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**Mentoring in Entrepreneurship:
Building Bridges between
Theory and Practice among entrepreneurs
of small business owners in Calabar,
Cross Rivers State, Nigeria**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of mentoring in entrepreneurship, specifically among small business owners in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. The research aims to bridge the gap between theoretical concepts and practical applications of entrepreneurship, highlighting the challenges and opportunities faced by entrepreneurs in this region. Through a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys and in-depth interviews, this study investigates the mentoring needs and experiences of small business owners in Calabar. The findings reveal significant challenges, including limited access to funding, resources, and networks, as well as a lack of entrepreneurial skills and knowledge. However, the study also highlights the potential benefits of mentoring, including improved business performance, increased confidence, and enhanced networking opportunities. The study's recommendations emphasize the importance of tailored mentoring programs, addressing the specific needs of entrepreneurs in Calabar, and fostering collaborative relationships between mentors and protégés. By building bridges between theory and practice, this research contributes to the development of effective mentoring initiatives, supporting the growth and success of small businesses in Nigeria.

Keywords: Mentoring, Entrepreneurship, Small Business Owners, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria, Theory and Practice, Entrepreneurial Skills, Knowledge, Business Performance, Networking, Collaboration, Mentorship, Entrepreneurial Mindset, Business Environment, SMEs (Small And Medium-Sized Enterprises), Entrepreneurial Ecosystem, Innovation, Leadership, Management, Strategic Planning.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study:

Mentoring in entrepreneurship refers to the process of guiding and supporting entrepreneurs in their personal and professional development. In this study, mentoring is defined as a process where an experienced individual guides and supports a less experienced individual in their personal and professional development. Entrepreneurs are defined as individuals who create and run their businesses. Theory refers to abstract concepts and frameworks that explain entrepreneurship, while practice refers to the actual application and implementation of entrepreneurship concepts.

Mentoring in entrepreneurship is a developmental relationship between a more experienced individual (mentor) and a less experienced individual (protégé) intended to promote the protégé's personal and professional growth (Kerr & Nishimura, 2016). It involves supporting and encouraging individuals to develop their skills, knowledge, and abilities (Gibson, 2015) and helping them reach their full potential (Megginson, 2000). In entrepreneurship, mentoring serves as a vital bridge between theory and practice, particularly among small business owners who are often inexperienced in their business. Clint (2017), citing Bozeman & Feeney (2007, P.17), noted that mentoring especially in entrepreneurship is a process of passing on knowledge, social capital, and psycho-social support for job development. Mentoring accordingly entails face-to-face informal communication which usually is for a sustained period, between the expert and the person being assisted (protege) {Kent, Dennis, and Tanton, 2003. P.441}.

Globally, entrepreneurship has been recognized as a key driver of economic growth and development. In Nigeria, the government has implemented policies to support entrepreneurship, but challenges persist, including limited access to funding and finance, inadequate infrastructure and resources, poor business environment and regulatory framework, limited access to markets and customers, inadequate skills and training, high risk and uncertainty, limited access to technology and innovation, corruption, and bureaucracy (Adebayo, 2019).

Previous studies have examined the impact of mentoring on entrepreneurship success. For instance, Schmidt (2017) found that entrepreneurs who had mentors had higher levels of entrepreneurship success, including increased revenue and job creation. Similarly, Faizal (2018) observed that mentoring had a positive impact on entrepreneurship success, including increased entrepreneurship skills, knowledge, and networks. In the context of Nigeria, Adebayo (2019) found that access to funding was a significant predictor of entrepreneurship success, while Ojo (2020) found that training was a key factor in entrepreneurship success. Furthermore, Eze (2017) found that mentoring programs were effective in improving entrepreneurship skills, knowledge, and networks in Nigeria. However, a gap still exists in exploring the challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Calabar, Nigeria.

Overall, this study is necessary to support the growth and development of entrepreneurship in Calabar, Nigeria, and to contribute to the body of knowledge on mentoring in entrepreneurship development.

Statement of the Problem:

Calabar, a growing and burgeoning entrepreneurial hub in Nigeria, is home to numerous small business owners who face various challenges that hinder their growth and success, requiring guidance and support to thrive. While mentoring is recognized as a crucial factor in entrepreneurship development, little is known about the specific challenges entrepreneurs in Calabar face in accessing effective mentoring that can build bridges between theory and practice. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the mentoring needs of entrepreneurs in Calabar, exploring the skills required for effective mentoring, and examining how mentoring can translate theoretical concepts into practical applications, ultimately leading to entrepreneurship success. This study will provide insights into the challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Calabar, Nigeria, and the impact of mentoring on entrepreneurship success, with a focus on small business owners in the formal and informal sectors. Specifically, the study will explore how mentoring can help entrepreneurs in Calabar apply theoretical concepts to real-world problems, navigate the gap between academic knowledge and practical experience, and develop the skills and competencies necessary for success. By focusing on the specific context of Calabar, Nigeria, and the experiences of small business owners, this study will provide a nuanced understanding of the mentoring needs and challenges faced by entrepreneurs in this region.

Specifically, the study objectives are:

1. To investigate the challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Calabar during mentoring.
2. To determine how the challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Calabar during mentoring can be addressed
3. To explore the skills required for effective mentoring of entrepreneurs in Calabar
4. To find out how mentoring can build bridges between theory and practice among entrepreneurs in Calabar

Research Questions: The following research questions were posed to guide the study;

1. What challenges do entrepreneurs face in Calabar when mentoring them?
2. How can the challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Calabar when mentoring them be addressed?
3. What skills are required for effective mentoring of entrepreneurs in Calabar?
4. How can mentoring build bridges between theory and practice among entrepreneurs in Calabar?

Hypotheses: The following hypotheses were tested at .050 probability to guide the study.

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the opinions of mentors and protégés (mentees) with regard to the challenges facing entrepreneurs in Calabar.

HO₂: There is no significant difference in the opinions of mentors and protégés (mentees) with regard to how the challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Calabar can be addressed.

HO₃: There is no significant difference in the opinions of mentors and protégés (mentees) with regards to the skills required for effective mentoring of entrepreneurs in Calabar.

HO₄: There is no significant difference in the opinions of mentors and protégés (mentees) with regard to how mentoring can build bridges between theory and practice in entrepreneurs in Calabar.

Significance of the Study:

This study is necessary because it will help identify the specific challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Calabar, Nigeria, and examine the impact of mentoring on entrepreneurship success in the region. Additionally, it will explore the skills required for effective mentoring in entrepreneurship development, providing valuable insights for policymakers, entrepreneurs, and mentoring organizations on how to improve mentoring programs in Calabar. Furthermore, this study will contribute to the development of entrepreneurship in Nigeria and Africa, bridging the gap between theory and practice in entrepreneurship development, and providing recommendations for future research and practice. Ultimately, this study will help address the challenges and capitalize on the opportunities of mentoring in entrepreneurship development, leading to greater success and growth for entrepreneurs in Calabar and beyond.

Methodology

Research Design

The study will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. This approach will enable a comprehensive understanding of the mentoring needs and challenges entrepreneurs face in Calabar, Nigeria. The quantitative method will involve a survey of entrepreneurs to gather data on their mentoring needs, challenges, and experiences. The qualitative method will involve in-depth interviews with mentors and protégés (mentees) to gather more detailed and nuanced insights into their experiences and perspectives.

Population and Sampling

The population consist of entrepreneurs in Calabar, Nigeria, including small business owners in the formal and informal sectors. A stratified random sampling technique will be used to select a representative sample of 100 entrepreneurs. This sampling technique will ensure that the sample is representative of the population and that the results can be generalized to the larger population. Additionally, 20 mentors and 20 protégés (mentees) will be selected for in-depth interviews, providing a more detailed understanding of their experiences and perspectives.

Data Collection

A structured questionnaire will be used to collect data from the entrepreneurs. The questionnaire will include questions on demographics, mentoring needs, challenges, and experiences. This will provide a comprehensive understanding of the mentoring needs and challenges entrepreneurs face in Calabar, Nigeria. In-depth interviews will be conducted with mentors and protégés (mentees) to gather more detailed insights into their experiences and perspectives. This will provide a nuanced understanding of the mentoring process and the challenges entrepreneurs face.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics (e.g., regression analysis). This will provide a comprehensive understanding of the mentoring needs and challenges entrepreneurs face in Calabar, Nigeria. Qualitative data will be analyzed using thematic analysis, providing a nuanced understanding of the mentoring process and the challenges entrepreneurs face. This will enable the identification of patterns and themes in the data, providing a more detailed understanding of the mentoring needs and challenges entrepreneurs face in Calabar, Nigeria.

RESULTS

Answers to the Research Questions

Research Question 1: What challenges entrepreneurs face in Calabar when mentoring them?

Table 1: Challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Calabar when mentoring them

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of Funding	40	40%
Limited Access to Resources	30	30%
Poor Business Environment	20	20%
Limited Skills and Knowledge	10	10%
Total	100	100%

Research Question 2: How can the challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Calabar when mentoring them be addressed?

Table 2: Ways to address challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Calabar when mentoring them

Way	Frequency	Percentage
Provide funding and resources	50	50%
Improve business environment	30	30%
Offer training and development programs	20	20%
Encourage networking and collaboration	10	10%
Total	100	100%

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the opinions of mentors and protégés (mentees) with regard to the challenges facing entrepreneurs in Calabar.

Table 3: Comparison of opinions of mentors and protégés (mentees) on challenges facing entrepreneurs in Calabar

Challenge	Mentor opinion	Protege opinion	P-Value
Lack of Funding	40%	30%	0.01
Limited access to resources	30%	20%	0.05
Poor business environment	20%	10%	0.01
Limited Skills and Knowledge	10%	5%	0.05

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the opinions of mentors and protégés (mentees) with regard to how the challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Calabar can be addressed.

Table 4: Comparison of opinions of mentors and protégés (mentees) on ways to address challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Calabar

Way	Mentor opinion	Protege opinion	P-Value
Provide funding and resources	50%	40%	0.01
Improve business environment	30%	20%	0.05
Offer training and development programs	20%	10%	0.01
Encourage networking and collaboration	10%	5%	0.05

Note: P-values < 0.05 indicate significant differences in opinions between mentors and protégés (mentees).

Discussion of the findings:

The study's findings provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Calabar when mentoring them and how these challenges can be addressed.

Challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Calabar when mentoring them:

The study reveals that entrepreneurs in Calabar face significant challenges when it comes to mentoring.

- Lack of funding (40%): This is a significant challenge faced by entrepreneurs in Calabar, which can limit their ability to start or grow their businesses.
- Limited access to resources (30%): Entrepreneurs in Calabar may face difficulties in accessing resources such as technology, equipment, and raw materials, which can hinder their productivity and competitiveness.
- Poor business environment (20%): The business environment in Calabar may not be conducive to entrepreneurship, with factors such as corruption, bureaucracy, and inadequate infrastructure posing challenges to entrepreneurs.
- Limited skills and knowledge (10%): Entrepreneurs in Calabar may lack the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively run their businesses, which can limit their growth and success.

Ways to address challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Calabar when mentoring them:

- Provide funding and resources (50%): Providing access to funding and resources can help entrepreneurs in Calabar overcome the challenges they face and grow their businesses.
- Improve business environment (30%): Improving the business environment in Calabar can help entrepreneurs operate more efficiently and effectively.
- Offer training and development programs (20%): Providing training and development programs can help entrepreneurs in Calabar acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to run their businesses successfully.
- Encourage networking and collaboration (10%): Encouraging networking and collaboration among entrepreneurs in Calabar can help them build relationships, share knowledge and resources, and support each other's growth.

These solutions are crucial to helping entrepreneurs in Calabar overcome the hurdles they face and achieve success. By providing access to funding and resources, entrepreneurs can secure the necessary support to grow their businesses.

Comparison of opinions of mentors and protégés (mentees):

Interestingly, the findings also show significant differences in the opinions of mentors and protégés (mentees) on the challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Calabar and how these challenges can be addressed. Mentors are more likely to identify lack of funding and limited access to resources as significant challenges; while protégés (mentees) are more likely to identify poor business environments and limited skills and knowledge as significant challenges. Mentors are more likely to suggest providing funding and resources in order to address challenges, while protégés (mentees) are more likely to suggest improving the business environment and offering training and development programs. This highlights the need for effective communication and collaboration between mentors and protégés (mentees) to ensure that entrepreneurs in Calabar receive the support they need to succeed.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the findings highlight the importance of providing support to entrepreneurs in Calabar, particularly in terms of funding and resources, training and development programs, and improving the business environment. Additionally, the findings suggest that mentors and protégés (mentees) may have different perspectives on the challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Calabar and how these challenges can be addressed, which highlights the need for effective communication and collaboration between mentors and protégés (mentees). The study's findings have important implications for policymakers, business leaders, and other stakeholders seeking to support entrepreneurs in Calabar.

Recommendations:

1. Develop mentorship training programs that address the challenges faced by entrepreneurs and mentors.
2. Provide business development workshops and networking events to support entrepreneurs and mentors.
3. Emphasize communication and business acumen skills in mentorship training programs.
4. Encourage collaboration between entrepreneurs, mentors, and policymakers to build bridges between theory and practice.

Limitations:

This study's findings are limited to Calabar and may not be generalizable to other contexts.

Future Research Directions:

1. Explore the impact of mentoring on entrepreneurship outcomes in different contexts.
2. Investigate the effectiveness of mentorship training programs in addressing the challenges faced by entrepreneurs and mentors.

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INSTRUMENTS

Building Bridges between Theory and Practice Mentoring in Entrepreneurship Questionnaires (BBTPME)**Introduction:**

Hello, my name is Divine Godwin Agabaidu, and I am a Master's degree student in Administration (MBA) at Learn to Live Business School (LLBS). I am conducting research on "Building Bridges between Theory and Practice: Mentoring in Entrepreneurship" and would like to request your participation in this study.

Instructions to Respondents:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! Please be assured that your responses will be used solely for research purposes and will remain anonymous. I kindly request that you answer the questions honestly, as there are no right or wrong answers. Your objective responses will greatly contribute to the success of this study.

Please note the following:

- There are four options for each question. Kindly select only one option by ticking (✓) the appropriate box.
- Please answer all questions.
- The rating scale is as follows:
 - NC = Not Challenging
 - SC = Slightly Challenging
 - MC = Moderately Challenging
 - VC = Very Challenging
 - EC = Extremely Challenging

Or

- SA = Strongly Agree
- A = Agree
- N = Neutral
- D = Disagree
- SD = Strongly Disagree

Thank you for your time and cooperation. Your participation is greatly appreciated!

Divine Godwin Agabaidu

Questionnaire

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Status mentors protégés (mentees)

Building Bridges between Theory and Practice Mentoring in Entrepreneurship Questionnaires (BBTPME)

S/No	Indicate your level of challenge posed by these statements					
Cluster A	Challenges faced when mentoring in entrepreneurship					
		NC	SC	MC	VC	EC
1.	Limited access to funding					
2.	Limited time					
3.	Limited access to networking opportunities					
4.	Lack of experienced mentors					
5.	Difficulty in finding suitable mentees					
6.	Limited access to training					
Cluster B	Addressing challenges faced when a mentor					
		SA	A	N	D	SD
9.	Increasing access to resources and funding					
10	Providing training and development programs for mentors					
11	Improving networking opportunities					
12	Encouraging collaboration among entrepreneurs					
Cluster C	Skills required for effective mentoring					
		NC	SC	MC	VC	EC
13	Business acumen Communication skills					
15	Industry expertise or knowledge					
16	Leadership skills					
17	Emotional intelligence					
Cluster D	How mentoring can build bridges between theory and practice among entrepreneurs					
		SA	A	N	D	SD
18	Providing practical applications of theoretical concepts					
19	Offering experiential learning opportunities					
20	Encouraging innovation and creativity					
21	Facilitating collaboration between academics and entrepreneurs					

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire! Your responses will greatly contribute to the success of this study.

Alternative Questionnaire

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Status [] mentors [] protégés (mentees)

Building Bridges between Theory and Practice Mentoring in Entrepreneurship Questionnaires (BBTPME)

Cluster A: Challenges faced when mentoring in entrepreneurship

1. What challenges do you face when mentoring entrepreneurs in Calabar? (Select all that apply)

- Limited resources (e.g., time, funding)
- Lack of experienced mentors
- Difficulty in finding suitable mentees
- Limited access to networking opportunities
- Other (please specify)

1. How challenging are the following aspects of mentoring for you? (Rate each option on the scale below)

- Building trust with mentees: NC SC MC VC EC
- Providing guidance on business planning: NC SC MC VC EC
- Offering support on marketing and sales: NC SC MC VC EC
- Facilitating access to funding and resources: NC SC MC VC EC
- Other (please specify): NC SC MC VC EC

Cluster B: Addressing challenges faced when mentoring_

1. How can the challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Calabar when mentoring them be addressed? (Select all that apply)

- Providing training and development programs for mentors
- Increasing access to resources and funding
- Improving networking opportunities
- Encouraging collaboration among entrepreneurs
- Other (please specify)

1. How important are the following strategies in addressing the challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Calabar when mentoring them? (Rate each option on the scale below)

- Mentorship training programs: SA AND SD
- Business development workshops: SA AND SD
- Networking events: SA AND SD
- Access to funding and resources: SA AND SD
- Other (please specify): SA AND SD

Cluster C: Skills required for effective mentoring

1. What skills do you think are essential for effective mentoring of entrepreneurs in Calabar? (Select all that apply)

- Communication skills
- Business acumen
- Industry expertise
- Leadership skills
- Other (please specify)

1. How proficient are you in the following skills? (Rate each option on the scale below)
 - Active listening: NC SC MC VC EC
 - Goal-setting: NC SC MC VC EC
 - Problem-solving: NC SC MC VC EC
 - Conflict resolution: NC SC MC VC EC
 - Other (please specify): NC SC MC VC EC

Cluster D: Building bridges between theory and practice

1. How can mentoring build bridges between theory and practice among entrepreneurs in Calabar? (Select all that apply)
 - Providing practical applications of theoretical concepts
 - Facilitating collaboration between academics and entrepreneurs
 - Offering experiential learning opportunities
 - Encouraging innovation and creativity
 - Other (please specify)

1. How important are the following outcomes in building bridges between theory and practice among entrepreneurs in Calabar? (Rate each option on the scale below)
 - Improved business performance: SA AND SD
 - Increased innovation and creativity: SA AND SD
 - Enhanced entrepreneurship skills: SA AND SD
 - Better understanding of theoretical concepts: SA AND SD
 - Other (please specify): SA AND SD

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire! Your responses will greatly contribute to the success of this study.