

# ACCELERATING CREATIVITY AND SKILL ACQUISITION IN ECONOMIC EDUCATION: A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO POVERTY ERADICATION IN NIGERIA

BY

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## Abstract

The reduction of poverty remains a critical challenge for nations worldwide, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. In this context, the role of economic education emerges as pivotal in equipping individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate economic challenges and foster sustainable development. Therefore, this study was geared towards accelerating creativity and skill acquisition within the framework of economic education; a strategic approach to poverty eradication in Nigeria. This study discusses different aspect and nature of poverty in Nigeria which encompasses economic, social and educational dimensions. It has unraveled the need for a holistic approach that goes beyond traditional economic paradigms to address the root causes of poverty and empower individuals to become agents of change in their communities. Central to this approach was the integration of creativity and skill acquisition into economic education curricula. By fostering creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, economic education can enable individuals to identify innovative solutions to economic challenges and seize opportunities for sustainable livelihoods. The paper also looks at various strategies for accelerating creativity and skill acquisition in economic education, including experiential learning, interdisciplinary approaches, and collaboration with industry stakeholders. The study affirmed that tailored interventions that address the specific needs and contexts of diverse learner groups, including youth, women, and marginalized communities is imperative.

**Keyword:** Accelerating, Creativity, Skill Acquisition, Economic Education, Poverty Eradication in Nigeria

## Introduction

The imperative to accelerate creativity and skill acquisition in Economic Education as a poverty eradication strategy in Nigeria is rooted in the nation's ongoing struggle to address poverty amidst rapid population growth and economic volatility. Despite Nigeria's wealth in natural resources and its status as Africa's largest economy, over 40% of its population lives below the poverty line, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (2020). This poverty rate of 40 percent is higher than the global average of 8.4 percent in 2019 as reported by the World Bank in its Global Monitoring Report on Poverty and Shared

Prosperity (2022). This signals an urgent need for approaches that empower individuals with the knowledge and skills to become economically self-reliant and resilient

Economic Education traditionally aims to provide individuals with an understanding of economic principles and how they apply in the real world, which is fundamental to economic literacy and personal financial management (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2016). However, with the demands of a modern economy, economic education must go beyond theory, integrating creativity and practical skills that prepare individuals for both traditional and emerging job markets. Emphasizing creativity fosters innovative

thinking and problem-solving capabilities, essential skills in a knowledge-driven global economy (Florida, 2014). When students and workers are equipped with creativity and technical skills, they are better positioned to seize opportunities in various industries, from technology to agriculture, which is vital for poverty alleviation (World Bank, 2018).

In many developing nations, including Nigeria, there is a growing recognition of the importance of combining economic education with vocational training and creative skill development. Programs that integrate these elements help individuals move beyond rote learning to apply their knowledge in dynamic, practical ways that enhance employability and entrepreneurial potential. For example, vocational training combined with economic literacy has been linked to increased employment and income levels in other African countries, providing a model for Nigeria to consider (ILO, 2019).

Despite the promise of this integrated approach, there are challenges to its implementation in Nigeria. Issues such as underfunding of educational institutions, outdated curricula, and lack of access to quality vocational training remain significant barriers. Nonetheless, international success stories suggest that overcoming these obstacles can lead to substantial progress. Nations like Singapore and South Korea, once facing similar developmental challenges, implemented policies that prioritized skill acquisition and creative education to bolster economic growth and significantly reduce poverty (Chang, 2016). Economics education involves preparing learners to become future economics educators (teachers) and equipping them with valuable economic knowledge to improve their standard of living by engaging in meaningful ventures. As a science, it represents a body of organized knowledge subjected to scientific tests and proofs. Additionally, as a product, economics education instills saleable values, skills, and dispositions in learners, making them

desirable to employers and beneficial to society at large (Hanushek, Jamison, Jamison, & Woessmann, 2015).

### **Concept of Economic Education**

The term 'Economic Education' is derived from two different words 'Economics' and 'Education'. It is expedient to explain and define the meaning of the two terms; their meanings have overtime shifted from pragmatic to modern due to globalization and new insight from scholars. The American Economic Association, (2018) defines Economics education as the study of scarcity, the study of how people use resources and respond to incentives or the study of decision making. Economics is a broad discipline that helps us understand historical trends, interpret today's headlines and make eradications about the coming years.

Becker (2017) sees Economics education as a field within economics that focuses on two main themes: the current state of, and efforts to improve, the economics curriculum, materials and pedagogical techniques used to teach economics at all educational levels; and research into the effectiveness of alternative instructional techniques in economics, the level of economic literacy of various groups, and factors that influence the level of economic literacy. Economics education can be seen as a process, science and product; as a process - economics education involves a time phase of inculcating the needed skills and values on the learners (Daniele, 2016).

### **Creativity in Education**

In Economic education, creativity involves the ability to think outside conventional frameworks to solve problems, generate innovative ideas and adapt to new economic trends. Traditionally, Economic education has focused on equipping students with knowledge of market systems, financial literacy and economic principles (Blaug, 2018). However, with the increasing complexity of global economies and the rise

of digital transformation, creativity has become essential in Economic Education. Creativity empowers students to not only understand economic theories but also apply them to real-world scenarios, think critically about challenges, and develop novel solutions. This broader approach encourages dynamic thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability—skills highly sought in modern job markets and essential for individual and collective economic advancement (Florida, 2014).

Creativity in education also involves encouraging students to view economics through a multidisciplinary lens, incorporating insights from psychology, technology, and the arts. By exposing students to various perspectives and approaches, economic education fosters creative capacities that go beyond traditional skills, equipping learners to explore diverse career paths and entrepreneurial opportunities. Richard Florida (2014) emphasizes that "creative capital" is crucial to economic growth, especially in developing nations where economies are in transition. As a result, fostering creativity can help students in Nigeria, for example, identify gaps in the market, create new products or services, and even develop innovative solutions for poverty reduction.

Incorporating creativity into economic education requires a departure from purely theoretical learning toward project-based and experiential methods. Studies show that hands-on learning and critical thinking exercises engage students more effectively and foster lasting understanding and skills (Kolb, 2014). For example, case studies and simulations in economic education allow students to experiment with different strategies, make decisions in controlled settings, and witness the impacts of these decisions—mirroring the real economy. Such methods help students cultivate problem-solving skills, a hallmark of creativity, enabling them to thrive in fast-changing

economic environments (Runco, 2014).

Creative Economic Education is particularly relevant in a world increasingly driven by knowledge and innovation. The World Economic Forum (2016) has identified creativity as one of the top skills needed in the workforce by 2025, reinforcing the need for educational models that nurture creative thinking. By integrating creativity, economic education prepares students to succeed not only as employees but as entrepreneurs and change agents who can actively contribute to economic growth and development. In Nigeria and other developing nations, a curriculum emphasizing creativity offers a pathway to reducing unemployment and poverty, as it equips students with the agility and innovative mindset necessary to respond to economic challenges and opportunities in their communities.

### **Overview of Nigeria's Poverty Situation**

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, faces a persistent and complex poverty crisis despite its significant natural and human resources. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) 2019 report, over 40% of Nigerians—approximately 82 million people—live below the poverty line, defined as earning less than ₦137,430 (\$381) per year. This statistics underscores the disparity between Nigeria's economic potential and the reality of widespread poverty. While Nigeria is often celebrated for its vast oil reserves and its position as the largest economy in Africa, the benefits of economic growth have not been equitably distributed across its population. One of the core drivers of poverty in Nigeria is the country's high unemployment and underemployment rates. Youth unemployment, in particular, has reached alarming levels, with more than 33% of the population aged 15–34 unable to secure gainful employment (NBS, 2020). This problem is exacerbated by rapid population growth, which places immense pressure on limited resources, infrastructure, and social

services. Nigeria's annual population growth rate of approximately 2.6% means that economic growth must significantly outpace this figure to make meaningful progress in poverty reduction.

Regional disparities further complicate Nigeria's poverty landscape. Poverty rates are highest in the northern regions, where access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities is limited. The insurgency by groups like Boko Haram has deepened the crisis in the northeast, displacing millions and disrupting livelihoods. In contrast, the southern regions, with better access to infrastructure and international trade, have lower poverty rates but still face pockets of deprivation, particularly in rural areas. The multidimensional nature of poverty in Nigeria highlights that it is not only about income but also about access to basic necessities such as education, healthcare, clean water, and electricity.

### Indicators of Poverty in Nigeria

The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) reveals that poverty goes beyond income and includes deprivations in health, education, and standard of living. Key indicators of poverty in Nigeria include:

1. **Low Per Capita Income (PCI):** A significant proportion of Nigerians live below the poverty line, earning less than \$2.15 per day (World Bank, 2022). This low income limits access to basic necessities such as food, clothing, and education.
2. **Poor Accommodation:** Many households lack access to adequate housing. A significant number of Nigerians live in overcrowded or substandard conditions, often without access to clean water and sanitation facilities.
3. **Lack of Reliable Electricity:** Over 60% of Nigerians do not have access to reliable electricity, which hampers

economic productivity and limits opportunities for small businesses to thrive (World Bank, 2022).

4. **Limited Access to Basic Health Services:** As of 2022, more than 50% of Nigerians were deprived of essential health services, contributing to poor health outcomes and low life expectancy.
5. **Inadequate Education:** A large number of children, especially in rural areas, lack access to quality education, resulting in high levels of illiteracy and reduced opportunities for upward mobility.

The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) reveals that many Nigerians experience deprivation in multiple aspects of life simultaneously. For instance, as of 2022, more than 50% of Nigerians lacked access to basic health services, and over 60% did not have access to reliable electricity (World Bank, 2022).

Another contributing factor to Nigeria's poverty situation is the overreliance on oil as the primary source of government revenue and foreign exchange. This economic dependence creates vulnerability to fluctuations in global oil prices, leading to periodic economic crises. Diversifying the economy and investing in sectors such as agriculture, technology, and manufacturing are critical to creating sustainable livelihoods and reducing poverty levels. The government has made efforts to address poverty through initiatives such as the National Social Investment Programmes (NSIP), which includes components like N-Power for youth employment and TraderMoni for micro-enterprise support. However, these initiatives often face challenges of scalability, transparency, and sustainability.



## **The Role of Economic Education in National Development**

Economic education plays a vital role in fostering national development by equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and mindset needed to make informed decisions and contribute meaningfully to economic growth. It provides a foundation for understanding the principles of resource allocation, production, and distribution, which are essential for the efficient functioning of any economy (Blaug, 2001). Through economic education, citizens become better equipped to navigate financial challenges, make sound investments, and engage in entrepreneurial activities that drive innovation and job creation. One of the key contributions of Economic education is its ability to enhance financial literacy. A financially literate population is more likely to save, invest, and plan for the future, leading to improved economic stability at both the individual and national levels. In Nigeria, where poverty and unemployment are pervasive, economic education can empower individuals to break free from cycles of dependency by understanding how to leverage opportunities in markets, access credit responsibly, and manage financial risks (World Bank, 2018).

Economic education also fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills. By analyzing real-world economic issues such as inflation, unemployment, and trade deficits, students and citizens alike develop a deeper understanding of how policies and market forces impact their lives and communities. This understanding encourages active participation in governance and advocacy for policies that promote inclusive growth and equity (Krueger & Lindahl, 2017). In Nigeria, where socioeconomic inequalities persist, an economically educated populace is better positioned to demand accountability and advocate for effective policies that address systemic challenges.

## **Importance of Creativity and Skill Acquisition for Poverty Alleviation**

Creativity and skill acquisition are pivotal in the fight against poverty, particularly in developing nations like Nigeria, where unemployment and economic disparity are pervasive. These two elements empower individuals to generate sustainable income, adapt to changing economic landscapes, and contribute to national development. When integrated into education and economic policies, creativity and skill acquisition become catalysts for personal and societal transformation.

### **Creativity: A Tool for Innovation and Problem-Solving**

Creativity fosters innovation, enabling individuals to think beyond conventional approaches and create solutions tailored to their unique circumstances. This capability is particularly vital in resource-constrained environments, where traditional methods may not suffice to overcome challenges. In Nigeria, for instance, creativity can help individuals identify gaps in the market, develop new products or services, and improve processes in agriculture, manufacturing, and technology sectors (Florida, 2014). At the community level, creative thinking can lead to collaborative ventures and social enterprises that address local needs, such as improving access to clean water or affordable healthcare. Such initiatives not only alleviate poverty directly but also build a culture of self-reliance and innovation, reducing long-term dependency on external aid.

### **Skill Acquisition: Enhancing Employability and Productivity**

Skill acquisition complements creativity by providing individuals with the technical competencies needed to execute their ideas effectively. In a rapidly evolving global economy, skill acquisition equips people to take advantage of emerging opportunities,

particularly in high-demand industries like information technology, renewable energy, and skilled trades. For Nigeria, where youth unemployment exceeds 33%, vocational training and skill development programs offer a practical pathway to economic empowerment (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Moreover, skill acquisition enhances productivity, which is essential for economic growth. Skilled workers can perform tasks more efficiently and to higher standards, driving innovation and competitiveness in their industries. For example, training in modern agricultural techniques has been shown to increase yields and income among smallholder farmers, directly impacting poverty levels in rural areas (World Bank, 2018).

### **Combined Impact on Poverty Alleviation**

When creativity and skill acquisition are combined, their impact on poverty alleviation is amplified. Creativity provides the vision and innovation necessary for identifying opportunities, while skill acquisition ensures that individuals have the practical tools to capitalize on them. This synergy is evident in successful entrepreneurial ventures, where creative problem-solving and technical skills converge to build businesses that create jobs and generate wealth.

### **Creativity and Innovation as Economic Drivers**

Creativity and innovation are fundamental forces that drive economic growth, development, and competitiveness in modern economies. These elements fuel new ideas, processes, products, and services that improve productivity, generate employment, and create wealth. For developing nations like Nigeria, utilising creativity and innovation can accelerate industrialization, diversify the economy, and reduce poverty, ultimately leading to sustainable development. Creativity and innovation drive economic growth by improving efficiency and fostering

competitiveness. Industries that invest in innovation typically experience higher productivity and market share. For instance, technological advancements in agriculture, such as precision farming and drought-resistant crops, have transformed agricultural productivity in many countries, directly impacting food security and income levels (OECD, 2019). Innovation also creates entirely new industries, contributing to job creation and economic diversification. The rise of the digital economy is a prime example. In Nigeria, the growth of tech startups and the fintech sector illustrates how innovation can unlock opportunities in untapped markets. Companies like Flutterwave and Paystack have not only enhanced financial inclusion but also positioned Nigeria as a hub for digital entrepreneurship in Africa (World Bank, 2021).

Creativity allows individuals and organizations to approach challenges from unique perspectives, leading to groundbreaking solutions. In economies facing resource constraints, creativity is often the driving force behind frugal innovation—developing low-cost, high-impact solutions. For example, in Nigeria, innovative solar energy projects have provided affordable electricity to rural communities, addressing the challenge of energy poverty while fostering economic activities (UNDP, 2020). Innovation is a key determinant of global competitiveness. Countries that prioritize creativity and innovation tend to dominate global markets, as seen in nations like South Korea and Germany, which have invested heavily in research and development (R&D) and innovation ecosystems (World Economic Forum, 2020). For Nigeria, fostering creativity and innovation is essential to compete in sectors like technology, manufacturing, and green energy, especially as the global economy shifts towards sustainability and digitalization.

### **Integrating Creativity and Skills in Economic Education Curriculum**

Integrating creativity and skills into the economic education curriculum is essential for preparing students to thrive in an increasingly complex and dynamic global economy. Traditional economic education has emphasized theoretical knowledge, such as economic principles and financial literacy, but the modern economy requires a broader set of skills, including creative problem-solving, adaptability, and practical technical skills. By weaving creativity and skill development into economic education, educators can equip students with the tools they need to actively participate in the workforce, drive innovation, and contribute to sustainable economic growth.

The inclusion of creativity in economic education promotes innovation and encourages students to think critically about complex economic issues. According to Robinson (2011), fostering creativity helps students develop flexibility in thinking, allowing them to generate new ideas and solutions to real-world problems. Creativity-driven economic education shifts the focus from rote learning to hands-on problem-solving, helping students understand economic principles in context and apply them in practical scenarios, such as through simulations, case studies, and project-based learning.

Skill acquisition is equally critical as it provides students with technical proficiencies needed in today's job market. These skills range from financial planning and digital literacy to specific competencies in fields like data analysis, entrepreneurship, and business management. Skill-based learning in economic education can improve students' employability and readiness to engage in entrepreneurial ventures, which is particularly valuable in economies with high youth unemployment rates, such as Nigeria (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020).

### **Impact of Accelerated Creativity and Skills Development on Poverty Reduction**

Accelerated creativity and skills development are transformative in the fight against poverty, especially in developing countries like Nigeria. By equipping individuals with the ability to think innovatively and apply relevant skills, these initiatives empower people to generate sustainable income, create jobs, and contribute to economic growth. In a world increasingly driven by knowledge and technology, creativity and skill development are becoming crucial for building resilient economies capable of addressing persistent poverty challenges.

### **Creativity as a Catalyst for Economic Empowerment**

Creativity drives innovation, which can lead to new products, services, and business models that directly impact poverty alleviation. Creative thinking allows individuals to see beyond traditional methods and come up with unique, often more efficient solutions to local problems. For example, in agriculture—a sector that employs a significant portion of Nigeria's rural poor—creativity enables farmers to adopt sustainable practices, implement value-added processing, or leverage technology to boost productivity (World Bank, 2022). Similarly, creative approaches to micro-entrepreneurship allow individuals to identify local needs and meet them through small-scale business ventures, generating income and stimulating local economies.

### **Skill Development:**

Enabling Workforce Readiness and Economic Inclusion. Skill acquisition is equally vital as it provides individuals with the competencies needed for gainful employment or self-employment. In economies with high unemployment rates, such as Nigeria, skills training in high-demand areas such as digital technology, healthcare, and renewable energy can

enhance employability and lift people out of poverty (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). For instance, the proliferation of digital platforms and e-commerce has created new opportunities for freelancers and micro-entrepreneurs who can leverage their skills remotely, contributing to financial inclusion and reducing reliance on traditional, often limited, job markets.

### **Synergistic Impact: Creativity and Skills Together**

The combined impact of creativity and skills development amplifies poverty reduction efforts. Creativity enables individuals to recognize and conceptualize opportunities, while skill development equips them to capitalize on these opportunities effectively. A clear example is in the small business sector, where a creative individual may identify a market gap and, with the relevant skills, can establish a successful business that creates jobs and generates income. A study by the International Labour Organization (ILO) found that entrepreneurship training and skill-building programs can double the success rates of small enterprises, significantly impacting poverty levels in developing economies (ILO, 2021).

### **Addressing Structural Barriers in Nigeria**

To fully realize the potential of creativity and skills development for poverty reduction, Nigeria must address several structural barriers. Access to quality education and training remains limited, particularly in rural areas. Additionally, a lack of supportive infrastructure, such as internet access and reliable electricity, hampers the effectiveness of skills programs. Ensuring equitable access to these resources and investing in education reform are crucial steps toward building a creative and skilled workforce that can drive poverty alleviation. Additionally, collaboration between the government, private sector, and educational institutions can foster an ecosystem that nurtures creativity and supports skill development.

### **Conclusion**

The imperative of accelerating creativity and skill acquisition in economic education as a strategic approach to poverty eradication in Nigeria cannot be overstated. As Nigeria faces economic challenges, high youth unemployment, and persistent poverty, equipping individuals with creativity and skills is crucial to fostering self-reliance, economic participation, and resilience against socioeconomic hardships. Economic Education that emphasizes creativity and skills goes beyond traditional theory by preparing students to tackle real-world problems, contribute to economic innovation, and foster local and national economic growth. This approach provides individuals, particularly young people, with the tools to transition from dependency to productivity, ultimately contributing to the goal of poverty alleviation. Creativity in economic education enables individuals to generate unique solutions to local challenges, unlocking new opportunities for entrepreneurship and market innovation.

### **Recommendations**

The following are the recommendation for the study;

1. The Federal Government should introduce policies that provide financial incentives, grants, and tax benefits to individuals and companies investing in skill development, entrepreneurship, and innovation. For example, the Ministry of Finance could offer subsidies to businesses that train young people or provide apprenticeships. Additionally, startup funding agencies such as the Bank of Industry (BOI) and Nigerian Incentive-Based Risk Sharing System for Agricultural Lending (NIRSAL) should be tasked with supporting startups focused on solving Nigeria's socio-economic challenges.
2. The Federal and State Governments, in partnership with educational



institutions and the private sector, should collaborate to provide up-to-date and relevant skill training. These stakeholders must fund the establishment of vocational schools, set up skill acquisition centers, and develop internship and mentorship programs that connect students with industry professionals. The private sector should be encouraged to offer technical expertise and co-sponsor skill development initiatives.

3. The Federal Ministry of Education should reform the curriculum at all levels, from primary to tertiary, to emphasize creativity, critical thinking, and entrepreneurship. This will require the National Universities Commission (NUC) and other regulatory bodies to integrate practical skills like problem-solving, design thinking, and innovation into the curriculum. Educational institutions must ensure that Economic Education goes beyond theoretical knowledge and includes experiential learning activities.
4. The Federal Ministry of Education, in collaboration with curriculum development agencies such as the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), should include training on financial management, budgeting, investment strategies, and wealth creation in Economic Education programs. Schools and universities should ensure that financial literacy modules are taught across all levels of education to empower individuals to make informed financial decisions about savings, investments, and income management.
5. The Federal and State Governments, through agencies like the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), should prioritize vocational and technical education alongside academic degrees. This involves investing in local

vocational centers, expanding access to affordable, quality training, and equipping individuals with hands-on skills applicable to sectors such as construction, agriculture, and technology.

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