to access funds. Consequently, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) reformed the banking sector involving the creation of twenty-five (25) megabanks from some eighty banks and raising their capital base to N25 billion to strengthen them to absorb shocks from loan losses and increase lending to SMEs (Soludo, 2009).

Sub-programme for SME expansion: The plan focused on promoting the formation of new and innovative SMEs. A National Survey on the output of SMEs in 2010 was conducted as the basis for establishing expansion targets for 2011 to 2013. The other strategies involved strengthening and injecting additional equity capital into the Bank of Industry to provide support for existing and new SMEs.



(ii) COVID-19 Pandemic and Entrepreneurship Performance (2019)

The Covid-19 had a devastating impact on all businesses in Nigeria (see Omoru, 2020). A 2022 survey report of SMEs, which the SMEDAN conducted for the period 2017 to 2022, showed that the population of SMEs in Nigeria shrank by 2 million from 41 million to 39 million. The collapsed SMEs were those which COVID-19 hit hardest (Ikpoto, 2023).

For the aviation sub-sector, the impact was such that the Senate of the National Assembly (NASS) considered a bailout package of NGN4 billion for its operators. SMEs did not benefit from the package. Although COVID-19 was a global pandemic, which had a similar impact on businesses around the world (Suttner, 2021; Wu and Blake, 2023), the inability of the Nigerian government to deal successfully with it indicated a lack of dynamic capability for dealing with emergent crises. Katarzyna et al. (2023) reported that dynamic capability enabled employees to successfully resort to online working mode during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Poland. In this regard, Lenart-Gansiniec et al. (2023) found that there is an increasing scholarly interest in innovation-driven human resources management practices.

The impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on business entrepreneurship was varied. Globally, the aviation sub-sector of the transportation industry suffered devastation during the COVID-19 outbreak because of the lockdown on movement of people among countries. Ironically, local flight business in Nigeria enjoyed a boom in the post-COVID-19 period, from growing insecurity, as members of the middle and upper classes in the country resorted to taking flights to avoid possible kidnapping on the highways. The road transportation sub-section was badly affected. Harel (2021) found that engaging in subcontracting strategy and international operations helped small businesses contend with problems and conditions of economic uncertainty.

The government's selective restriction of movements across the country during the COVID-19 outbreak allowed ostensibly food-bearing trucks to transport sophisticated weapons, munitions, and terrorists to the Middle Belt and Southern Nigeria unchecked, unhindered or undetected. This enabled Boko Haram and allied terrorists to take over the forests and farmlands of Southern Nigeria and wreak havoc but the government has been unwilling to respond.

The escalating insecurity in the country has devastating and lingering effects on the business climate. Major cases of recent attacks without satisfactory response from the country's military include the attack on the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA), Kaduna on August 24, 2021 (Owolabi, 2021); the attack of the Kaduna-bound Train from Abuja and the killing and kidnapping of some of its passengers on March 29, 2022 (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2022); and the ambush and attack of the advance convoy of President Buhari on July 6, 2022 (The Guardian, Nigeria 2022). For more, see Boniwe (2020).

(iii) EndSARSNow Uprising and Entrepreneurship Development (2020)

Experiencing ballooning unemployment, desperate poverty, not having an unemployment benefits programme and hopelessness, youths embarked on a nationwide EndSARSNow protest against the federal government. Many had collapsed businesses from the hostile business environment and were driven to desperation. So, their anger and protest were typical of protests reported from Bolivia, India, Venezuela, and other countries (Kohl and Farthing, 2009; Pandey, n.d.; Ucbasaran et al., 2013). This sordid state of socio-economic condition has been cited in recent coups sweeping Francophone countries of West and Central Africa. But



the destructive leadership (see Krasikova et. al, 2013) ordered the military to open fire on the unarmed and peacefully protesting youths.

In addressing the nation on the issues, which sparked the protest, President Buhari announced the creation of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Survival Fund (MSME-SF). In addition, the Federal Government committed itself to implement: (i) Farmermoni, (ii) Tradermoni, (iii) Marketmoni, (iv) N-Power, (v) N-Tech, and (vi) N-Agro. They were too little to make a substantial impact. The government also committed itself to (1) pay 3-months salaries of staff of 100,000 MSMEs; (2) pay for the registration of 250,000 businesses at the Corporate Affairs Commission; (3) give a grant of NGN30,000 to 100,000 artisans; and (4) guaranteeing a market for the products of traders. There is no report that these measures have been implemented but a recent survey which the Association of Small Business Owners of Nigeria (ASBON) conducted, showed that 7.8 million small businesses went under from 2021 to January 2023 (Ikpotu, 2023). The ASBON blamed this on the harsh business environment in the country.

(iv) Currency Redesign and Entrepreneurship Performance (2022-2023)

The government implemented a cashless economy policy during the countdown to the 2023 general elections. In 2022, the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the CBN, embarked on redesigning/recolouring the NGN200, NGN500, and NGN1,000 notes. The CBN immediately enforced the cashless policy. Yet, digital capability is just developing (Adhafeeri et al., 2022). Unfortunately, the country did not have the infrastructure and culture to adopt the digital economy policy (see Okereocha, 2012). The policy caused hardship of immense proportions to businesses and individuals. So, SMEs shut down their shops/operations because their funds were trapped in the banks.

The recent main issue here has been the political uncertainty during the countdown to the presidential election (2022-2023) and thereafter. The electoral violence, the disputed results, and the tribunal cases, especially the tension and threats surrounding the ongoing hearing at the Presidential Electoral Petition Tribunal (PEPT) create uncertainty as fears of chaos are rife. The removal of fuel subsidies, hike in fuel price, and threat to hike electricity tariff are not helping to improve the business environment.

Evaluation of NEEDS for Entrepreneurship Development and Performance

The issues highlighted above defined the environment in which entrepreneurs operated and within which the NEEDS was implemented.

Entrepreneurial intensity and employment generation: On paper, the strategic management model, NEEDS, appears to be sound but it has not translated to the envisaged emergence and performance of SMEs. Indicators include the fact that the incidence of unemployment has been on the increase, which means that job creation lags behind the increase in entrepreneurship endeavours or entrepreneurial intensity (see also Koster and Rai, 2008). Citing the National Bureau of Statistics, Nzalibe et al. (2022: 44) suggested that the unemployment rate in Nigeria has even worsened as it increased to 23.9% from 2011 to 2015 and 28.9% from 2015 to 2016. They further observed that, even globally, unemployment and poverty are worsening and they keep climbing in the neoliberal market economy. Those of Nigeria are unequalled, as the country ranks first in poverty to become the poverty headquarters of the world.



Information and communication technology sub-sector: Implementation of the antecedent liberalisation policy of the communication sector from 2001 has been a huge success which continues to the present. The first to spring up was large-scale mobile telecommunication companies (TELCOs) such as the Mobile Telecommunication Network or MTN (Nigeria) Ltd, which provide wireless communication services based on digital technology. Technopreneurship has been slowly building up. Currently, young unemployed people are migrating to the ICT sector and setting up Nano or Micro enterprises for repairing and selling computers, cell phones, and their accessories. The NEEDS rode on the back of this development and benefited from the fit but the e-trust discussed in Katarzyna et al. (2023) is a critically important issue, which hampers a seamless use of these media platforms for fear of hackers.

Industry sector: The *creative industries* sub-sector is mainly the music and movie industries. In the movie industry, for example, Nollywood is acclaimed for its *Africa Magic* and its family of movie brands. It compares favourably with the Bollywood of India, which is noted for its *Zeeworld* and the Hollywood of the US.

But *the manufacturing industries sub-sector* has been a disaster since the late 1970s and the government is not interested in resuscitating it. Failed flagship state-owned companies include the Delta Steel Company, the Iron and Steel Company, Ajaokuta; the steel rolling mills at Oshogbo and others. So, companies keep failing because of the hostile business environment (see Akinbogun, 2008). As Kemp (1989: 177) observed, Nigeria remains in the position where it had been shaped as a primary products-exporting and finished goods-importing country.

Power sector: This sector is a notorious failure. Attempts to get it working through commercialisation and privatisation have been hugely unsuccessful. The electricity distribution companies (EDCs) have been incapable of generating and distributing electricity to consumers, which adds to the woes of the industrial sector (Akinbogun 2008). Nigeria, the so-called giant of Africa, lags way behind Egypt, Ghana, and South Africa which have overcome the problem of generating and supplying electricity to their citizens.

Security sector: Security challenges have persisted and even escalated during the period of the implementation of the NEEDS. It is perplexing that Nigeria, which commanded the Economic Commission of West African States' monitoring group (ECOMOG), the military wing of the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS) and brought peace to warring countries in the West African sub-region, now cannot defend and maintain its territorial integrity. Two of seven examples are given here. One, through the ECOMOG, set up in July 1990 and led by Nigeria, brought political stability to Liberia when Sir George Tubman Goldie was toppled and the trio of Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe, Charles Taylor, and Prince Yormie Johnson turned that country into a political quagmire (Kehinde and Edah, 1991; Lamin, 2003). Two, the ECOMOG brought political sanity to Sierra Leone, which had been ravaged by a savage and protracted rebel onslaught led by Foday Sankoh of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) against the governments of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and, later, Johnny Paul Koromah (Davies, 1998; Fofana and Nduru, 2000).

It is clear that the government has been politically paralysed unwilling to deploy its awesome military power to restore peace and security in the country. The government knows the bandits, terrorists, and their sponsors but it is unwilling to take decisive action against them to stop them and ensure the attainment of peace and security (Olawumi, 2021). This is not exemplary.



Agricultural sector: The agricultural sector is the most battered of all sectors from the insecurity in Nigeria. The farms have become the killing fields in the asymmetric battle between the Fulani cattle herdsman armed with AK-47 Rifles and indigenous farmers possessing just cutlasses. The herders provokingly and maliciously graze on the food crops of farmers, who get killed for protesting against the destruction of their crops. Underfarmed, Nigeria loses being the food basket of Africa and is unable to provide raw materials for industry. The strategy of backward integration remains unrealised.

Education sector: The education sector collapsed in about 1986 when the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was implemented. We focus on universities here. The country boasts 262 universities, which dramatically increased access to the ever-rising number of applicants for admission. But, there has also been a decline in the quality of university products (see Moruku, 2013). The quality decline arises because universities are under-resourced; their faculty is under-motivated, hungry, angry, and disrespected but overworked to mass-produce graduates.

Financial sector: Although the CBN embarked on banking reform to strengthen banks to increase lending to SMEs (Soludo, 2009), lending to SMEs declined after the banking reform and remains so to date (Moruku, 2011).

General Lessons and the Way Forward

The following are general lessons culled from the study with respect to policy failures and the way forward.

Sound policies also require competent implementation: Sound public policies have not automatically translated to successful socioeconomic development in Nigeria. Undoubtedly, Nigeria has talented people who have been designing sound public policies. But most of the policies have been failing. What matters, in addition, is the competent implementation of the policies. For example, corrupt politicians divert to their pockets, funds, which the government budgets for SMEs (Ikpotu, 2023). Yet, the looters are not called to account for the stolen money. Thus, funding remains a binding constraint for SMEs.

Without the will to succeed, sound development policies cannot succeed: Sound policies have been plagued by failure for what is called “the Nigerian factor”. For example, Nigeria was set for industrial take-off in the 1970s but failed miserably because of institutionalised corruption, wastefulness, and, most especially, the lack of will of state actors to orchestrate industrialisation and socioeconomic development. It was the main reason why the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion (Indigenisation) Decree (NEPD) of 1972, for example, failed because Nigerians were unwilling to take to entrepreneurship. SMEs did not develop as many Nigerians subverted the Decree by fronting foreigners in the transfer of business ownership (Ejiofor, 1981: 13-28; Kemp, 1989: 191-197).

De-contextual development policies do not work: Most development policies implemented in Nigeria are either adopted from or imposed on it by, the Neoliberal Western world. So, rather than Nigerians, it is Neoliberal Western countries, which are driving the development process in the country or other African countries. The policies are not meant to work and do not work for Nigeria/Africa. For example, the global financial and trading systems are rigged against LDCs including Africa. Yet, neoliberal ideology pretends to achieve “free” trade, poverty “reduction”, social “equality,” and individual “liberty” (Peet, 2019; Wamsley, 2017). The



devaluation of Nigeria's naira during the implementation of the SAP plunged the Nigerian economy into a crisis and deepened poverty from which it has not recovered. Poverty even increased despite the implementation of alleviation programmes (Uche, 2000). As Mazorodze and Tewari (2023) found, devaluation does not always work. Attempts to escape this strangulation are ongoing. One of them is constituted by the military coups sweeping through Africa. Another is the initiative of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) to create an alternative financial architecture to escape the strangulating global financial system of the Bretton Woods institutions.

A hostile global environment has disastrous impacts on Africa's business environment.

In the densely interconnected global economy, hostile shock waves from the global environment impact Africa's business environment because it is not buffered against these shock waves. Examples include the outbreak of the COVID-19 Pandemic with its epicentre in Yuan, China and the Global financial meltdown with its epicentre in the United States (2007-2009). The recession of the West in the 1970s plunged Africa into a debt crisis and moved it into an economic disaster from which the Continent has not recovered.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS/RESULTS

In this study, we found that the business environment has been hostile to entrepreneurship development and performance. This is shown in a recent survey, which the Association of Small Business Owners of Nigeria (ASBON) conducted, which showed that 7.8 million small businesses went under from 2021 to January 2023 (Ikpoto, 2023). The ASBON blamed this on the harsh business environment in the country. However, the ICT as well as the creative industries sub-sectors recorded some successes but the power, security, agriculture, and education sub-sectors recorded unsatisfactory performances.

In particular, the security challenges persisted and even escalated during the implementation of the NEEDS. Nigeria, which commanded the ECOMOG and brought peace to warring countries in the West African sub-region, now cannot defend and maintain its territorial integrity. The agricultural sector is the most battered of all sectors from the insecurity in Nigeria. The farms have become the killing fields in the asymmetric battle between the Fulani cattle herders armed with AK-47 Rifles and indigenous farmers possessing just cutlasses. The herders provokingly and maliciously graze on the food crops of farmers, who get killed for protesting against the destruction of their crops. Underfarmed, Nigeria loses being the food basket of Africa and is unable to provide raw materials for industry. The strategy of backward integration remains unrealised.

The education sector collapsed in about 1986, when the SAP was implemented. Nigeria boasts 262 universities, which dramatically increased access to the ever-rising number of applicants. But, there has also been a decline in the quality of university products (see Moruku, 2013). The quality decline arises because universities are under-resourced; their faculty is under-motivated, hungry, angry, and disrespected but overworked to mass-produce graduates.

The government's inability to overrun terrorist groups thwarted peace and security upon which development depended. High-level official corruption has been shackling the implementation of entrepreneurship development policies in Nigeria.



Policy Implications of Findings/Results

As Athey (2010) and Lerner (2010) have shown in the cases of Singapore, Silicon Valley, Taiwan, and others, public policy in support of business makes a big positive difference. The following are areas suggested for government action in developing entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

Fitting environment to entrepreneurship: There is interconnectedness between entrepreneurship and its environment, leading to their coevolution. It devolves on the government to design the environment for business performance. For good results, it should use the dynamic capability and learning organisation approaches (Iszatt-White, 2010) to achieve strategic flexibility in the face of the complex dynamism of the environment.

Developing human capital of public servants. The Nigerian government is privatising education and disengaging from involvement in its provision, thus failing in its parametric function of human capital development (see also Moruku, 2013) at a time when coordinated market economies (CMEs) constituting the institutional complementarities of the economy and labour market call for extensive public involvement in public educational provision (Jensen, 2011).

It is thus that, for eight months in 2022, federal universities in Nigeria and most state-owned universities were closed down as a result of the dispute between the federal government and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) over the implementation of the Integrated Personnel Payroll Information System (IPPIIS) and a running university funding inadequacy. The government implemented the infamous “no-work-no-pay policy” by which members of academic staff were starved to submission and many to their very deaths. Prolonged crises and the closure of universities are weakening human capital development. So, the government should stabilise and strengthen the university system for the development of entrepreneurship skills as envisaged in the NEEDS.

Decisively tackling insecurity: Nigeria has been unwilling to deal decisively with terrorist groups. This has led to a war of attrition. It overran the Biafran rebels during the Nigeria-Biafra Civil War in just 30 months. But it has failed to defeat Boko Haram since 2012 while threatening to take decisive military action against the military junta of Niger Republic to return power to President Mohammed Bazoum, who was ousted in the military coup of July 26, 2023.

Institutionalising culture of entrepreneurship: Institutionalisation is a *cultural process*, which is evolutionary and takes a long period to bear fruit (Moroni, 2010), as demonstrated in the Western Cultural Account (Brandl and Bullinger, 2009). Consequently, the process should begin from the primary school stage in the education system. It should also involve discursive strategies, such as radio and television jingles and inspirational talks by well-known entrepreneurs in Nigeria, such as Aliko Dangote and his likes.

Entrepreneurisation of the state: The state should be an *enterprise state/entrepreneur* to lead its people to entrepreneurship; for now, it is not. It gives the feeling of “the blind leading the blind.” The state should cultivate the uniquely entrepreneurial qualities suggested by Gardner (Duening, 2010).



CONCLUSION

The present research drew on social liberal theory as a bearing for the new impetus for entrenching entrepreneurship culture in Nigeria. The researchers adopted the periodisation methodology in examining longitudinal qualitative data. Using this procedure, the researchers highlighted mixed results from the efforts of the state in encouraging/entrenching entrepreneurship culture and creating an enabling environment for its performance.

The Nigerian business environment has been hostile on account of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the insecurity posed by terrorists, the still-unfolding election-induced political crisis which keeps the country in high tension, and shock waves from the global business environment. These have been posing a challenge to the emergence and performance of entrepreneurship.

We also found that the Nigerian state did not display dynamic capability in effectively addressing emerging challenges, such as that of the outbreak of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

It also failed in its strategic management practice, as it did not continuously scan the business environment with a view to fine-tuning policies and strategies, which departed from the requirements of the recursiveness of the strategising process.

Consequently, the study urges the state to take steps to decisively tackle insecurity, develop dynamic capabilities of public servants, institutionalise entrepreneurship, develop human capital, and embark on the entrepreneurization of the state.

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