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Peer Reviewed Book Chapter

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Acknowledgments

The authors gratefully acknowledge the support of our academic institutions and colleagues whose insights and contributions informed the development of this chapter, Sustainable Education in Africa. We also extend our appreciation to the editors of this volume for their guidance and for providing a platform to share our collective work.

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CHALLENGES FACING INNOVATION EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

Innovation education is critical for fostering creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, and entrepreneurship, all of which are essential for sustainable national development. In Nigeria, however, the effective implementation of innovation education faces numerous challenges, including inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, outdated curricula, limited teacher capacity, socio-economic disparities, weak research culture, and policy gaps. This chapter examines these challenges in detail and analyzes their impact on the quality, accessibility, and effectiveness of innovation education in Nigeria. The chapter further explores practical solutions, including increased investment, curriculum reform, teacher capacity development, infrastructural improvements, promotion of digital literacy, equitable access, strengthened research and development, and effective governance. By addressing these challenges, Nigeria can enhance the effectiveness of innovation education and leverage it as a catalyst for economic growth, technological advancement, social inclusion, and sustainable national development.

Keywords: Innovation, Education, Development

1.0 Introduction

Innovation education has emerged as a critical component of modern educational systems worldwide, aimed at equipping learners with creativity, problem-solving skills, critical thinking, and entrepreneurial capabilities necessary for national development. In Nigeria, innovation education holds significant promise for addressing persistent socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, poverty, technological gaps, and low productivity. By integrating technology, research, and practical skills into the learning process, innovation education has the potential to produce a generation of skilled, solution-oriented, and self-reliant citizens capable of driving sustainable national growth.

Despite its importance, the implementation of innovation education in Nigeria faces numerous challenges that undermine its effectiveness. Inadequate funding, poor educational infrastructure, lack of access to modern technologies, and outdated curricula limit the ability of schools and higher education institutions to foster innovation. Additionally, insufficiently trained educators, low digital literacy among students, and socio-economic disparities further constrain the reach and impact of innovation-oriented learning. These problems hinder the development of critical human capital and reduce the capacity of innovation education to contribute effectively to national development.

This chapter examines the challenges facing innovation education in Nigeria, analyzing both systemic and contextual barriers to its effective implementation. It also explores practical solutions and policy interventions that can enhance the quality, accessibility, and relevance of innovation education. By addressing these challenges, Nigeria can maximize the potential of education as a catalyst for technological advancement, entrepreneurship, and sustainable national development.

2.0 Conceptual Terms

2.1 Innovation Education

Innovation is the systematic practice of developing and marketing breakthrough products and services for adoption by customers. Innovation is defined as the process of bringing about new ideas, methods, products, services, or solutions that have a significant positive impact and value. It involves transforming creative concepts into tangible outcomes that improve efficiency, and effectiveness, or address unmet needs (Jain, 2023). Innovations are not ends in themselves but means towards an end. From the forgoing, it can be said that innovation preset change, as innovation is synonymous with creative thinking and it is the result of this thinking that is being translated into change (Fadipe and Adepoju, 2008). It is imperative to state here that an innovation does not mean the thing with creativity, change, improvement, product, development and invention. Rather, each of these activities may lead to innovation (Danladi, 2019).

Innovation is not limited to technological advancements and encompasses novel approaches to problem-solving, processes, organizational practices, or business model innovation. At its core, innovation involves challenging the status quo, thinking outside the box, and taking calculated risks to drive progress and achieve breakthrough outcomes (Jain, 2023). Innovation to be the process of taking a creative idea and turning it into a useful product, service or method of operation. The authors further stress that, all innovations start as an idea, after which some of them reach the level of overt and tangible expression through the implementation process (Elsewhere, Robbin and Coulter 1998).

Innovation as introduction of new idea, method or invention. Innovation is purposeful, organized, risk-taking change introduced for the purpose of ensuring efficiency and increased productivity. It means not only adapting to new conditions but creating new conditions (Longman, (1995). Similarly, Innovation as any idea, practice or material artifact perceived to be new by the relevant unit of adoption (Bassey, 2008). Innovation is driven by a combination of factors, including curiosity, creativity, and the desire for improvement. It requires a mindset that embraces change, welcomes ideation, and encourages experimentation. Innovation can occur in various contexts, such as business, science, technology, social sectors, or public services. It can lead to economic growth, social progress, improved quality of life, and sustainable development (Jain, 2023).

Innovation education is an approach to teaching and learning that emphasizes creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and the practical application of knowledge to generate new ideas, products, services, or processes. Unlike traditional education, which often prioritizes rote learning and memorization, innovation education focuses on equipping learners with skills that enable them to identify problems, develop solutions, and implement strategies that add value to society. In essence, innovation education integrates knowledge acquisition with practical experiences, technological proficiency, entrepreneurial thinking, and research-based learning. It is designed to prepare learners to adapt to rapidly changing socio-economic and technological environments, making them capable of contributing meaningfully to national development (Peter, 2019).

Components of Innovation Education

Creativity and Critical Thinking: Learners are encouraged to think outside the box, question assumptions, and develop novel solutions to complex problems.

Problem-Solving Skills: Education emphasizes practical application of knowledge to solve real-world challenges in areas such as agriculture, healthcare, energy, and information technology.

Entrepreneurship Education: Students are trained to identify business opportunities, develop products or services, and create startups that drive economic growth and job creation.

Research and Development (R&D): Learners are involved in systematic research projects, experimentation, and innovation initiatives that produce tangible solutions or technological advancements.

Technological Literacy: Innovation education integrates digital skills, ICT tools, and emerging technologies into learning processes to prepare learners for the demands of a digital economy.

Collaborative and Interdisciplinary Learning: Encouraging teamwork and interdisciplinary approaches fosters creativity, knowledge-sharing, and the development of comprehensive solutions to societal problems (Jain, 2023; Daniel, 2022).

3.0 Result and Discussion on Importance of Innovation Education

Innovation education is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone for sustainable development, economic growth, and social transformation. Unlike traditional education, which often emphasizes rote learning and memorization, innovation education focuses on developing learners' creativity, problem-solving abilities, critical thinking, and practical skills. In Nigeria, where economic, technological, and social challenges persist, innovation education is particularly vital for fostering a workforce capable of addressing national development issues.

1) Human Capital Development

Human capital refers to the knowledge, skills, competencies, and abilities that individuals bring to the workforce, which are essential for productivity and societal progress. Innovation education contributes to human capital development by: Equipping learners with practical and adaptable skills required in modern workplaces. Promoting critical thinking and problem-solving abilities that enhance decision-making and creativity. Preparing graduates to be self-reliant, reducing dependence on government or external employment. By building a skilled and innovative workforce, Nigeria can improve productivity, reduce unemployment, and strengthen its position in the global economy (World-bank, 2020; Abara, Ogunode, & Olatunde-Aiyedun, 2022).

2) Promotion of Entrepreneurship and Economic Growth

One of the most significant contributions of innovation education is the cultivation of an entrepreneurial mindset among learners. Entrepreneurship is a major driver of economic growth and job creation. Innovation education promotes:

Business creation: Equipping students with skills to identify opportunities, start businesses, and manage resources effectively.

Job creation: Graduates trained in innovation can create employment for themselves and others, reducing unemployment rates.

Economic diversification: Through innovative ideas, students can develop solutions in non-oil sectors such as technology, agriculture, and manufacturing, reducing Nigeria's economic dependence on oil. By fostering entrepreneurship, innovation education directly contributes to economic development and national self-reliance (Akinwumi, Ariyo, & Ademola, 2025).

3) Technological Advancement and Research Development

Innovation education emphasizes the integration of technology and research into learning processes, which has the following benefits: Encourages students to develop new products, services, and processes that solve societal problems. Enhances technological literacy, digital skills, and adaptability to global technological trends. Positions educational institutions as centers of research, experimentation, and knowledge creation. In Nigeria, this is particularly important to bridge the technological gap, encourage local solutions, and reduce reliance on imported technologies (Dolapo, 2015; Dada, Ishaya, & Ogunode, 2021).

4) Problem-Solving and Addressing Societal Challenges

Innovation education trains learners to identify problems, think critically, and design practical solutions. This has direct implications for national development:

Health: Students can develop cost-effective healthcare technologies or awareness programs.

Agriculture: Innovation education can lead to better farming techniques, mechanization, and food security solutions.

Energy and Environment: Learners can create renewable energy solutions or sustainable environmental practices.

Infrastructure: Graduates can contribute to innovative approaches to urban planning, transportation, and housing. By equipping learners to solve real-life problems, innovation education strengthens societal resilience and improves quality of life (Lars, 2018; Jain, 2023; Ogunode, 2025).

5) Social Inclusion and Empowerment

Innovation education has a transformative social impact according to Akinwumi, Ariyo, & Ademola, (2025) in the following ways:

Promoting access to quality education through digital tools and e-learning platforms. Empowering marginalized groups, including girls, rural learners, and people with disabilities, to develop practical skills and participate in economic activities. Encouraging civic engagement and socially responsible innovation that addresses local community challenges. This ensures that development is inclusive, equitable, and sustainable.

6) Promotion of Sustainable National Development

Sustainable development involves balancing economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection. Innovation education supports this by: Preparing learners to create environmentally friendly technologies and sustainable practices. Encouraging ethical entrepreneurship that considers social and ecological impacts. Supporting policy and governance through research-based evidence and innovative solutions. By linking education with innovation, Nigeria can develop a generation of citizens capable of contributing to long-term sustainable development (Fadipe, & Adepoju, 2008; Fedena, 2019).

7) Global Competitiveness

In a rapidly changing global economy, countries that embrace innovation education gain competitive advantages. Nigerian learners trained in innovative skills can: Compete in international labor markets. Participate in global technological and scientific research. Develop solutions that enhance Nigeria's standing in knowledge-based economies. This ensures that Nigeria remains relevant and competitive in a globalized world (Bello, 2020; Daniel, 2022).

B- Challenges of Innovation Education in Nigeria

Inadequate Funding

One of the most significant challenges facing innovation education in Nigeria is insufficient funding. Schools, universities, and technical institutions often lack the financial resources necessary to: acquire modern teaching and laboratory equipment. Establish innovation hubs, incubators, and research centers. Support students in practical, experimental, or technology-driven projects. Without adequate funding, institutions cannot provide learners with the facilities and resources needed for effective innovation education. This underfunding is compounded by poor budgetary prioritization and limited government investment in research and development (R&D) (Ogunode, 2022).

Poor Infrastructure and Learning Facilities

Many Nigerian educational institutions operate with inadequate infrastructure. Innovation education requires well-equipped laboratories, digital tools, internet access, libraries, and spaces for collaborative learning. However, challenges include: Lack of functional laboratories and workshop facilities. Poor internet connectivity and limited access to computers and digital resources. Overcrowded classrooms that hinder collaborative and practical learning. These infrastructural deficits prevent students from engaging in hands-on learning, experimentation, and technological exploration core components of innovation education (Mungai, 2011; Livinus, E., (2013;).

Outdated Curriculum and Pedagogy

The Nigerian educational system has traditionally emphasized rote learning and memorization over creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving. The challenges here include: Curricula that are largely theoretical and disconnected from practical application. Limited integration of innovation, entrepreneurship, and technology-oriented subjects. Teaching methods that do not encourage experimentation, creativity, or independent thinking. This gap between curriculum design and the needs of a knowledge-based, innovation-driven economy hinders the development of learners' innovative capacities (Ogunode & Jegede 2020; Oyinlola, M., et al. 2024; Standtogether 2023).

Insufficient Teacher Capacity

Teachers play a crucial role in delivering innovation education. However, challenges in Nigeria include: Limited training in modern pedagogical approaches, digital literacy, and innovation methodologies. Low motivation and morale due to poor remuneration and working conditions. Resistance to adopting technology-driven or student-centered teaching methods. Without adequately trained and motivated teachers, innovation education cannot be effectively delivered, limiting students' ability to develop creative and problem-solving skills (Abubakar, 2021; Dada,Olowonefa & Ogunode, 2022; Ellsworth, 2000).

Scio-Economic Constraints

Many learners face socio-economic barriers that limit their participation in innovation education: High poverty levels restrict access to technology, learning materials, and extracurricular innovation activities. Students in rural areas often lack exposure to modern teaching methods, digital resources, or innovation hubs. Economic disparities contribute to unequal opportunities, creating gaps between urban and rural, rich and poor students. These socio-economic factors exacerbate educational inequality and reduce the overall impact of innovation education on national development (World-bank, 2020).

Limited Access to Technology and Digital Resources

Innovation education relies heavily on technology and digital literacy. In Nigeria: Many schools lack computers, smart devices, and reliable internet connectivity. Online learning platforms, virtual labs, and digital collaboration tools are often unavailable. Students and teachers have limited exposure to modern technological tools necessary for research, experimentation, and innovation. This digital divide restricts learners' ability to develop relevant skills and competences for the modern workforce (Ogunode, 2025; Yemi, 2018).

Weak Research and Development Culture

Innovation education requires a strong emphasis on research and experimentation. In Nigeria: Universities and technical institutions have limited research funding and facilities. Collaboration between academic institutions and industry is weak. Students and educators often have little motivation or opportunity to engage in research-based innovation. This lack of R&D culture undermines the capacity of innovation education to produce practical solutions to societal challenges (Nurudeen, 2008; National Information Technology Development Agency NITDA).).

Policy and Governance Gaps

The success of innovation education depends on effective policy implementation and governance. In Nigeria: Policies promoting innovation and entrepreneurship in education are often poorly implemented. Strategic planning for education reform lacks long-term commitment and coordination. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for innovation programs are weak, leading to inconsistent outcomes. These governance gaps limit the sustainability and effectiveness of innovation education initiatives (World-bank, 2020).

C- Solutions to the Challenges of Innovation Education in Nigeria

1) Increased Funding and Investment in Education

Adequate funding is critical to addressing many challenges in innovation education. Solutions include: Government investment. The federal and state governments should prioritize innovation education in budget allocations, ensuring adequate funding for infrastructure, technology acquisition, and research programs. Collaboration with private companies, tech firms, and philanthropists can provide additional resources for innovation hubs, laboratories, and student projects. Financial support for students pursuing innovation-focused programs can enhance access and encourage participation in research and entrepreneurial activities. Increased funding ensures that schools and higher institutions have the resources necessary to deliver quality innovation education (Bello, 2020;Daniel, 2022)..

2) Development of Infrastructure and Technological Facilities

Improved infrastructure is essential for effective innovation education. Key measures include; Establishment of modern laboratories, maker spaces, and innovation hubs in schools and universities. Provision of computers, smart devices, high-speed internet, and digital learning **tools** for students and educators. Creation of collaborative learning spaces to facilitate teamwork, experimentation, and project-based learning. Proper infrastructure supports practical learning, experimentation, and digital literacy core elements of innovation education (Akinwumi, Ariyo, & Ademola, 2025; Ogunode, Adamu & Ajape 2021; Ogunode, Okwelogu, & Olatunde-Aiyedun, 2021).

3) Curriculum Reform and Pedagogical Innovation

Curriculum and teaching methods must align with the goals of innovation education. Solutions include: Integrating creativity, entrepreneurship, and problem-solving into all levels of education. Updating existing curricula to include technology, innovation, digital skills, and research-based learning. Adopting learner-centered teaching methods such as project-based learning, experiential learning, and flipped classrooms. Encouraging interdisciplinary approaches to allow learners to tackle complex, real-world problems. Curriculum reform ensures that learners develop the critical thinking and innovative skills required for national development (World-bank, 2020; Ogunode, Babayo, Jegede, &Abubakar, 2020; Ogunode, Garba.Ajape 2021;Ogunode, Okwelogu, & Olatunde-Aiyedun,2021).

4) Teacher Capacity Development

Teachers are central to the success of innovation education. Solutions include: professional development programs focusing on digital literacy, innovative teaching methods, and technology integration. Training workshops and certifications to equip educators with skills to facilitate creativity, problem-solving, and entrepreneurship. Incentives and motivation schemes to retain skilled teachers and encourage commitment to innovation education. Well-trained and motivated educators are critical to nurturing innovative competencies among learners (Ogunode, 2025a; Fadipe, & Adepoju, 2008; Ellsworth, 2000).

5) Bridging Socio-Economic Gaps and Ensuring Inclusivity

Innovation education must be accessible to all learners regardless of socio-economic background. Solutions include: Scholarships and financial aid for students from low-income households. Provision of technology and learning materials to rural and underserved communities. Community-based innovation centers that provide equal access to innovation resources. Promoting gender inclusivity and empowering girls to participate in STEM and entrepreneurial programs. Equitable access ensures that all citizens can contribute to innovation-driven national development (Ogunode, Babayo , Jegede & Abubakar 2021; Lars, 2018).

6) Strengthening Research and Development Culture

A strong R&D culture is essential for practical innovation. Solutions include: establishing research grants and funding schemes for students and academ staff. Promoting industry-academia collaboration to create innovation ecosystems that link research to practical application. Encouraging student research projects, competitions, and hackathons to stimulate creativity and problem-solving skills. Creating innovation awards and recognition programs to motivate students and educators. R&D strengthens the capacity of education to produce solutions to local and national challenges (Ogunode, 2025a; Imogie 2002).

7) Policy and Governance Reforms

Effective governance and policy frameworks are critical to sustaining innovation education. Solutions include: developing comprehensive national innovation policies that support education, research, and entrepreneurship. Monitoring and evaluation **systems** to track progress and ensure accountability in innovation education programs. Institutional frameworks that coordinate stakeholders, including government, private sector, and NGOs, for implementation of innovation initiatives. Long-term strategic planning to ensure sustainability and consistency in innovation education policies. Good governance ensures that innovation education programs are implemented effectively and sustainably (Ogunode & Jegede, 2020; Osakwe, 2012).

7) Promotion of Technology and Digital Literacy

Technology is central to innovation education. Solutions include: integrating ICT tools, e-learning platforms, and virtual labs into curricula. Providing continuous training for students and educators in emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics, and renewable energy. Promoting digital entrepreneurship programs to enable students to create tech-based solutions and businesses. Digital literacy prepares learners for the knowledge-based economy and global competitiveness (Paul, 2020; Oyinlola, M., et al.2024).

4.0 Conclusion

Innovation education has the potential to transform Nigeria's educational system, economy, and society by equipping learners with critical skills, creativity, and entrepreneurial abilities. However, its effectiveness is constrained by multiple challenges, including funding deficits, inadequate infrastructure, outdated curricula, low teacher capacity, socio-economic inequalities, limited access to technology, weak research culture, and governance gaps. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated interventions, including increased investment in education, development of modern learning infrastructure, curriculum reform, teacher training, promotion of digital literacy, equitable access for all learners, enhanced research and development, and effective policy implementation. By implementing these solutions, Nigeria can maximize the benefits of innovation education, fostering human capital development, technological innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable national development, thereby positioning the country to meet the demands of a rapidly changing global economy.

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Concluding Synthesis

This edited volume, *Sustainable Education in Africa*, presents a robust and multidimensional exploration of the evolving dynamics shaping educational systems across Nigeria and the broader African context. The contributions collectively interrogate critical issues such as digital transformation, artificial intelligence in educational planning, gender inclusivity, economic constraints, institutional effectiveness, and the intersection of education with national development priorities.

A synthesis of the chapters reveals that sustainable education in Africa is inherently complex and requires an integrated, systems-oriented approach. While technological advancements offer transformative potential for improving educational access, quality, and administration, their successful implementation is dependent on enabling environments characterized by adequate infrastructure, policy coherence, and human capacity development.

Furthermore, the persistence of structural barriers—including underfunding, inequality, insecurity, and governance challenges—continues to impede progress. The contributors consistently emphasize that achieving sustainability in education necessitates deliberate, inclusive, and context-sensitive policy interventions that address both systemic inefficiencies and emerging global trends.

Importantly, this volume reinforces the position of education as a strategic instrument for sustainable development, aligning with global development priorities while responding to local realities. The insights generated herein contribute meaningfully to scholarly discourse and provide actionable knowledge for stakeholders across the education sector.

Implications for Practice

Drawing from the collective contributions of this volume, several practical implications emerge for policymakers, educational leaders, and practitioners:

- **Policy and Governance:** Governments should prioritize coherent and forward-looking educational policies that integrate technology, inclusivity, and sustainability into national development agendas.
- **Investment in Infrastructure:** There is a critical need for sustained investment in digital infrastructure, learning facilities, and instructional resources to support modern educational delivery systems.
- **Capacity Building:** Continuous professional development for educators and administrators is essential, particularly in the areas of digital literacy, data-driven decision-making, and innovative pedagogy.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** Educational interventions must intentionally address gender disparities, socio-economic inequalities, and access challenges affecting marginalized populations.
- **Research and Innovation:** Institutions should foster a culture of research and innovation to generate context-relevant solutions and inform evidence-based practices.
- **Collaboration:** Stronger partnerships among governments, private sector actors, development agencies, and academic institutions are necessary to drive sustainable educational transformation.

Editors' Note

The editors of this volume express profound appreciation to all contributing authors for their scholarly rigor, intellectual depth, and commitment to advancing knowledge in the field of education. The diversity of perspectives represented in this work reflects the complexity of educational challenges and opportunities within Africa.

We also acknowledge the invaluable contributions of peer reviewers, editorial board members, and institutional supporters whose efforts ensured the academic quality and integrity of this publication.

This volume is conceived not only as a scholarly resource but also as a catalyst for dialogue, policy reform, and practical innovation. It is our expectation that the ideas presented herein will inspire further research and contribute to the ongoing transformation of education systems across the continent.