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Self-efficacy and Sustainable Entrepreneurial Success among Youths in Nigeria

Deborah Olufunke Ayeni
Educational Developmental Psychologist, Lead City University
ayenideborah56@gmail.com

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Abstract: *Nigeria faces a youth unemployment crisis, with over 53 percent of young Nigerians unemployed and an estimated 80 percent of youth-owned businesses failing within five years. Successive administrations have responded with laudable programmes including the National Youth Development Policy, Youth Enterprise Development Programme, National Enterprise Development Programme, Youth Entrepreneurship Support, Nigeria Youth Employment Action Plan, and the recent 3 Million Technical and Vocational Education and Training initiative. These programmes have focused predominantly on providing capital, skills training, and infrastructure. However, evidence from across Africa suggests that funding alone is insufficient. The Kenyan Nyota programme audit revealed that despite substantial financial backing, many youth businesses failed because beneficiaries lacked the psychological capacity to manage their ventures effectively. This paper argues that entrepreneurial self-efficacy, that is, an individual's belief in their capacity to execute the actions required to succeed, is the foundational psychological resource that determines whether young entrepreneurs translate capital into sustainable success. Drawing on Bandura's social cognitive theory, which identifies mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states as the four sources of self-efficacy, the paper demonstrates how this internal resource enables resilience, resource optimization, and long-term sustainability. Evidence from recent African scholarship confirms that self-efficacy mediates the relationship between financial education and entrepreneurial intention, strengthens the impact of entrepreneurship education, and moderates the effectiveness of microcredit programmes. The paper addresses the counter-argument that capital is the primary need by demonstrating that providing funds without psychological preparation yields predictable failure. A dual approach that builds the person while providing resources is not a compromise but the only path to sustainability. Case studies from the Nigerian entrepreneurial ecosystem such as the Tony Elumelu Foundation, Alabian, and exemplary entrepreneurs such as Tony Elumelu, Folorunsho Alakija, and Jason Njoku all validate this argument. The paper concludes with recommendations for entrepreneurship education reform, government programme redesign, and structured mentorship networks.*

Keywords: entrepreneurial self-efficacy, youth entrepreneurship, sustainable business, mentorship, and entrepreneurial education.

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INTRODUCTION

Laudable Programmes for the Youths Employment by Different Administrations

Youth in Nigeria is a group which includes citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, categorized into 18 – 29 years according to the 2019 New Youth Policy. The United Nations defines youth as people of age 15 - 24 years (UNESCO, 2017). Although the African youth is between 15 and 35, the Nigerian youth's age is still within the accepted African Youth's Charter. The administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, President of Nigeria from 1999 – 2007 called the attention of the youths as the only solution to improve the overall national development. He was of the opinion that youths constituted Nigeria's only hope for a greater future. His government saw the youth as ambitious, energetic, promising and enthusiastic in nature, ready to make something fantastic out of the incredible and still be able to sustain the achievement. A National Youth Development Policy, created and designed in 2009 to advocate for the youths' participation in the National development. The main goal then was to promote the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and protect the health, social, economic and political well-being of all young men and women. This was designed to enhance their participation in the overall development process and improvement of their quality of life which focused on all spheres of life to alleviate poverty and improve participation in the national development (Falode, 2013). Going deeper, the policy was guided by several national and international policy initiatives, such as, National Policies for Education, Gender, Health, Population for sustainable development and the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) (Iyamu, Ojeega, 2015).

Nevertheless, the previous ideas and feelings about the youth flourishing in different areas and capacities did not end with a regime, it went further, President Obasanjo laid the foundation while others build on it. In 2012, Youth Enterprise Development Programme (YEDP) was launched under President Goodluck Jonathan's administration, this programme aimed to create over 1Million direct jobs by 2020. National Enterprise Development Programme (NEDEP) was implemented during President Muhammadu Buhari's regime. This programme focused on equipping individuals with skills and resources to start and sustain businesses. Also introduced during this tenure is Youth Entrepreneurship Support (YES) programme, this initiative supported young entrepreneurs with necessary skills and resources. Nigeria Youth Employment Action Plan (NIYEAP) introduced during the last regime as part of National Development plan (2021 – 2025), which aims to provide decent employment opportunities for young Nigerians. The current administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is not left in the race of equipping the youths for employment. In 2023 he came up with a 3 Million Technical, Vocational, and Educational and Training (TVET) graduates for skills development. Another programme has just been launched in 2026 for youths' training, it is tagged National Skills and Industry Alignment Roundtable Series, focusing on aligning skills training with industry demands. Federal government unveils 2026

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Youth Initiatives to boost skills entrepreneurship and digital innovation, thereby renewing its focus on youth – led development.

The Concept of Youth

However, from the above past and current administrations' contributions, a lot have been done through policies and activities to help the youths contribute immensely to the national development. The question we need to ask ourselves is why are the youths the centre of attraction and why are they not focusing on the adolescents? Who are the youths? The youth are more matured than the adolescents. The youths are young adults who are aware of their environments, explore it and make use of their best discovery. Youths are generally considered the young adults. This is a unique developmental period during which there are key developmental tasks that allow young adult to participate in self exploration, identity formation risk-taking behaviours and openness to learning new skills. Youthful stage is best understood as a period of transition from dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence, hence youth is more fluid than other fixed age groups. This stage emphasizes positive life experiences that promote youths' success through competence, confidence, character, connection, caring and contribution. According to Kennedy (2024), youth is not just a time of life but a state of mind, a temper of the will, a quality of imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over the life of ease. Youth is the stage of building self-efficacy which is influenced by several variables such as peers, lifestyle, gender and culture. It is the time of a person's life in which they make choices which will affect their future. Youths are generally considered vulnerable due to the rapid change they experience at this stage of their lives. Apart from their physical and psychological changes, they are notable agents and drivers of societal transformation especially at this age of digital information.

Challenges of Youth Entrepreneurship in Nigeria: Youths stand at a critical crossroads. On one path lies the promise of a demographic dividend—the economic boom that comes when a large, energetic, and educated youth population drives productivity, innovation, and growth. On the other path lie a demographic disaster, the instability, poverty, and mass emigration that result when those same young people cannot find work. Today, with youth unemployment exceeding 53 percent, representing over 80 million young Nigerians without jobs, the nation is dangerously close to the wrong path (Vanguard News, 2026). These are not abstract statistics; they are the deferred dreams of graduates, the frustrated ambitions of artisans, and the quiet desperation of young mothers unable to provide for their children. In response, policymakers have focused almost exclusively on external resources. The logic is straightforward and this is, equip young people with capital and skills, and they will build businesses that drive growth. This has been evident in programmes like N-Power, the Nigeria Youth Investment Fund, and the Bank of Industry's initiatives (Adedeji & Oluwaseun, 2025; Ogunleye & Adebayo, 2025). Such programmes are essential, yet their fundamental premise, that access to finance is the primary missing ingredient deserves critical examination.

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Business failure rates remain devastating despite substantial investment in youth entrepreneurship programmes. The experience of Kenya's Nyota programme is particularly instructive. Launched as a successor to the Kenya Youth Employment and Opportunities Project, Nyota is a World Bank-backed initiative designed to provide business grants to 120,000 young entrepreneurs. An audit of the predecessor programme revealed a troubling pattern as after funds were disbursed, many beneficiaries became unreachable, uncooperative, or had simply wound up their businesses (Mburu, 2026). The funds had been provided, yet the businesses failed. In response, the government announced that under the Nyota programme, beneficiaries would receive mentorship and training after receiving their funding. This was a reactive measure acknowledging that something essential had been missing from the initial disbursement.

Most expressively, the government openly projects that 20 percent of these funded start-ups will still fail, citing poor financial management, lack of business acumen, and high operating costs (Mburu, 2026). This is not a criticism of the programmes rather, it is an official admission that even with substantial financial backing, a significant portion of young entrepreneurs will not succeed. The reason for this assertion is that the business world today is so complex, risky and faced with so many challenges, incapacitating the success and sustainability of entrepreneurship. The lesson is clear. Funding without the psychological capacity to manage it yields predictable failure. In Nigeria, the situation is equally precarious. A 2025 report revealed that 42 percent of small businesses cannot survive a month without income, and an estimated 80 percent fail within five years (The Port City News, 2025; Ogundele & Akinyemi, 2025). If capital alone were sufficient, these figures would not persist. There is a missing internal variable that determines what an entrepreneur does with the resources they are given. Recent African scholarship points to entrepreneurial self-efficacy which is an individual's belief in their capacity to execute the actions required to succeed. A South African study found that self-efficacy mediates the relationship between financial education and entrepreneurial intention (Springer, 2025). Nigerian research shows that self-efficacy strengthens the impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention (Olusola et al., 2025).

Furthermore, in Kano, a study on microcredit found that self-efficacy significantly moderates the relationship between receiving a loan and successfully reducing poverty (Kura et al., 2025). This is pointing to the fact that while access to finance, infrastructure, and government support remain critical. Hence, the paper argues that other provisions are fundamentally insufficient without a parallel, deliberate, and systematic focus on developing entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy is an entrepreneur's unshakeable belief in their capacity to execute and persevere. This internal resource is the true engine of sustainable success.

Defining Self-Efficacy in the Nigerian Context

To appreciate why self-efficacy holds the key to sustainable success, we must understand what it truly means. Self-efficacy is not merely confidence. This concept is rooted in Albert Bandura's

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social cognitive theory. Generally, it is a personal belief in one's capacity to execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations (Bandura, 1977, 1997). Self-efficacy is domain-specific, dynamic, and shaped by four sources: mastery experience (successfully performing a task), vicarious experience (observing similar others succeed), and verbal persuasion (encouragement from others), and physiological states (interpreting stress as excitement rather than fear). Translating this framework into the lived reality of the Nigerian youth entrepreneur transforms abstraction into tangible experience. Specifically, in Nigeria, self-efficacy is conceptualized as the practical belief that one can navigate the unique challenges of the business environment. Considering power supply when it comes to a Nigerian entrepreneur, self-efficacy manifests as the conviction that when the lights go out, the business does not stop. It is the belief that one can find a solution, whether investing in a generator or restructuring operations.

Beyond power supply, the Nigerian regulatory landscape presents bureaucratic hurdles that can overwhelm an undetermined entrepreneur. From registering with the Corporate Affairs Commission to navigating tax obligations and securing permits, the path to formalization is complex. For the entrepreneur with high self-efficacy, these bottlenecks are challenges to be understood and overcome since such possess the creative confidence to seek mentors, break down the journey into manageable steps, and persist despite obstacles (Ogbeide & Okonkwo, 2025). The Nigerian marketplace is also volatile. A trader can experience days of booming sales followed by weeks of stagnation. In this environment, self-efficacy sustains persistence after a bad market day. Research by Olabimitan, Jaiyeola, and Iyapo (2025) found that resilience significantly influences entrepreneurial intentions by enabling individuals to persist in the face of setbacks. The entrepreneur who views a bad market day as a data point rather than a verdict builds a sustainable enterprise.

Self-efficacy encompasses the cognitive flexibility to pivot when a business model fails. A caterer whose event business declines during an economic downturn may pivot to meal subscriptions or packaged foods. This capacity is fundamentally a function of self-efficacy which is the belief that one can reinvent oneself in response to changing circumstances. Iga, Ssekajja Mayanja, and Byarugaba (2025) found that psychological capital enables entrepreneurs to engage in entrepreneurial bricolage, the creative combination of limited resources to solve new problems. In essence, self-efficacy is the psychological infrastructure that enables entrepreneurs to do what is necessary despite obstacles. It is the belief that one can navigate NEPA, overcome regulatory bottlenecks, persist after bad market days, and pivot when necessary. These are the daily experiences of Nigerian entrepreneurs who succeed where others fail.

The Argument for Self Efficacy Matters

There are three interconnected mechanisms that explain the centrality of self-efficacy.

Resilience: Self-efficacy is the primary predictor of who survives the valley of death. This is a precarious phase when initial capital is spent and revenues are unstable. Bandura (1997)

established that individuals with high self-efficacy perceive difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered, not threats to be avoided. Where the low-self-efficacy entrepreneur sees evidence they were never meant to be in business, the high-self-efficacy entrepreneur sees a phase to be navigated with creativity and persistence. Iga et al. (2025) found that psychological capital enables entrepreneurs to creatively combine the limited resources available to them, finding innovative ways to overcome scarcity. The entrepreneur with high self-efficacy does not despair when resources are insufficient; instead, they ask such questions as what can I do differently? Who can I partner with? How can I achieve my goal with what I have? This resilience transforms obstacles from reasons to quit into the very reason to forge ahead.

Resource Optimization: An entrepreneur with high self-efficacy does more with less. They bootstrap, innovate, and find creative solutions, making any capital go further. Iga et al. (2025) demonstrated that entrepreneurs with higher psychological capital are more adept at making do with what they have. When a loan falls through, the high-self-efficacy entrepreneur finds a way to launch on a smaller scale. When a supplier raises prices, they explore alternatives rather than simply passing costs to customers. High self-efficacy ensures that any capital received goes much further than it would in the hands of an entrepreneur who lacks that internal resource.

Sustainability: True sustainability is about long-term viability. It is the capacity to endure, grow, and contribute over time. Self-efficacy drives continuous learning, adaptation, and ethical decision-making. Bandura (1997) emphasized that self-efficacy influences goals, effort, and persistence. The entrepreneur who believes in their capacity to learn actively seeks knowledge and embraces feedback. When a competitor emerges, such innovates rather than despair, and when tempted to cut corners, self-efficacy enables the choice of integrity because the trust in one's capacity to succeed legitimately. Kura et al. (2025) found that self-efficacy influences how entrepreneurs manage financial resources responsibly. This is a form of ethical decision-making that contributes to long-term sustainability. Therefore, self-efficacy is not merely one factor among many; rather, it is the foundational psychological resource that enables resilience, resource optimization, and sustainability. For Nigerian youth navigating one of the world's most challenging business environments, this internal resource is the critical determinant of lasting success.

Counter-Arguments and Rebuttal

However, a compelling counter-argument must be addressed and that is the assertion that you cannot have self-efficacy if you are hungry and that capital is the primary need. This perspective holds intuitive appeal, especially where poverty is widespread. Proponents point to evidence that credit constraints are a major barrier to entrepreneurship. In Nigeria, programmes like the Nigeria Youth Investment Fund were established precisely because capital is essential. This counter-argument is compelling but presents a false dichotomy. The argument is not against capital but for sequencing. Providing capital to individuals with low self-efficacy is like giving a car to someone who has never learned to drive. The car represents opportunity, but without skill and confidence,

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it is more likely to end up crashed than to serve its purpose. The evidence supports this. The Kenya Youth Employment and Opportunities Project audit revealed that funds disbursed without psychological preparation led to widespread business failure (Mburu, 2026). Shamsudeen (2017) found that access to finance alone is insufficient; the capacity to utilize capital must be cultivated. Iga et al. (2025) demonstrated that psychological capital enables entrepreneurs to achieve significant outcomes even with modest funding.

The rebuttal is not that self-efficacy substitutes for meeting basic needs but that once capital is provided, self-efficacy becomes the critical determinant of whether that capital translates into sustainable success. A dual approach that builds the person while providing the resources is not a compromise; it is the only path to sustainability. Research across Africa confirms that the most effective interventions simultaneously build internal capabilities and provide external resources (Springer, 2025; Olusola et al., 2025. Furthermore, the assumption that self-efficacy cannot be cultivated in conditions of material scarcity is contradicted by countless Nigerian entrepreneurs who built successful businesses from humble beginnings. The self-efficacy of the market women of Lagos, the mechanics of Nnewi, and the tech entrepreneurs of Yaba was forged in the crucible of scarcity. Poverty does not destroy the capacity for self-belief; it makes its cultivation more urgent and more deserving of deliberate attention. In the final analysis, capital is a primary need, but it is not the foundational need. Apparently, any young entrepreneur with capital but no self-efficacy is a tragedy waiting to happen, while a young entrepreneur with self-efficacy but no capital is a problem waiting for a solution. The wise policy response is to bring them together.

Recommendations for Action

Three domains demand urgent reform.

Entrepreneurship Education: Nigerian universities and polytechnics must move from theory to experiential learning. The reform required is a fundamental shift from theory to experiential learning. Bandura (1997) identified mastery experience as the most powerful source of self-efficacy, and that students must actually engage in entrepreneurial activity. This means replacing the traditional business plan with simulations, mentored internships, and real-world projects. Simulations place students in realistic scenarios where they make decisions under uncertainty and respond to setbacks. Mentored internships tap into vicarious experience and verbal persuasion as students observe successful entrepreneurs and receive constructive feedback. Ogunyomi and Ogunyomi (2025) found that structured mentorship significantly enhances self-efficacy. Resilience training must also be integrated, helping young people reframe setbacks as learning opportunities. The goal is graduates who possess the unshakeable belief that they can execute, adapt, and persist under any given circumstances.

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Government Programmes: Agencies like the Bank of Industry and SMEDAN must integrate mandatory, mentored, pre-disbursement boot camps into the funding process. Before funds are released, applicants should complete intensive programmes focused on mindset, problem-solving, and psychological preparedness. Participants are to engage in simulations replicating entrepreneurial challenges such as managing cash flow, negotiating with suppliers, and responding to customer complaints. Such need to receive mentorship and experience small successes that build mastery experiences before receiving capital. This model will ensure that only committed applicants receive funding, builds the psychological infrastructure for success, and creates supportive networks. Kura et al. (2025) found that self-efficacy moderates loan effectiveness, suggesting that interventions building self-efficacy alongside funding achieve better outcomes.

Mentorship Networks: Nigeria possesses a wealth of successful entrepreneurs who embody high self-efficacy. Yet their knowledge remains largely untapped. Structured, long-term mentorship programmes must pair these entrepreneurs with youth in deliberate, sustained relationships. Looking at vicarious experience, which involves observing a similar other succeed, is a powerful source of self-efficacy that is brewed when a young entrepreneur is paired with a mentor from a similar background who has succeeded despite challenges, the message is unmistakable. The strength is in the understanding that if such can do it, so can I. Mentorship also provides verbal persuasion in the form of encouragement and feedback that strengthen self-efficacy. Programmes should have a minimum duration of one year and be integrated with boot camps and educational initiatives. These recommendations are ambitious, but the challenge is urgent as every business that fails represents wasted capital and a young person whose confidence may never recover in an economy that will be underproductive. By investing systematically in building self-efficacy, Nigeria can transform its youth entrepreneurship ecosystem from one that produces failure into one that produces sustainable success.

Case Studies from the Nigerian Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

Three case studies drawn from the Nigerian entrepreneurial ecosystem offer powerful validation of these arguments, showing what is possible when self-efficacy is deliberately cultivated. The Tony Elumelu Foundation demonstrates the power of combining capital with structured mindset development. Alabian exemplifies the shift from theoretical instruction to experiential learning. And the journeys of exemplary Nigerian entrepreneurs reveal how self-efficacy operates in practice, offering vicarious learning for the next generation.

The Tony Elumelu Foundation: A Model of the Dual Approach

Perhaps no organization in Africa has done more to systematize the support of young entrepreneurs than the Tony Elumelu Foundation (TEF). Founded in 2010 by Nigerian economist and philanthropist Tony Elumelu, the foundation launched its flagship Entrepreneurship Programme in 2015 with a bold vision: to identify, train, mentor, and fund 10,000 African entrepreneurs over a decade. To date, the programme has surpassed that goal, supporting over 20,000 entrepreneurs

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across 54 African countries, with a significant cohort from Nigeria (Tony Elumelu Foundation, 2025). What makes the TEF model particularly relevant to this paper is that it embodies precisely the dual approach of building the person while providing the resources. The TEF Entrepreneurship Programme operates through a structured, multi-stage process that explicitly targets the development of entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Applicants undergo a rigorous selection process, but those selected do not simply receive a cheque. Instead, they are required to complete a comprehensive online training programme that covers not only business fundamentals but also mindset, leadership, and resilience. Following the training, participants receive non-refundable seed capital accompanied by ongoing mentorship from experienced entrepreneurs and business professionals. The programme also connects participants to a vast alumni network, fostering peer support and collaboration.

When examined through Bandura's framework, the TEF model engages all four sources of self-efficacy. Mastery experience is cultivated through the training programme itself, which requires participants to demonstrate their capabilities before receiving funding. Vicarious experience is embedded through the stories of past beneficiaries who have built successful businesses with TEF support. Verbal persuasion is delivered through the mentorship component, where experienced entrepreneurs provide encouragement and guidance. The programme also addresses physiological and emotional states by explicitly teaching stress management and resilience. Elumelu and Adebayo (2024) found that beneficiaries demonstrated higher survival and growth rates, with training, funding, and mentorship identified as key success factors.

Alabian: Experiential Learning in Action

The second case study shifts the focus from funding to education. Alabian, a Nigerian technology education platform, represents a model of entrepreneurship education that stands in stark contrast to the traditional business plan approach that dominates Nigerian universities and polytechnics. What distinguishes Alabian from conventional educational institutions is its commitment to experiential learning: students do not simply listen to lectures; they build real products, work on real projects, and solve real problems (Alabian, 2025). Alabian's model is grounded in the principle that self-efficacy is built through doing. Students are not passive recipients of information; they are active builders, creating portfolios of work that demonstrate their capabilities. Throughout their programmes, they work on individual and team projects that simulate real-world conditions. They face deadlines, manage competing priorities, and learn to collaborate with others. When a project fails, the response is not punishment but reflection: what went wrong, what can we learn, and how will we approach the next project differently? This is mastery experience in its purest form. The vicarious experience component is equally deliberate. Instructors are practitioners who share their own journeys, modeling that success is possible despite obstacles. Verbal persuasion comes through personalized feedback and code reviews. The supportive community normalizes the stress of learning complex skills. Alabian's model offers a blueprint for entrepreneurship education reform, moving from theory to practice and from passive instruction to active building.

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Exemplary Nigerian Entrepreneurs: Role Models for a Generation

The third case study focuses on individuals whose journeys embody the self-efficacy this paper has argued is essential. Tony Elumelu rose from clerk to CEO, transforming United Bank for Africa into a pan-African institution before founding his foundation. Folorunsho Alakija built a fashion empire, and then pivoted to oil and gas when faced with challenges. Jason Njoku built IROKO Television, which is an equivalent to the Netflix in Africa, despite investor rejections and infrastructure challenges. Their journeys demonstrate resilience in the face of adversity, the capacity to pivot when models fail, and the resource optimization that characterizes high self-efficacy. For young Nigerians, these entrepreneurs provide vicarious learning: living proof that success is possible despite formidable obstacles. Their stories embody the four sources of self-efficacy and illustrate that the arguments of this paper are grounded in reality. Together, these three case studies offer powerful validation. While the Tony Elumelu Foundation demonstrates that the dual approach works at scale, the Alabian shows that experiential learning builds self-efficacy. Exemplary entrepreneurs provide role models who prove that success is possible, and the implications for policy and practice are clear: these models should be studied, supported, and replicated.

Way forward

This paper began with a stark reality. Nigeria's youth unemployment rate stands at 53 percent, and the businesses that young people start fail at devastating rates. The dominant policy response of loans, grants, and skills training is necessary but insufficient. The evidence from African studies and Bandura's framework converges on a single conclusion. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy is the psychological bedrock upon which all other entrepreneurial resources must be built. Without self-efficacy, capital is squandered and dreams are deferred. With it, young entrepreneurs possess the resilience to navigate the valley of death, the creativity to optimize scarce resources, and the adaptive capacity to sustain their enterprises over the long term. A dual approach that builds the person while providing resources is not a compromise, it is the only path to sustainability. The case studies demonstrate this approach is achievable. The Tony Elumelu Foundation combines capital with mindset development at scale. Alabian shows that experiential learning builds self-efficacy more effectively than theoretical instruction. Exemplary entrepreneurs like Tony Elumelu, Folorunsho Alakija, and Jason Njoku provide living proof that self-efficacy can overcome even the most formidable obstacles.

The path forward is clear. Entrepreneurship education must move from theory to practice, replacing business plan exercises with simulations, mentored internships, and resilience training. Government programmes must integrate pre-disbursement boot camps that build psychological preparedness before funds are released. Mentorship networks must be structured and sustained, pairing young entrepreneurs with successful role models who demonstrate that success is possible. These are not utopian aspirations. They are practical, evidence-informed reforms within reach. The Tony Elumelu Foundation has already shown what is possible. Alabian has already demonstrated

how experiential learning transforms students into builders. And the entrepreneurs celebrated across Nigeria prove daily that self-efficacy, not capital alone, is what separates those who build from those who merely dream. The task before policymakers, educators, and development practitioners is therefore not to invent self-efficacy. It is to cultivate it deliberately, systematically, and at scale. It is to create the conditions in which the self-belief that already flickers in the hearts of Nigerian youth can be fanned into a flame that illuminates their path to sustainable success.

Nigerian youth are not waiting for permission to build their futures. Across the country, in bustling markets and emerging tech hubs, in small workshops and growing agribusinesses, they are already demonstrating the resilience, creativity, and determination this paper has argued are essential. They navigate NEPA and regulatory bottlenecks, persist after bad market days, pivot when business models fail, do these things not because they have been given everything they need evidently, because they have discovered within themselves the belief that they can. What remains is the will to act. The youth of Nigeria stand ready, not as passive recipients of aid but as active architects of their own futures. They ask not for handouts but for tools to build, ask not for pity but for partnership, and definitely, they ask not for promises but for a system that believes in them as deeply as they are learning to believe in themselves. Self-efficacy is the psychological bedrock upon which all other entrepreneurial resources must be built. Let us begin the work of laying that foundation.

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