

# Revisiting Nigeria's Indigenous Industries in Niger State for Students Entrepreneurship in Tertiary Institutions

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## Abstract

Nigeria is endowed with diverse indigenous industries that embody cultural heritage, creativity, and economic resilience. In Niger State, traditional crafts such as blacksmithing, weaving, pottery, leatherwork, and food processing have historically served as vital sources of livelihood. However, the influence of modernization and neglect has led to their decline, even as graduate unemployment continues to rise. This study revisits Nigeria's indigenous industries in Niger State with a focus on their relevance for fostering student entrepreneurship in tertiary institutions. The study identifies major indigenous industries in the state by examining the challenges confronting them, and explores how their knowledge and practices can be integrated into entrepreneurship education for students. A descriptive research design is used, using qualitative methods. Data were collected through interviews with students, artisans, and educators. The information gotten was analyzed and translated using thematic analysis. The outcome results indicate that indigenous industries in Niger state remain viable but are underutilized due to lack of modernization, low government support, and limited student exposure. Findings are anticipated which shows that integrating indigenous industry practices into tertiary entrepreneurship curricula will enhance students' creativity, self-reliance, and job creation potential.

**Keywords:** Indigenous industries, Students Entrepreneurship, Niger State,

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## 1. Introduction

Nigeria is endowed with rich cultural heritage and diverse traditional industries that have historically served as sources of livelihood, socio-economic development, and identity formation. Indigenous industries such as blacksmithing, weaving, pottery, dyeing, leatherwork, wood carving, and food processing have played significant roles in sustaining local economies and transmitting cultural knowledge across generations (Akinlua, 2018). In Niger State, these industries have contributed to household income generation, social cohesion, and skill transfer within communities. They represent not only the

creativity of the people but also their resilience in adapting to local resources for survival and development.

Despite their historical importance, indigenous industries in Nigeria are gradually declining. The advent of globalization, modernization, and the proliferation of imported goods have reduced the relevance of local crafts, while urbanization and the preference for white-collar jobs have discouraged youth participation in indigenous occupations (Adegbite & Bello, 2020). The neglect of these industries has led to erosion of indigenous knowledge systems and reduced employment opportunities in local communities. Meanwhile, Nigeria continues to grapple with high rates of graduate unemployment and, raise questions about the adequacy of tertiary institutions in preparing students for self-reliance and entrepreneurship (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2022).

Entrepreneurship has been globally recognized as a key driver of innovation, employment, and sustainable development (Acs et al., 2018). In Nigeria, the government has made entrepreneurship education compulsory in tertiary institutions to equip students with business and life skills. However, many entrepreneurship programs remain largely theoretical and detached from local realities, limiting their impact on students' entrepreneurial mindset (Obi, 2021). Revisiting indigenous industries provides a unique opportunity to align entrepreneurship education with Nigeria's cultural heritage, offering practical, hands-on learning experiences that can enhance innovation, creativity, and job creation.

Integrating indigenous industries into student entrepreneurship training could provide multiple benefits. First, it will preserve cultural heritage by ensuring the transmission of indigenous knowledge to younger generations. Second, it will expose students to sustainable business models rooted in local resources, thereby promoting self-reliance and reducing dependence on formal employment. Finally, it will encourage innovation by combining traditional techniques with modern technology to meet contemporary market demands (Ogunyemi, 2019). This approach is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 8, which emphasizes decent work and economic growth, and Goal 9, which focuses on industry, innovation, and infrastructure (United Nations, 2015).

Against this background, revisiting Nigeria's indigenous industries in Niger State is imperative for fostering entrepreneurship among students in tertiary institutions.

This study therefore examine the potentials and challenges of indigenous industries in Niger State, and explore how they can be revitalized and integrated into entrepreneurship education as a strategy for youth empowerment, poverty reduction, and sustainable development.

The research filled a gap of limited geographic generalizability. Despite the wealth of indigenous industries in many states and regions none or little is written on Niger State, There is a dis- connects between these industries and the educational curriculum in tertiary institutions. Many students graduate without adequate exposure to local business opportunities. Moreover, existing indigenous industries often face challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of innovation, and limited market access. These issues hinder their growth and sustainability, further exacerbating the unemployment crisis among graduates. Therefore, this study investigates how revisiting these industries can foster entrepreneurship among students and contribute to local economic development.

The study is conducted in some selected tertiary institution in Niger State, Nigeria, which is located in the North-Central region of the country. Niger State is known for its rich cultural heritage and diverse indigenous industries, including agriculture, crafts, textiles, and food processing. The state's economic activities are largely driven by these traditional sectors, making it an ideal location to explore the integration of indigenous industries into entrepreneurship education within tertiary institutions. The study focuses on selected tertiary institutions within Niger State, including Universities, Polytechnics, and Colleges of education, to assess how they can leverage local industries to foster entrepreneurship among students.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **Concept of Indigenous Industries in Nigeria**

Indigenous industries refer to traditional craft-based economic activities that are locally developed, utilizing native skills, raw materials, and cultural knowledge (Aremu, 2005). In Nigeria, such industries include blacksmithing, pottery, weaving, leatherwork, wood carving, dyeing, and traditional medicine. These industries have historically contributed to local economies and sustained livelihoods before and after colonial contact (Ekong, 2003). They embody indigenous knowledge systems and reflect the socio-cultural heritage of various Nigerian communities (Odora Hoppers, 2002).

In Niger State, indigenous industries like brass work in Bida, leatherwork in Kontagora, weaving in Kutigi, and pottery in Lapai represent crucial aspects of local economic identity. These industries not only promote cultural continuity but also provide employment and entrepreneurial opportunities (Audu & Gana, 2019). However, modernization and globalization have contributed to their decline due to neglect, inadequate funding, and lack of institutional support (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, 2006).

### **Entrepreneurship and Tertiary Education**

Entrepreneurship is increasingly recognized as a key driver of economic transformation and job creation (Schumpeter, 1934). Within tertiary institutions, entrepreneurship education aims to instill creative thinking, innovation, and self-employment orientation among students (McClelland, 1961; Drucker, 1985). The Nigerian government, through agencies like the National Universities Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC), has integrated entrepreneurship studies into tertiary curricula to reduce graduate unemployment and stimulate indigenous enterprise development (Ojeifo, 2013).

However, most entrepreneurship programs remain theoretical and poorly connected to the local context, leading to limited practical exposure (Adegbite et al., 2007). Linking entrepreneurship education with indigenous industries could provide experiential learning, enabling students to apply business principles within culturally grounded and sustainable frameworks (Onu, 2019).

The reviewed literature establishes that indigenous industries are crucial for skill development, employment generation, and cultural preservation. However, there remains a significant research gap regarding the integration of these industries into entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions, particularly within Niger State. Most existing studies focus on the cultural and economic roles of indigenous industries without linking them to structured educational frameworks. This study, therefore, addresses this gap by exploring how indigenous industries can be revitalized and integrated into tertiary entrepreneurship programs to promote sustainable development and self-reliance among students.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is underpinned by **Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964)** which justifies the need to enhance students' entrepreneurial potential through exposure to indigenous industries—such as leatherwork, pottery, weaving, blacksmithing,

and food processing—thereby transforming traditional skills into viable business ventures., **Entrepreneurship Development Theory (Schumpeter, 1934; McClelland, 1961)** that supports the argument that students exposed to indigenous industries can innovate within traditional production systems—modernizing techniques, improving product quality, and accessing broader markets. It implies that with the right entrepreneurial orientation and institutional support, indigenous industries can be a platform for new venture creation and local economic development, and the **Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS) Theory (Hountondji, 1997; Odora Hoppers, 2002)** that equally situates indigenous industries as reservoirs of valuable cultural and technical knowledge that can be transmitted to students. It supports the notion that revitalizing indigenous crafts and industries can empower youth entrepreneurs while preserving cultural heritage. Incorporating IKS into entrepreneurship education aligns local content with national development and self-reliance goals. These three theories jointly explain how indigenous industries can be revitalized and linked with student entrepreneurship in tertiary institutions.

### **3. Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative research design, utilizing semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to gather in-depth insights from various stakeholders. The qualitative approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the perceptions, experiences, and challenges faced by students, educators, and industry practitioners. The participants in this study include:

1. Students: 20 students from various tertiary institutions in Niger State enrolled in entrepreneurship-related programs.
2. Educators: 10 lecturers and instructors involved in entrepreneurship education.
3. Industry Stakeholders: 10 representatives from indigenous industries, including artisans, business owners, and local government officials.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions conducted over a period of three months. The interviews were designed to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and suggestions regarding the integration of indigenous industries into entrepreneurship education. Focus group discussions facilitated interaction among participants, allowing for the exchange of ideas and collective insights.

### **Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data. Transcripts from interviews and discussions were coded to identify recurring themes and patterns. The analysis focused on understanding the current state of indigenous industries, the challenges faced by students, and the opportunities for enhancing entrepreneurship education.

### **4. Results and Discussions**

The analysis revealed several key themes regarding the state of indigenous industries in Niger state and their potential for fostering entrepreneurship among students:

1. **Current State of Indigenous Industries:** Participants highlighted the rich diversity of indigenous industries in Niger State, including soil-based, plant-based, and animal-based industries in places like Bida, Paiko-Tatiko, Lapai, Agaie, Rijau, Kontagora among others. However, many industries face challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of funding, and limited access to markets.
2. **Integration into Curriculum:** Educators expressed the need for a curriculum that incorporates practical experiences related to indigenous industries. Students emphasized the importance of hands-on training and exposure to local businesses to enhance their entrepreneurial skills.
3. **Challenges for Students:** Participants identified several challenges faced by students, including limited access to funding, lack of mentorship, and insufficient knowledge about indigenous industries. Many students expressed a desire for more support from educational institutions and industry stakeholders.
4. **Opportunities for Entrepreneurship:** The study identified several opportunities for students to engage with indigenous industries, including internships, workshops, and collaborative projects with local businesses. Participants emphasized the potential for innovation and creativity in developing new products and services based on traditional practices.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study underscore the importance of revisiting Nigeria's indigenous industries as a means of fostering entrepreneurship among students in Niger State. The rich cultural heritage and local resources present a unique opportunity for students to develop entrepreneurial skills that are relevant to their communities. By integrating indigenous industries into the entrepreneurial

curriculum, educational institutions can provide students with practical experiences that enhance their employability and promote economic development.

However, several challenges must be addressed to realize this potential. Inadequate infrastructure and limited access to funding remain significant barriers for both students and indigenous industries. Collaborative efforts between educational institutions, government agencies, and industry stakeholders are essential to create an enabling environment for student entrepreneurship. This includes providing mentorship programs, access to funding, and opportunities for networking and collaboration.

Furthermore, the study highlights the need for a shift in mindset among students and educators regarding the value of indigenous industries. Emphasizing the relevance of local resources and traditional knowledge can inspire students to explore entrepreneurship as a viable career path.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This research has demonstrated the potential of Nigeria's indigenous industries in Niger State to serve as a foundation for entrepreneurship among students in tertiary institutions. By revisiting and integrating these industries into the entrepreneurial curriculum, educational institutions can empower students to leverage local resources and traditional practices for economic development. Collaborative efforts among stakeholders are crucial to overcoming the challenges faced by students and indigenous industries. Ultimately, fostering entrepreneurship through indigenous industries can contribute to sustainable economic growth and job creation in Niger State and beyond.

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