



**Entrepreneurship education knowledge transfer in a conflict sub-Saharan African context**

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**Abstract**

**Purpose** - This paper explores how entrepreneurship education interacts with knowledge transfer and entrepreneurial behaviour in a conflict sub-Saharan African context.

**Design/methodology/approach** - In-depth telephone interviews of 20 participants who benefited from entrepreneurship education knowledge transfer were used to document and analyse the effect of entrepreneurship education on their behaviours as micro-entrepreneurs in a conflict zone.

**Findings** - These participants exhibited rare forms of innovative behaviour, through their business skills, gained from their involvement in entrepreneurship education. In relation to the effect of the conflict on their entrepreneurial behaviours, whereas it emerged the conflict was not the major barrier to entrepreneurial intentions, it however affected how they made strategic decisions about downsizing, advertising and future business plans. Consequently, these decisions altered at different junctures because of the conflict and therefore defined their coping strategies.

**Policy implications** - The paper advocates a policy shift towards a more collaborative sub-regional approach to tackling the underlying causes of conflict in sub-Saharan Africa through investment in EE strategies as a spur to economic development. Central to this are *a priori* assumptions about economically disadvantaged populations and their symbiotic relationship with conflict, a phenomenon frequently exploited by armed groups with deviant agenda. Thus, access to employment opportunities could benefit disadvantaged populations, thereby plays a decisive role in conflict mitigation.

**Originality and value** - The paper provides empirical analysis integrating entrepreneurship education with knowledge transfer and entrepreneurial behaviour in a conflict sub-Saharan African context. In this way, novel insights are provided that contribute to current efforts aimed at developing a robust theoretical and conceptual foundation for EE domain.

**Keywords** - Entrepreneurship education, knowledge transfer, higher education, entrepreneurial behaviour, conflict environment, sub-Saharan Africa.

**Paper type** - Research paper

## Introduction

Entrepreneurship education (EE) is high on the agenda for many governments and multilateral agencies across the world. Notably, the Association of African Universities (AAU) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recognise EE as a catalyst for socio-economic development (Johnson *et al.*, 2011; Wilson, 2008; Uslay *et al.*, 2002). As a result, they provide EE policies and how these interact with the concept of knowledge transfer to affect entrepreneurial skills acquisition and socio-economic development, especially in regions that suffer persistent high rate of poverty and unemployment (Harrington and Maysami, 2015; Johnston *et al.*, 2010). Also, the relationship between EE and entrepreneurial behaviour is well documented in academic circles (see, for example, Kirby, 2004; Bechard and Gregoire 2005; Co & Mitchell, 2006; Matlay & Carey, 2007; Solomon, 2007; Fuchs *et al.*, 2008; Kabongo & Okpara 2010). Unfortunately, the current knowledge in EE field (see also Klandt, 2004; Kuratko, 2005; Fayolle *et al.*, 2006; Nurmi & Paasio, 2007; Fuchs *et al.*, 2008; Matlay, 2008) is limited by evidence obtained mainly from resource-rich developed economies where the business environment is more stable, and the business dynamics often predictable.

Over the last 15years, improved political climate, fiscal discipline, and macroeconomic stability have significantly enhanced Africa's entrepreneurship landscape. Particularly, the informal sector in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has spawned economic activities on a scale unseen before, which have helped to guarantee the continent's impressive economic growth. In addition, different sub-Saharan African countries (see Kabongo & Okpara 2010 for a list of African educational institutions offering EE), especially those with a history of inter-communal and terrorist conflicts (e.g., Nigeria and Rwanda) are increasingly turning to EE as a way to catalyse their peace-building efforts. They view EE as a means to tackle widespread poverty and unemployment widely perceived as the underlying causes of those conflicts (Honeyman, 2016; Arogundade, 2011). For instance, anxious to deal with the persistent issue of poverty and youth unemployment, coupled with the Boko Haram conflict, the Nigerian government in 2006 made EE a compulsory higher education (HE) curriculum (Ojeifo, 2013). In doing so, it was envisioned that EE would influence entrepreneurial behaviour amongst university students and graduates.

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3 Despite these developments, how EE interacts with entrepreneurial behaviour within  
4 the context of SSA is surprisingly missing in mainstream empirical debates in EE  
5 (Henry *et al.*, 2005a). If anything, research has tended to ignore the SSA context,  
6 particularly those with a history of conflict. Perhaps, the difficulty associated with  
7 obtaining reliable data to undertake a proper analysis is partly to be blamed.  
8 Notwithstanding, if the promise of EE as a vehicle to influence entrepreneurial  
9 behaviour and socio-economic development is constrained by the validity of evidence  
10 obtained only from one region, then global efforts, such as those championed by the  
11 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework, which aim to use  
12 entrepreneurship as a vehicle to foster a more cohesive and economically prosperous  
13 world might not have as much impact as envisaged. Thus, integrating emerging  
14 entrepreneurship developments, particularly from the perspective of SSA, with  
15 mainstream EE research seems a sensible way forward.  
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#### 25 26 **Why SSA as a focus for EE research?**

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28 With several sub-Saharan African countries (e.g., Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Rwanda  
29 and Tanzania) growing at between 6% and 10% (AfDB/OECD/UNDP, 2016), and  
30 also turning to EE to drive their socio-economic agenda (Nwekeaku, 2013), there is  
31 much to be gained from a focus on SSA as a context for EE research. As such, for a  
32 holistic and more comprehensive understanding of the EE concept and to widen the  
33 existing body of evidence in this field, there is a need to understand the effect of EE  
34 on entrepreneurial behaviour of micro-entrepreneurs operating in SSA. Echoing this  
35 view, Fayolle (2013, p.693) calls for an urgent “reflection” about how best to  
36 safeguard the future of EE research by developing “robust theoretical and conceptual  
37 foundations” in EE domain field. In retrospect, Bruton *et al.*, (2008, p. 9) emphasise  
38 that “emerging economies” lend themselves more uniquely as environments in which  
39 to obtain “fresh insights” to expand theoretical understanding of entrepreneurship and  
40 economic development.  
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51 However, the key question is how to use EE to nurture entrepreneurial behaviour  
52 through the process of knowledge transfer in a conflict sub-Saharan context. Frankly  
53 speaking, SSA’s place as an important sub-regional constituency in the global fight  
54 against terrorist conflict makes a study of this nature both timely and important. By  
55 definition, knowledge transfer is seen as a distinct pathway by which individuals and  
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3 organisations learn, usually through scholarship, experience and information flow  
4 from one context to another for the purpose of individual and organisational  
5 development. Scholarship involves learning, and “learning is used to solve problems  
6 or provide new and creative insights” (Goh, 2002, p.23). Thus, the sociology and the  
7 process of learning shed a whole new light into the complexity of knowledge transfer,  
8 particularly, within a sub-Saharan African context where the interplay between  
9 poverty, unemployment and conflict presents new experimental challenges – and this  
10 makes it a unique context for EE research investigation (Refai, *et al.*, 2015).  
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18 In this study, knowledge transfer is employed as a mechanism to deliver EE to  
19 northeast Nigeria, a region besieged by Boko Haram terrorist conflict. The findings  
20 showed that although EE influenced entrepreneurship awareness and business skills  
21 development, lack of start-up capital rather than conflict was seen as the major  
22 hindrance to entrepreneurial activity and business expansion. Based on this, to  
23 support the development of entrepreneurial behaviour and entrepreneurship activity  
24 in SSA especially in regions affected by conflict, the study proposes a policy shift  
25 towards a more regionalised approach, rather than country-level emphasis, to using  
26 EE strategies to tackle poverty and unemployment seen as the underlying causes of  
27 conflict in SSA. Alongside, the study also advocates for a stronger emphasis on  
28 assessing individual’s business skills and capabilities as a prerequisite to accessing  
29 government-backed microcredits. In view of the foregoing, this paper contributes to  
30 the EE literature. In particular, novel insights are gained from understanding how EE  
31 interacts with the process of knowledge transfer to impact entrepreneurial behaviour  
32 in a conflict sub-Saharan African context.  
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44 To achieve this mission, section one contextualises how the problem of poverty and  
45 unemployment, linked with early child or *Qur’anic* education in Northern Nigeria is  
46 helping to fuel Boko Haram’s conflict. Section two evaluates EE concept and its  
47 relationship with entrepreneurial behaviour development. Specifically, the section  
48 argues that EE may actually provide a solution to unemployment amongst the  
49 Nigeria’s disadvantaged populations, thereby mitigate the effect of terrorist conflict.  
50 This is followed by a discussion intended to exemplify how knowledge transfer was  
51 used as a mechanism for EE delivery to Nigeria’s northeast severely affected by the  
52 Boko Haram conflict. The methodology of this study is explained and justified in  
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3 section three, followed by the analysis and empirical discussions in section four. The  
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5 concluding section outlines the study's policy and research implications.  
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### 8 **Context of Boko Haram conflict in Nigeria**

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10 As a group, Boko Haram has been associated with terrorist activities for over a  
11 decade. They recruit their members from mainly disadvantaged population, mostly  
12 unemployed youth across but not limited to northern Nigeria. Notably, their April  
13 2014 abduction of more than 270 schoolgirls from Government School Chibok  
14 brought them into international limelight that sparked the '*BringBackOurGirls*'  
15 global campaign. Despite recent release of some of the abductees and the increased  
16 military campaign by the Nigerian government and its international allies, Boko  
17 Haram remains defiant and undefeated (Burke, 2016). In fact, since 2013, 14.8million  
18 Nigerians including 7.3 million children have been severely affected by the Boko  
19 Haram's conflict. Of this population, 2.3 million people are known to have been  
20 internally displaced (UNICEF, 2016). Additionally, between 2012 and 2016 more  
21 than 30,000 deaths have been directly or indirectly linked to Boko Haram's conflict.  
22 Widespread poverty and unemployment, attributed to the prevalence of *Qur'anic*  
23 education in northern Nigeria, are seen as the underlying causes of Boko Haram  
24 conflict (Oladosu, 2012).  
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37 Qur'anic education is dominant in northern Nigeria where it is seen as an  
38 antidote to Western education and Christian proselytisation. Most uneducated  
39 Muslim parents prefer to send their children to Qur'anic schools rather than to formal  
40 or State schools (Yusuf *et al.*, 2013). Qur'anic schools, popularly known as the  
41 '*Almajiri*' schools in Nigeria, are similar to *Madradas* in Central Asia and Pakistan  
42 (Awofeso, Ritchie & Degeling, 2003, p.314). Mostly male pupils aged 5-15 years  
43 from poor family backgrounds attend *Almajiri* schools. Historically, *Almajiri* schools  
44 have been known to produce prominent Islamic scholars. However, the current socio-  
45 economic realities of the Nigerian situation and the increasing number of enrolments  
46 have made the *Almajiri* school system unsustainable (Hoechner, 2011). Partly,  
47 because, growth in enrolment coupled with lack of access to basic necessities meant  
48 that most *Almajiri* pupils and graduates (i.e., *Almajirai*) end up as "street urchins" to  
49 the detriment of Nigerian security (Aghedo and Eke, 2013, p.104). An estimated  
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3 9.5million pupils are currently enrolled in Nigeria's *Almajiri* schools compared to  
4 about 7.0million a decade earlier (UNICEF, 2016).  
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8 Besides growth in enrolment, the *Almajiri* school curriculum de-emphasises "critical  
9 thinking" and lacks basic learning in subjects such as English language, mathematics,  
10 problem-solving and ICT skills (Usman, 2009, p.64; Aluaigba, 2009). These are vital  
11 skills essential to survival in Nigeria where 56.1% of the youths aged 15-34 years  
12 old, mostly in northern Nigeria, are currently either unemployed or underemployed  
13 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016). By comparison to formal or State school, the  
14 *Almajiri* schools in Nigeria harbour a large and rapidly growing unemployed  
15 population with deficiency in skills needed to develop entrepreneurial behaviour  
16 (Khalid, 2001). This deficiency has serious implications for entrepreneurship  
17 development, not least, the apparent vulnerability of such a large unemployed  
18 population to Boko Haram ideology. As unemployed and poor, the *Almajirai*  
19 population are more vulnerable to "exploitation" by Boko Haram group than any  
20 other population group in Nigeria (Salaam, 2012, p.152). For instance, Aghedo and  
21 Eze (2013, p. 106) found that the *Almajirai* act as "foot soldiers" that carry out paid  
22 violent activities on behalf of Boko Haram group. However, Tobias *et al.*, (2013)  
23 identify that EE is an effective way of addressing conditions of unemployment and  
24 poverty, particularly amongst economically disadvantaged population, thereby  
25 mitigate their vulnerability to exploitation.  
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### 39 **Entrepreneurship education, unemployment and conflict**

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41 To help reduce the confusion in the literature about the broad use of the concepts of  
42 EE and enterprise education (see Gibb, 1993b), it is necessary to first clarify that both  
43 concepts share a distinct but complementary prerequisites for achieving  
44 entrepreneurial effectiveness. Entrepreneurial effectiveness is the ability of an  
45 individual to behave as an entrepreneur or function in an entrepreneurial capacity  
46 (Fayolle and Gailly, 2008; Kuratko, 2005). On the one hand, enterprise education is  
47 the process of equipping students with an enhanced capacity to generate business  
48 ideas and to exhibit entrepreneurial skills. On the other hand, EE equips individuals  
49 (e.g., students, graduates) with the knowledge, attributes and capabilities to acquire  
50 entrepreneurial skills necessary for entrepreneurial effectiveness, particularly in the  
51 context of new venture formation and management. In this sense, EE could be  
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3 characterised as a “transdisciplinary” concept that requires a high degree of  
4 application of “knowledge transfer” (Quality Assurance Agency, 2012, p. 2). In this  
5 perspective, it is obvious that knowledge transfer has a close association with the  
6 process of EE dissemination. Dissemination of EE through knowledge transfer is  
7 essential to entrepreneurial skills acquisition necessary to exhibit entrepreneurial  
8 behaviour, particularly in SSA where poverty, unemployment and conflict interact.  
9 Rogers (2012) argues that EE is a means of building entrepreneurial knowledge and  
10 skills amongst disadvantaged groups affected by poverty and conflict, especially in  
11 developing economies. Aligned with this view is Brixiova *et al.*, (2015), which found  
12 that disadvantaged Black South African youths acquired entrepreneurial knowledge  
13 and skills through EE, which in turn enabled them to alter their economic  
14 circumstance through self-employment.  
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25 Notwithstanding, the complex interaction between an entrepreneurship activity and  
26 conflict means that this interaction, depending on the dynamics, may present different  
27 outcomes in cross-cultural environments and also for certain population groups.  
28 There is a probability that conflict may increase the presence of entrepreneurship  
29 activities whilst at the same time hinder entrepreneurship development regardless of  
30 the levels of interaction with EE. For instance, barriers (e.g., access to market,  
31 finance and networks) to entrepreneurship development and SME growth may be  
32 harder to deal with by women entrepreneurs in a conflict environment (Lemmon,  
33 2012). Similarly, Ciarli *et al.*, (2015) conclude that in South and Central Asia (e.g.,  
34 Afghanistan) conflict produces different economic consequences for the individual  
35 (micro) and the State (macro) depending on the institutional context and arrangement.  
36 For the latter, conflict may hinder the development of employment opportunities for  
37 socio-economic development, whereas for the former, it may enhance self-  
38 employment in economic activities that have low returns. Welter & Smallbone (2010,  
39 p.1) argue that “the institutional context influences the nature, pace of development  
40 and extent of entrepreneurship as well as the way entrepreneurs behave”.  
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53 In any of these instances, it must be borne in mind that institutional contexts and  
54 arrangements have antecedents in terms of allocation, misallocation and the utility of  
55 entrepreneurial talents. This is because entrepreneurs vary in the extent to which they  
56 engage in defiance, avoid or simply acquiesce to informal institutional arrangements  
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3 (Sutter *et al.*, 2013). Thus, if the proper institutions are weak or non-existent, it takes  
4 time and effort to build stronger ones, and that situation applies to conflict or post-  
5 conflict environments in SSA and elsewhere, such as, in Syria where conflict  
6 prevents entrepreneurship development (Sanders & Weitzel, 2009; Bayram, 2017).  
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8 As a consequence, entrepreneurial talent could be used as a productive, unproductive  
9 or even destructive asset (Baumol, 1990). Hence, under such environments, it is  
10 difficult to mitigate the barriers to the development of entrepreneurial behaviour as  
11 well as the conditions (e.g., economic stagnation) that hinder access to economic  
12 opportunities. This barrier is also relevant to situations in which individuals may be  
13 educated, but remain vulnerable to conflict because of poverty and unemployment. In  
14 her study of the effect of poverty on conflict, Kavanagh (2011) concluded there was a  
15 conditional association between the highly educated who are unemployed and their  
16 participation in terrorist conflict.  
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26 A common feature of the above studies is their focus on the impact of conflict on  
27 entrepreneurs and on entrepreneurship activity in South and Central Asia. This focus  
28 delimits this study's unique emphasis on the impact of EE knowledge transfer on the  
29 entrepreneurial behaviour of individuals affected by terrorist conflict in SSA. Others  
30 (e.g., Krause & Jutersonke, 2005; Demirguc-Kunt, 2011) have examined the role of  
31 entrepreneurship in post-conflict transition economies. However, the effect of EE on  
32 entrepreneurial behaviour from the perspective of a sub-Saharan African context  
33 where people are constantly threatened by terrorist conflict is very rare and  
34 underserved. Thus, this suggests that our current understanding of EE research and  
35 practice is incomplete. If anything, extant EE studies are overwhelmingly based on an  
36 assumption of peace, and much of the evidence are derived from developed Western  
37 economies where the business environment is usually stable. There is generally  
38 limited research study in EE under conflict conditions due to the difficulty associated  
39 with data collection (Bruck, *et al.*, 2011; 2013). Of pertinence is the conflict  
40 environment of northern Nigeria, which has a turbulent institutional framework  
41 because pre-existing institutions (e.g., educational institutions) may have broken  
42 down as a result of the Boko Haram conflict.  
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56 Consistent with Bruck *et al.*, (2011), conflict is seen in this study as the deliberate  
57 and systematic use of violence by non-State armed groups (e.g., such as Boko Haram  
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3 group in this study) to achieve a radical socio-political agenda. Conflict emerges as  
4 one of a number of external shocks that has an adverse effect on people's socio-  
5 economic wellbeing and development (Nafziger and Auvinen, 2002). It increases  
6 vulnerability to poverty and vulnerability to violence. Vulnerability to violence may  
7 drive individuals into conflict (Justino, 2009), just as lack of access to economic  
8 opportunities and unstable institutional arrangements, at the start of or during a  
9 conflict, may also provide the incentive to engage in conflict (Goodhand, 2003; Noor  
10 *et al.*, 2016). However, if well designed and promoted effectively EE can reduce  
11 poverty and unemployment, and consequently vulnerability to conflict. EE can  
12 influence people's ability to acquire entrepreneurial talent in form of knowledge and  
13 skills that could enhance their ability to alter their individual and economic  
14 circumstance regardless of the environmental constraints.  
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25 Unfortunately, the lack of consensus (see Bird *et al.*, 2012; Fayolle and Gailly, 2008;  
26 Kuratko, 2005; Henry *et al.*, 2005a; 2005b; Fiet, 2001a; 2001b; Klinger and  
27 Schündeln, 2001; Krueger *et al.*, 2000; Timmons and Stevenson, 1985) about the role  
28 of EE in developing entrepreneurial knowledge and skills is compounded by the  
29 Schumpeterian notion of entrepreneurship with its emphasis on "innovation" as a  
30 means to develop entrepreneurial skills, often in resource-rich Western environments  
31 (Prieger *et al.*, 2016, p. 96). However, in many resource-poor developing economies,  
32 such as in SSA, the majority of economic activities are not yet a product of  
33 'innovation' (Naude, 2011). In fact, in most developing economies, especially those  
34 with a history of conflict, innovation is probably not even the object of interest for  
35 many people (Demirgüç-Kunt *et al.*, 2011). In such contexts, "entrepreneurship is  
36 important because it represents a route out of poverty, a means by which people with  
37 little capital, education, or experience can earn a living" (Baumol *et al.*, 2007, p. 3).  
38 This means that the Schumpeterian entrepreneurship principles may not be  
39 universally applicable (Bruton *et al.*, 2008). As such, the notion of 'entrepreneurial  
40 bricolage' - defined as "making do by applying a combination of the resources at  
41 hand to new problems and opportunities" (see Baker and Nelson, 2005, p. 333) –  
42 seems to offer a more plausible alternative about "how entrepreneurs behave and act  
43 entrepreneurially" when faced with environmental and resource constraints (Fayolle,  
44 2013, p. 696).  
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3 By and large, in reality, the substantial economically disadvantaged but active  
4 population across the world merely exhibit entrepreneurial behaviour in a survivalist  
5 sense of “raising capital, carrying out investment, and being full residual claimants  
6 for their resulting earnings” (Banerjee and Duflo, 2007, p.151). If this is the case, as  
7 others (e.g., Hanon, 2006; Jones and Matlay, 2011; Kassean, 2015) imply, then EE  
8 could serve as a vital platform to provide the poor and the unemployed with the basic  
9 entrepreneurial knowledge and skills required in order to exhibit entrepreneurial  
10 behaviour in a productive manner. Based on this premise, a knowledge transfer  
11 project on EE was commissioned in 2014 in partnership with the University of  
12 Maiduguri (UNIMAID) in northeast Nigeria – the Boko Haram heartland. Nigeria’s  
13 northeast showed the appropriate context in which to demonstrate, for the first time,  
14 through knowledge transfer, how EE interacts with entrepreneurial behaviour and  
15 conflict within a sub-Saharan African context.  
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### 25 26 **Knowledge transfer of EE**

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28 A number of frameworks (e.g., Jamieson 1984; Garavan and O’Cinneide 1994;  
29 Hynes, 1996; Leitch and Harrison, 1999; Inkpen & Tsang, 2005; Fayolle and Gailly,  
30 2008) used to deliver EE generally aim to create awareness about the significance of  
31 various contextual factors influencing entrepreneurial effectiveness and new venture  
32 creation. Whereas Garavan and O’Cinneide (1994) emphasise the importance of  
33 continuous skills enhancement for owners of small businesses, Jamieson (1984)  
34 offers a three-level sequential framework that advocates ‘education about enterprise’  
35 - which focuses on creating a theoretical awareness of the importance of owning and  
36 running a small business, ‘education for enterprise’ – which deals with providing the  
37 practical skills for setting up and managing a small business, and ‘education in  
38 enterprise’ - which stresses the importance of continuous business growth through  
39 learning, product or service innovation.  
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50 Thus, by adapting Jamieson’s framework, EE project based on two-phase knowledge  
51 transfer delivery was used to facilitate the development of entrepreneurial behaviour  
52 amongst UMIMAID students. Under phase one, undertaken in the UK over a ten-  
53 week period, sixteen UNIMAID staffs responsible for supporting students in  
54 entrepreneurial learning benefitted from mentorship overseen by eight UK-based  
55 knowledge transfer experts. Phase one focused on the underpinning theory and  
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3 practice of entrepreneurship in an experiential learning process. Thus, classroom and  
4 industrial learning activities were used to support mutually beneficial exchanges.  
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6 Alongside, graduates who benefited from the Student Placement in Entrepreneurship  
7 in Education Plus (SPEED) scheme coordinated in the UK were invited to share their  
8 personal experiences about how they overcame challenges to successfully set up their  
9 own businesses. The adoption of experiential learning e.g., 'live cases' helped to  
10 "close the gap between academic experience and real-world requirements", which  
11 Kassean *et al.*, (2015, p. 691) saw as crucial to successful EE delivery.  
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18 Similarly, UNIMAID staffs that completed phase one planned and led the delivery of  
19 the second phase in Maiduguri. The context was different and less conducive because  
20 of the conflict. However, the psychology of planning and delivery based on the  
21 learning principles derived from phase one offered a unique learning curve. It was  
22 striking to observe how culturally embedded norms (e.g., married Muslim women in  
23 *hijab* and their interactions with non-family members) were reified, yet, in ways that  
24 reinforced the importance of EE. Essentially, the focus was on developing an  
25 entrepreneurship curriculum template and using outreach activities to provide  
26 UNIMAID students with a route to entrepreneurial knowledge and skills acquisition.  
27 The outreach activities focussed on business ideas generation, business proposal  
28 writing, business planning, advertising, marketing and accounting skills. Thus,  
29 students were not just passive recipients of knowledge and skills, but were compelled  
30 to exhibit and regulate active behaviours that promoted entrepreneurial effectiveness  
31 through business plan writing and start-up activities. From a delivery viewpoint, the  
32 project delivery followed the iterative nature of Kolb's experiential learning, which  
33 Gopinath and Sawyer (1999) found reinforces the objective of any knowledge  
34 transfer programme associated with EE.  
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#### 48 **Sampling and data collection**

49 Because of the on-going Boko Haram insurgency it was difficult to recruit study  
50 participants in northeast Nigeria. Thus, snowballing technique was used as a means to  
51 collect data from a sample of twenty participants. Moreover, movement of people  
52 within Maiduguri was severely restricted and all travel by foreigners to the northeast  
53 region strictly forbidden. Nigeria's northeast remains a dangerous place to visit, with  
54 a lot of internally displaced persons. To put this into perspective, the UK's Foreign  
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3 and Commonwealth Office (FCO) advise against all travel to Maiduguri and the  
4 northeast has barely changed since the visit in 2014. Various studies (e.g., Bullough  
5 *et al.*, 2014; de Groot and Goskel, 2011) have employed snowballing to obtain  
6 primary research data from conflict or post-conflict contexts.  
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11 A diverse group of mostly male participants aged between 23 to 55 years, living and  
12 working in Bornu State and conurbation, participated in this study. The participants  
13 have university degrees and were fluent in English language. Some were university  
14 lecturers responsible for teaching and assessing students in a range of subjects  
15 including business, IT and engineering. The difficulty associated with recruiting the  
16 appropriate participants most of whom have forcefully relocated, as well as with  
17 rescheduling cancelled interview appointments meant that the data collection spanned  
18 from October 2015 to January 2016. Essentially, it was easy to employ semi-  
19 structured interviews to collect data from participants via telephone with a  
20 speakerphone functionality. Semi-structured interviews allowed for further probing,  
21 which sometimes proceeded along a course as directed by participants' responses  
22 (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). Each interview on average lasted for forty-five minutes.  
23 Interviews were digitally recorded, with informed consent, using an audio recorder  
24 and subsequently transcribed verbatim.  
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36 Despite the view that telephone interview is inferior to face-to-face interview, Sturges  
37 and Hanrahan (2004) reported no significant differences between the two in terms of  
38 the insights and the results obtained. If anything, telephone interview was shown to  
39 be more effective especially in situations in which participants might be required to  
40 discuss sensitive subjects, such as, the effect of trauma on their overall well-being  
41 (see also Carr, 1999). As the participants in this study were dealing with the traumatic  
42 effect of Boko Haram conflict, the use of telephone interview was deemed most  
43 appropriate and very effective in obtaining rich insights. Following Burnard (1994)  
44 and Irvine (2011), which advised re-establishing an atmosphere of mutual trust by  
45 using shared memories of social activities, it was possible to mitigate the risk of  
46 participants' reticence or parsimony common in non face-to-face interviews.  
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56 As such, the interviews were non-prescriptive and focussed on participants'  
57 experiences with the EE they had received and its effect on their entrepreneurial  
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3 behaviours vis-à-vis the Boko Haram conflict. Essentially, the overall conduct of the  
4 interviews mirrored Easterby-Smith *et al.*, (2008), which advised the use of  
5 exploratory tone in seeking deeper meanings and insights participants attribute to  
6 their responses. To bring out the value of these insights, inductive approach informed  
7 the interview analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Sekaran and Bougie, 2013).  
8 Specifically, thematic data analysis progressed iteratively by listening to the  
9 interview recordings, reading verbatim transcriptions, identifying interpretive themes  
10 and exploring these themes to search for disconfirming data, and at the end of the  
11 analysis no such data was found (Kvale, 1996). The key themes that supported the  
12 analysis are presented below. For ethical reasons, all participants' details have been  
13 anonymised.

### 21 22 **Analysis and empirical discussions**

23 'Entrepreneurship awareness', 'business skills development' and 'entrepreneurial  
24 intention' were three common themes linked with EE, which participants frequently  
25 referred to as either entrepreneurship 'training' or 'course'. Features frequently used  
26 to describe the impact of these themes on entrepreneurial behaviour range from  
27 'knowledge of entrepreneurship', 'curriculum development' to skills about  
28 'relationships management', 'advertising', 'business plan writing, 'market analysis'  
29 and 'business expansion'. These three prominent themes in different ways defined  
30 how participants perceived their coping strategies and interaction with the conflict,  
31 thus, informed the following analysis and the empirical discussions.

#### 32 33 *EE and Entrepreneurship awareness*

34 Entrepreneurship awareness can be seen as attaining a state of knowledge and  
35 mindset that gives one the optimal direction towards achieving entrepreneurial  
36 effectiveness without the need for them to learn the full theory of entrepreneurship.  
37 Participants in this study appeared to have gained sufficient knowledge of the  
38 crosscutting nature of entrepreneurship as a disciplinary concept as well as developed  
39 the mindset to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions. As such, the perception that EE  
40 provided both theoretical and practical value was overwhelming. Thus, as P1  
41 summarises: "*My thinking has changed regarding entrepreneurship. I have come to*  
42 *understand that entrepreneurship is multidisciplinary. It is not something exclusive to*  
43 *faculty of social sciences or the department of Business Administration*". Another  
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3 exemplified the practical impact of EE on his professional practice: “*Before, I had a*  
4 *different view of training students. Now the view I have is to train students to go out*  
5 *and be on their own. I want to train somebody to be creative, not just to serve as a*  
6 *subordinate to someone else*” (P.2). The change in orientation towards professional  
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8 practice has a stronger resonance:  
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13 “My name is Engineer BM. we are trying to inculcate the idea of entrepreneurship.  
14 When we came to the University of Wolverhampton, we had discussions with  
15 knowledge transfer experts and we are able to pick things from what they taught us,  
16 and then see how we can apply and transfer it here to our students” (P.3).  
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19 From the above, having entrepreneurship awareness was not only equated to the idea  
20 of knowledge transfer. More importantly, it was viewed as the ability to alter not just  
21 students’ entrepreneurial behaviour, but also institutional strategies around  
22 curriculum development. Thus: “*Sincerely speaking, our contributions to the new*  
23 *university [of Maiduguri] curriculum were drawn from our experience and*  
24 *interactions at University of Wolverhampton regarding entrepreneurship curriculum*  
25 *design. And this is what the students are being exposed to*” (P.13). Entrepreneurship  
26 awareness was also associated with having the ability to educate others as well as  
27 monitor their progress in pursuit of entrepreneurial activities. This relates to Henry  
28 and Leitch, (2005, p.101) who identify that entrepreneurial activity of individuals  
29 varies according to their awareness and education in entrepreneurship, which “as  
30 much as possible should provide an opportunity to improve and monitor the  
31 entrepreneurial learning process of others”. This notion is perceptible in this study:  
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36 “We have been doing that for three years now, and there is no year we have not had up  
37 to 4,000 or 5,000 students in a year. So you are looking at an estimate of about 15,000  
38 students over the past three years. So in terms of tracking and impact, it is only those  
39 who have shown serious interest about going into business after graduation...and that  
40 is 900 students we are trying to keep track of” (P.16).  
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43 In other words, through the awareness of EE, it was felt that one could influence  
44 students' towards taking up self-employment, thereby, mitigate the consequences of  
45 poverty and joblessness. For instance, as a tutor, P9 asserts: “*I am very happy that the*  
46 *[UNIMAID] students are beginning to rethink. So, changing students’ mindsets*  
47 *about paid employment is the one thing I know we have seriously gained from*  
48 *Wolverhampton*”. In fact, P1 retraced the wider context in which UNIMAID  
49 embarked upon the EE knowledge transfer with the University of Wolverhampton  
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3 Business School. In his view, this is linked to “*the reality of the Nigerian situation*”  
4 in which “*graduates were being produced by universities but there are no jobs for*  
5 *them. So the idea was that if students are exposed to entrepreneurship, they may*  
6 *graduate and began to think less of paid employment and more of self-employment*”.

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9 By being able to influence students to consider self-employment, it seemed the  
10 participants have defied the odds in achieving the primary objective for investing in  
11 the EE knowledge transfer project. Overall, there was a greater awareness of how to  
12 produce graduates with a mindset to start their own business. This signals a new  
13 norm, an approach and orientation towards using more innovative learning models  
14 away from the hitherto didactic or rote learning emblematic of the nature of HE  
15 provision across much of SSA. As such, from that viewpoint, EE and entrepreneurial  
16 intention could be considered to have a direct association.  
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#### 24 *EE and Entrepreneurial intentions*

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26 From the foregoing, it was evident that EE influenced students’ entrepreneurial  
27 intentions. As P5 asserts: “*I attended the entrepreneurship training in 2013 at the*  
28 *University of Maiduguri. I have not started a business of my own yet, but I plan to do*  
29 *so. I am a computer engineer, so I hope to set up an IT centre where I can do repair*  
30 *and maintenance of computers*”. The same is true for P7 who stated: “*I benefited a lot*  
31 *from the training. I am planning to go into transport business in the future*”. These  
32 findings are consistent with Bae *et al.*, (2014), which found that participation in EE  
33 significantly influenced entrepreneurial intentions. Despite the enthusiasm to start  
34 their own business, unsurprisingly, participants viewed the effect of Boko Haram  
35 conflict on their entrepreneurial ambitions with some apprehension. P6 embodies this  
36 mood: “*When I started I had three employees, but due to the insurgency I had to sack*  
37 *some of them*”. While lamenting the consequences of the conflict, P11 however  
38 struck an optimistic note: “*the insurgency has really affected things a lot. But of*  
39 *course, businesses can thrive in the midst of the insurgency. You need to come to*  
40 *Maiduguri and see what people are doing. You will be surprised*”.

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53 Notwithstanding, the lack of capital rather than the conflict emerged as the major  
54 barrier to developing entrepreneurial intentions. Again, P5 was quick to recognise  
55 lack of capital as a barrier to starting his new IT business, thus: “*my problem is that I*  
56 *don’t have business capital*”. New entrepreneurs usually encounter three hurdles: the  
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3 issue of start-up capital, knowledge of business strategy and market access. To access  
4 markets, entrepreneurs need social networks and to develop a business strategy they  
5 need knowledge about executing their business ideas or plan. When engaging with  
6 entrepreneurship in a market economy, the availability of finance and access to that  
7 finance is a critical and the most challenging task for new entrepreneurs, particularly  
8 in SSA. Therefore, by implication, “barriers or impediments to accessing appropriate  
9 levels of finance will have enduring and negative impact upon the performance of  
10 affected firms” (Marlow and Patton, 2005, p. 717).

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18 Consequently, as P11 acknowledged: *“I started my business in 2007, before I*  
19 *attended the course in 2013 I was employing one person, now I am employing five*  
20 *people, but you know I have not been able to expand my business much because we*  
21 *don’t have capital”*. There are a number of reasons why micro-enterprises in SSA  
22 find it difficult to expand their business despite access to start-up capital. In most  
23 cases, for instance, they fail to separate their household expenditures from business  
24 transactions, which means they rarely keep accurate financial records. Because of  
25 this, “detecting fully how much, if any, return to capital has occurred over a specific  
26 period is difficult, if not impossible” (Honig, 1998, p. 373). Unfortunately, this  
27 scenario is typical of the attitude of the micro-entrepreneurs that constitute this  
28 study’s sample. Taken collectively, it is not hard to see why lack of or insufficient  
29 capital featured strongly as a major impediment to entrepreneurial intentions.

#### 39 *EE and Business skills development*

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41 Apart from developing entrepreneurship awareness and entrepreneurial intentions,  
42 participants felt that they have acquired a range of business skills from EE. For  
43 instance, P9 acknowledged: *“From the [EE] course I knew that I had to keep records.*  
44 *Those records help me to be clear in my mind about my inflows and outflows”*.  
45 Another participant who gained a mix of skills commented: *“You must also know*  
46 *how to gain the attention of your customers...how to package your product very well”*  
47 (P.15). Linked with skills acquisition for product packaging is skills for customer  
48 relationship as well as effective management of one’s transactions with lenders or  
49 suppliers. P6 acknowledged: *“the entrepreneurship training really helped me to*  
50 *better relate with my customers and suppliers, to pay them as and when due”* (P.6). In  
51 addition, P17 stated: *“Before the training at the University of Maiduguri I did not*  
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3 *have much knowledge about business strategy. I know better now how to plan and*  
4 *invest my money”.*  
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8 Skills about diversification and advertising also featured prominently as major  
9 component of business skills acquisition, which were seen as especially useful in the  
10 conflict environment. P4 says: “*Before, I restricted myself, but after the training I*  
11 *diversified more*”, while P20 affirms: “*the training helped me to advertise my*  
12 *business differently. So, I went to small hamlets to get people to sell and buy my*  
13 *goods, I give them complimentary cards, encouraging them to call me*”. Utility of  
14 business skills acquired from EE emerges in two forms in this study - as basis to  
15 make strategic decision about future business plans and as a coping strategy under  
16 increased market volatility, thus:  
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24 “Because of the problem of the insurgency I plan to expand to other locations where  
25 there is good demand for my goods. I want to open new branches in Kano, in Yobe  
26 (because Yobe is near Maiduguri). I hope to employ like 50 people in the next four  
27 years. I have also visited some places in Jigawa and can see that it is a very nice place  
28 for my business. Jigawa is especially hot at some points of the year so it is a very good  
29 place to sell drinks” (P.16).  
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32 The above insights would indicate that micro-entrepreneurs in resource-poor  
33 environments could deploy their business skills in strategic and innovative ways  
34 regardless of the environmental constraints. Thus, whereas Bruck *et al.*, (2011) argue  
35 that conflict environments stifle innovation, economic activities and opportunities for  
36 employment. However, evidence from this study suggests that conflict environments  
37 may not necessarily hinder the acquisition of business skills and the innovative use of  
38 such skills in a survivalist sense. This is because individual’s resilience, creativity,  
39 ingenuity as well as strong disposition to survive even under very difficult  
40 circumstances may be unaffected by environmental constraints, such as, conflict. As  
41 with the findings of Kanaghan (2009), and as argued by Baumol (1990) and Baker &  
42 Nelson (2005), the real issue is whether or not individuals, when faced with resource  
43 and environmental constraints, choose to use their acquired business skills to invest  
44 in productive behaviours rather than on destructive activities.  
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55 It would appear that participants in this study were invested in productive behaviours  
56 including strategic thinking and writing business plans. For example, P15  
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3 acknowledges: “*One of the main lessons I learnt was writing a good business plan.*  
4 *With the format they gave I was surprised by how much I was able to write*”.  
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6 Therefore, it is highly likely that even under challenging conditions of poverty,  
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8 unemployment, and conflict, “individuals will benefit from learning an innovative  
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10 approach to becoming self-reliant by developing their creativity through the study of  
11  
12 entrepreneurship” (Henry *et al.*, 2005a, p. 101). Similarly, others (e.g., Krueger *et al.*,  
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14 2000) have found positive linkages between EE and entrepreneurial intentions.  
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16 Although some studies (e.g., Fatoki and Chindoga, 2011) found that lack of access to  
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18 market analysis and market intelligence impeded entrepreneurial behaviour and  
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20 entrepreneurial success, evidence from this study along with Krueger and Maleckova  
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22 (2003) however showed that these constraints could be overcome through EE.  
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24 Overall, EE facilitated access entrepreneurial knowledge and skills acquisition vital at  
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26 those ‘moments of truth’ in any type of business environment.

### 27 **Conclusions**

28 A number of implications emerge from this study, which contribute to policy and  
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30 research in entrepreneurship, particularly, the emerging theoretical context of  
31  
32 ‘transformative entrepreneuring’. Defined as “the process of addressing and  
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34 ultimately transforming conditions or protracted socioeconomic constraint through  
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36 entrepreneurship” (Tobias *et al.*, 2013, p. 728), transformative entrepreneuring has  
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38 the “potential to help substantially expand the domain of entrepreneurship as a  
39  
40 solution to poverty” (Bruton *et al.*, 2013, p.687). This study has shown that EE can  
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42 have a transformative effect on people’s entrepreneurial behaviour in a conflict  
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44 context, thereby, alter their economic circumstance in ways that reduce the tendency  
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46 to support conflict. This is particularly relevant to SSA where poverty,  
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48 unemployment and conflict interact. A key instance of this transformative effect is  
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50 seen in changes to people’s attitudes and thinking about self-employment because of  
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52 their awareness of the multidisciplinary nature of entrepreneurship. With this  
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54 perspective comes the need to influence people’s entrepreneurial learning orientation  
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56 towards self-employment instead of paid employment. Instilling the idea of self-  
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58 employment amongst HE students and graduates remains the central focus of EE  
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60 provision in Nigeria. Thus, from that perspective the introduction of EE as a  
compulsory HE policy seems a sensible initiative.

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3 Therefore, from a HE policy standpoint, other countries in SSA dealing with the  
4 challenges of graduate unemployment and poverty may benefit from introducing a  
5 compulsory EE curriculum. Of relevance are those SSA countries (e.g., Rwanda,  
6 Ethiopia, and Côte d'Ivoire) with a history of conflict experiencing high rates of  
7 unemployment and poverty. From the findings, it was obvious that conflict *per se*  
8 was not the major barrier to developing an entrepreneurial behaviour. Rather, lack of  
9 access to capital emerged as a major impediment to pursuing one entrepreneurial  
10 ambition. This leads to a complex yet fundamental question of how to design the  
11 necessary EE pedagogies that can facilitate access to finance considered as one of the  
12 strategic imperatives to sustaining entrepreneurship development in SSA. The  
13 complexity associated with formulating such EE strategy will be more acute in  
14 conflict environments where the dynamics of education provision and business  
15 transaction may be different: What will the criteria be given the volatility of the  
16 environment vis-à-vis the individual's disposition and orientation to conflict? As  
17 such, in creating conditions, for instance, that would enable students and graduate  
18 entrepreneurs to access government-backed microcredit finance schemes, it is  
19 important for policy makers to be more sensitive to the peculiarities of contexts as  
20 well as the individual changing needs and circumstances.

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23 To access government-backed finance scheme, potential recipients must be able to  
24 demonstrate the appropriate business mind-set and skills including the ability to cope  
25 with different business situations and challenges. At the very least, knowledge of  
26 basic accounting and problem-solving skills derived from EE should be a  
27 prerequisite. This will ensure that recipients not only possess the required  
28 competence and knowhow to exhibit a good business practice, but also that they  
29 appreciate the importance of accountability in their business transactions. For  
30 instance, from the findings, the ability to manage one's financial inflows and  
31 outflows through separating business and household expenditures is an example of a  
32 good business practice. Thus, the successful design and implementation of such  
33 government scheme rests on two basic assumptions. First, the EE curriculum must be  
34 designed to meet specific end-user needs around attaining entrepreneurial  
35 effectiveness. Secondly, the extent to which such a curriculum can lay claim to  
36 helping to influence individual's entrepreneurial behaviour development must be  
37 unequivocal.

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3 Integrating end-users needs with EE curriculum development is particularly relevant  
4 to conflict mitigation in SSA, as populations in a conflict environment often have a  
5 symbiotic association with the conflict. This association shapes their circumstances  
6 including lives, choices and individual behaviours (Verwimp *et al.*, 2009).  
7  
8 Unfortunately, armed groups constantly manipulate and exploit the dynamics of this  
9 phenomenon to advance their deviant agenda, often to the detriment of the individual  
10 and the wider society. We see evidence of this in relation to the *Almajirai* population.  
11 Thus, by incorporating end-user needs and more contextualised considerations in  
12 developing EE curriculum, in particular conceiving of individuals or groups in  
13 conflict as either abducted or coerced by circumstances outside their control  
14 (Humphreys & Weistein, 2008), then more sustainable strategies that influence good  
15 business practices through EE are more likely to be fashioned out with desirable  
16 outcomes.  
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26 Also, for a more sustainable way to reduce poverty and unemployment and their  
27 consequential factor of conflict, there is a need for policy to go beyond military  
28 campaigns and begin to articulate a more joined-up sub-regional approach to  
29 economic development in SSA through investment in EE programmes beyond  
30 national boundaries. A joined-up approach is necessary given the fact that many of  
31 today's conflicts in Africa are regionalised, yet, policy in most cases is constrained  
32 by narrow focus on country-level analysis. For instance, the Boko Haram's conflict  
33 affects Nigeria's regional neighbours including Chad (particularly the Lake Chad  
34 region), Niger and Mali. In addition, the causes of Boko Haram conflict are rooted  
35 not just in fundamentalist ideology and radicalisation of unemployed northern  
36 Nigerian youths (Onuoha, 2014; Walker, 2012), but by the wider socio-economic  
37 imbalances across the sub-region. Therefore, a comprehensive EE policy framework  
38 drawn up by the affected countries that addresses the socio-economic ramifications of  
39 Boko Haram's threat will be more fruitful in the immediate and long-term. However,  
40 this cannot be achieved in isolation of a consensus around a cross-national effort that  
41 seeks to foster the 'spirit of enterprise' within the affected countries.  
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54 From a research perspective, there is a need for a further study based on rigorous  
55 empirical foundations to support better theoretical understanding of the relationship  
56 between EE and conflict. For example, a cross-national study directed at unravelling  
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3 the underlying incentives for joining non-State armed groups, such as, Boko Haram,  
4 could focus on a much deeper scrutiny of the levels and quality of human capital  
5 development across the sub-region, particularly conflict-affected countries. In many  
6 countries in SSA, as seen in Nigeria, the underlying reasons why people sympathise  
7 with armed groups may result from poverty, unemployment and lack of access to  
8 economic opportunities. Ultimately, such a cross-national study must propose the  
9 conditions that enhance entrepreneurial behaviour through access to EE. This could  
10 include proposals to establish regional EE knowledge ecosystems that work to correct  
11 the socio-economic imbalances as well as compensate for the adverse effects on the  
12 economic prospects of individuals and communities devastated by the conflict. Thus,  
13 from a practical standpoint, establishing EE knowledge ecosystems that are  
14 appropriate to the needs of diverse communities affected by conflict will of course  
15 presents a challenge (e.g., delivery capacity). This challenge can be overcome  
16 through a process of knowledge transfer in which EE knowledge dissemination is  
17 core. Since knowledge transfer process involves learning, knowledge acquisition and  
18 adaptation as well as knowledge retention (Argote, 2013), in establishing EE  
19 knowledge ecosystems consideration must therefore be given to the cultural and  
20 contextual factors in which the knowledge transfer occurs. In other words, the  
21 processes, the characteristics of learning, the motivations and the needs of the  
22 knowledge recipients, especially if they have been affected by conflict, must be  
23 clearly understood and aligned with the knowledge transfer intervention. Such  
24 alignment will ensure that EE can address the issue of unemployment and poverty  
25 seen as the underlying causes of conflict.  
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43 In conclusion, EE generally can be an effective platform to provide strategic  
44 coherence to disparate poverty, unemployment and conflict mitigation initiatives in  
45 developing countries. Invariably, within the context of SSA, some broad (e.g., lack of  
46 sub-regional EE strategy and curriculum) and narrow (e.g., lack of human capacity)  
47 challenges must be overcome in order for EE to be effective. In this light, although  
48 this study is limited by its focus on sub-Saharan Nigeria, by drawing from the policy  
49 points outlined in this study some of the above challenges can be overcome. Thus,  
50 unless there is a more collaborative approach that prioritises the effective  
51 implementation of regional EE strategies as a sustainable way to address the issue of  
52 poverty and unemployment in SSA, then conflicts would persist.  
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