

Business Incubators and Entrepreneurship Development Centers as Strategies for Poverty Reduction in North East, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Poverty reduction has become a major issue for economic and political agenda of many governments, nongovernmental and private organizations using various strategies in different part of the world. Business Incubators (BIs) and Entrepreneurship Development Centers (EDCs) are strategies to reduce poverty in North East Nigeria where poverty rate averages 70 percent compared to other regions in Nigeria. BIs and EDCs are strategies that could assist impact poverty reduction in North East Nigeria where poverty rate is currently above 70 percent. Therefore, the paper objective was to examine the strategic impact of BIs and EDCs to poverty reduction among youths in the region. The methodology was based on review of on-line materials including entrepreneurship, BIs, EDCs, poverty reduction, training and capacity building, income generation, job creation and innovation including journals and conference papers obtained from various databases like Research Gate, Semantic, JSTOR, Wiley, Goggle Scholar etc. Entrepreneurship and business management books, Students Handbooks obtained from Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education on operations of BIs and EDCs and poverty reduction in various countries were consulted and reviewed. Information gotten and examined from these materials led to the conclusion that BIs and EDCs are strategic to poverty reduction in this region. Recent studies point to the fact that BIs and EDCs have served as hubs for poverty reduction with remarkable success in many regions of the world. Based on the review and findings, the paper recommends more funding and diversification of BIs and EDCs and improvement in workshop and training tools so that the rate of poverty could be further reduced. The paper contributes to knowledge by synthesizing existing literature on the contributions of BIs and EDCs to poverty reduction through training, job creation, income generation, and innovation in North East Region of Nigeria.

Keywords: Incubators, Entrepreneurship Development, Income Generation, Training, Poverty Reduction.

INTRODUCTION

It has long been realized that poverty is the main issue that is faced by every developing country and a major factor that retards economic growth and development. Despite the development made in decreasing poverty, the total number of people especially youths living in extreme poverty globally stays high. Today, the total population living in poverty globally is estimated at over 2.47 billion (Grant et al., 2019). Therefore, poverty reduction has become a key economic, political and social goal for many governments, non-governmental, international and corporate organizations world over as it is important for the overall well being of all societies. In reality, poverty is an issue in every state, region or country. However, each may be suffering from different forms of poverty, depending on their levels of social and economic development.

In North East Nigeria, poverty level is more prevalent among youths and women. These group of the population constitute a large number of low income earners. Government at all levels, tertiary institutions, private organizations and non-governmental agencies have recognized that entrepreneurship development is a key strategy in job creation, income generation and poverty reduction. Therefore, Business Incubators (BIs) and Entrepreneurship Development Centers (EDCs) strategic entrepreneurship development approaches or interventions aimed at training and capacity building, innovation and technological development, income

generation, infrastructure and facility development, access to funding and knowledge awareness that may ultimately lead to poverty reduction in the region. Apart from encouraging individuals and groups to establish sustainable businesses, these organizations provide support in various ways to transform business ideas into established enterprises.

Generally, BIs are defined as organizations dedicated to supporting nascent businesses during their critical development stages. They represent a strategic ecosystem designed to accelerate the growth and success of early-stage startups by providing comprehensive support beyond traditional funding mechanisms (Safael, 2025). They can also be referred to as organizations that help new businesses to develop by providing services such as management training, access to funding, office space, networking opportunities and so on. Specifically, business incubators are conducive environment where startups, new ventures are nurtured, ideas are developed to commercialization thereby building profitable, sustainable and salable enterprises without exposing them to harsh realities of external business environment and high startup costs of operations (Ogutu & Kihonge, 2016). Although definitions of business incubators might differ, the major objective of business incubators is to make young businesses survive, become sustainable and profitable.

Entrepreneurship “is the process of designing, launching and managing a new business or venture” (ESMT Berlin, 2025). It involves innovation, risk-taking and the goal of achieving financial and social value. It is about creating something new whether it is a product, a process, a service or a social movement. Entrepreneurship Development Centers (EDCs) are institutions that serve as places where entrepreneurs are trained to acquire skills, be self-employed, mentored etc. Many of these centers are established in tertiary institutions: Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education in North East and throughout the country.

Both BIs and EDCs are strategically important because of their ability to address the root causes of low income and poverty through the development of profitable and sustainable enterprises. They are also strategic because they offer more permanent instead of temporary welfare measures by creating ways for promoting training and skills acquisition, innovation and technology, job creation, access to funds and investment, business expansion, improve infrastructure and facilities, wealth creation etc. The outcomes of this strategic approach improves the economic well-being of individuals, stimulate local economic development, reduce unemployment and also bring about social inclusiveness.

In North East Nigeria, government, tertiary institutions and private organizations have realized the strategic importance of these mechanisms and have increasingly promoted these organizations. This approach aligns with the NUC, SMEDAN, Manufacturers Association of Nigeria, TetFund and indeed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) especially Goal 1 (No Poverty) and Goal 8 and 9 (Decent Work and Economic Growth and Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) of the United Nations (<https://www.undp.org>).

Despite these measures and efforts, poverty levels are still high in this region where literacy remains very high, insecurity is persistent (including killings, kidnapping, payment of ransom, destruction of businesses etc), increasing number of IDPs, limited number of industries, cultural barriers to business operations and so on. These pose important question about the impact of BIs and EDCs and efforts to achieving their objectives on poverty reduction. Therefore, there is urgent need for a survey to examine how BIs and EDCs affect or impact poverty reduction directly or through other mechanisms (mediating variables) including training and capacity building, innovation and technology, access to funds and investors, employment creation, income generation and infrastructure and facilities. These variables are possible through awareness creation and information gathering.

BIs and EDCs are institutions (organizations) designed to train and build human capacity, bring innovative ideas, assist in funding, generate income, create employment opportunities, provide infrastructure, mentor, collaborate, make business plans, network etc. In fact they assist early-stage startups and new ventures grow and survive. They provide business support that help to reduce poverty. The battle in the North East should be against poverty, not for one another. Poverty is caused by man. Kennedy (1963) once said that: *“Our problems are man-made, therefore they may be solved by man. No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings and humanity has the power to abolish poverty and human misery”*. The above statement from the perspective of this research means that we must find strategies for reducing poverty which we caused by ourselves.

Considering all the regions in Nigeria: North West, South West, South East, South South and North Central, the North East is the worst region in terms of poverty. Data from NBS: (Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index Survey 2022: <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng>) and UNDP Human Development Reports. The poverty rate by states comprising the North East region is shown below:

Gombe	86.20%
Yobe	83.50%,
Taraba	79.40%,
Bauchi	73.90%
Borno	72.5%.

Adamawa 68.70%, On the average, the poverty rate in the region is 77.34% and youths are most affected thus increasing multidimensional, generational and relative and rural poverty levels. Poverty was measured using education, health, living standards, housing, food security, access to basic services, sanitation and insecurity as the basic factors that are contributory.

Thus, the battle against poverty reduction takes different strategies, policies and programs and BIs are one of the most relevant among the economic and social development programs of any community. Therefore, entrepreneurship is one of such strategies and programs that have metamorphosed into development (innovative) centers. These strategies, policies and programs are vigorously pursued by government and other international organizations (Azamat, Fayzullokh & Nilufar, 2023). A World Bank Report of 2020 and the Global COVID-19 pandemic which started in 2020 brought a negative impact on the economic and social life of nations around the world leading to an increase in the number of poor people in many countries. The sudden removal of fuel subsidy by the Federal Government in Nigeria has compounded the problem and further pushed many people into multidimensional poverty.

Experts on economic trends now regard Nigeria as “the center of poverty in the world”. To this end, government and private organizations have been working hard for many years to reduce the number of poor people majorly youths and improve the living standards of the general population. With a population of over 216 million people, Nigeria has a poverty rate of 71%. Out of the six geopolitical regions in the country, the North East Region has the highest rate of poverty. On the contrary, it has the lowest number of businesses, (The World Bank Report, 2021: www.icirnigeria.org>poverty-rate-...). Therefore, encouraging the establishment of BIs by government, private organizations and individuals as strategies for poverty reduction would assist to reduce the high rate of poverty in Nigeria through training, capacity building, startups, infrastructure and facilities, access to finance, technology development, mentoring etc. if these incubators and their programs are effectively managed.

The World Bank Report (2023) says that poverty rate in Nigeria has increased by 4% in 2018 to 46% in 2023 representing 104 million poor Nigerians. More people have fallen below poverty line due to “sluggish growth and rising inflation. The report also said that urban poverty increased from 13million to 20 million people while rural poverty rose from 67 million to about 84 million people in the same period (World Bank: <https://www.thecable.ng>world-b..>). Recent research (December, 2025) indicates that poverty threshold in the USA, for example is \$15,060.00USA annually for a single individual, that is \$41.26.00USA per day. However, in Nigeria, the threshold per person is N137,430.00 annually and per day is \$1.05USA during the same period. The international extreme poverty line was set during the period at \$2.15USA per day. This implies that approximately 64% of the the Nigerian population (140m) people live below poverty line and have no hope of a bright future. The National Bureau of Statistics (2023) found that “Nigeria has the awful distinction of being the world capital of poverty as many people are classified as being multi dimensionally poor”, (<https://statistical.com>statistics>)

Research Problem

BIs and EDCs have been identified as one strategy for poverty reduction among youths in North East, Nigeria. Establishing, improving and successfully managing these BIs and EDCs would create more businesses and open up job opportunities and enhance training, employment creation, income generation, innovation and creativity, business performance, networking, access to capital, startup actions, collaboration, linkages etc. It is argued that youth unemployment rate in Nigeria differs depending on the source of data collected, Civil Society Expert estimates that between 23% - 50% of the active youth population are either unemployed or underemployed. To this end, there have been several efforts by previous administration in Nigeria to create employment programs, schemes and skill acquisitions centers that were directed at assisting youths to stand and cater for their needs and also to serve as support systems for financial needs.

These programs and schemes including Graduate Internship Scheme, Tony Elumelu Entrepreneurship Program, Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria etc. have impacted on youth unemployment, insecurity and so on but they have not significantly and positively contributed to poverty reduction. Over the years, poverty rate has been on the increase in this region. Based on the above information, examining BIs and EDCs as strategies for poverty reduction in the region is absolutely justified. From the foregoing, it becomes imperative to examine the strategic impact of BIs and EDCs on poverty reduction in North East Nigeria. An examination of these strategies will be in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Sachs, et al 2021 and UN: <https://udpd.org>).

Paper Objective

The objective of the study was to examine the strategic impact of Business Incubators (BIs) and Entrepreneurship Development Centers (EDCs) on Poverty Reduction in the North-East Region of Nigeria. To achieve this objective, the study focused and reviewed factors (variables) like training and capacity building, income generation, job creation, innovation and technology, access to funding and investment and poverty reduction.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method employed for the study is a theoretical review of BIs, EDCs and poverty reduction. The study made use of secondary data which was gotten from research archives at different tertiary institutions and organizations on training and capacity building, access to finance, infrastructure and facilities, innovation and technology, income generation, employment creation, mentoring and coaching, business plan and models and so on.

In addition, online sources like relevant journals publications and books on BIs and EDCs, entrepreneurship, business, finance, management, appropriate videos tapes and organizational bulletins were consulted for effective investigation. Furthermore, online databases were also considered and included Academic Archives, Google Scholar, Science Direct, Springer Link, Wiley, e-Library, Pro-Quest, Chat GPT (for guidance) etc. These databases provided academic journal articles, professional conferences, World Bank and the United Nations Working Papers relevant to the research topic, objectives and literature review to add value to the research. Secondary data was also used for literature, conceptual clarifications, empirical studies and theoretical framework.

Conceptual Framework And Clarifications

The conceptual framework focuses on the independent variables: Business Incubators and Entrepreneurship Development Centers. Poverty reduction is the dependent variable while training and capacity building, income creation, employment generation, access to finance and investment, innovation and technology, infrastructure and facilities etc are the mediating variables that facilitate the process of poverty reduction. All these variables are reviewed and explained below beginning with BIs.

Review of Business Incubators

Conceptually, incubators are entrepreneurial firms (Rice & Matthews, 1995) that perform a “bridging function” by sourcing and macro-managing the innovation process within emerging weak-but-promising intermediate potential organizations, infusing them with at various developmental stage-gates while containing the cost of their potential failure. This view holds that the incubator functions as a place (organization or institution) where resources can be rationally invested in stages in selected incubates that fail quickly, cheaply at various stages of the development path to success. In addition, Ayatse, et al (2017) are of the view that the concept of BI is founded specifically on the premise of increasing the survival and growth of firms by developing mechanisms that will ensure the early identification of those firms that have great potentials for success but are constrained by resources. In support of the concept Ishak & Malik (2025) were of the view that business incubators enhance “startup competitiveness”. This is possible by their ability to offer a combination of physical space, shared, access to capital and investment, which help reduce operational costs for startups in addition to providing a controlled environment that fosters creativity, innovation, technology as well as business growth and ultimately poverty reduction.

Salvador & Rolfo (2011) suggest that the concept of incubation ensures that firms especially small businesses overcome the liability of newness and smallness thereby creating innovative businesses that are competitive, profitable and sustainable so as a strategy to reduce poverty through increase income and employment generation in the community. Therefore, the general concept of incubation is aimed at achieving certain fundamental aims which may include: creation of new jobs and businesses, networking, commercializing technology, fostering entrepreneurial mindset, diversifying, revitalization and accelerating the growth of industries and local economies, inter-organizational or social partnership organizations, reduce unemployment, increase university-incubation collaboration, foster technological development and reduce poverty (Bizzotto, 2003, Mutambi et al, 2010, Al-Mubarak & Busler, 2011).

The objective of business incubation is achieved through business incubators. Incubators are the principal actors in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. They link talent, technology, capital and know-how (Levakove, 2012, Bejarano, 2012, Al-Mabaraki et al, 2023). In spite of difficulties in assimilating the concept, there are general agreement by research scholars about what business incubators. The general agreement is that BIs are “institutions concerned with speeding up the growth, financial and operational stability of entrepreneurial startups by offering them targeted services and support with a strong emphasis on knowledge agglomeration, resource sharing, innovation and competitiveness by creating an environment which enables startups succeed and become profitable”, sustainable and impact on economic growth which in turn affect poverty reduction (Mendoza, 2009, Masutha & Rogerson, 2014).

In today’s economy, one of the most important ways for a region or nation to increase the standard of living of its population is to make the private sector grow. In a capitalist economy, all wealth creation starts with the private sector. Furthermore, experts have suggested that businesses, employ people, who pay taxes that fund social programs. Innovation in entrepreneurship is one of the most important factors that help stimulate economic development. Government in themselves may not create the desired wealth but they are vital catalysts of wealth creation by creating environments that enable entrepreneurs to thrive and succeed. Most governments consider investing in effective schemes for the success of entrepreneurs. One of such schemes is business incubation (incubators). Incubators by their formation support the entrepreneurs to create new businesses (startups) that in turn employ people who earn incomes and further reduce poverty in the economy. Business Incubation schemes are not common in North East Nigeria.

If an entrepreneur wants to start a business, s/he might have limited time, personnel or funds. S/he might wonder how entrepreneurship really works and might wish to have a mentor or more knowledge to help through the process of growing a business so that the operations and the finances become more easily sustainable. In order to overcome the above hurdles, a business incubator might offer the beginner-entrepreneur the above resources to enable the entrepreneur to succeed. Therefore, a business incubator is an organization designed to help startup businesses grow and succeed by providing free or low-cost mentoring, expertise, workspace and access to

investors and in some cases, working capital in the form of loan, Business Incubators: <https://aofund.org/resource/business-incubators-pros-and-cons>.

In summary, BIs are formed to help startups. They are established to create value by combining the entrepreneurial drive of startups with the resources generally available to new businesses or ventures. The primary objectives of business incubators are creating employment opportunities in the local economy and commercializing technologies. The main idea behind business incubators is to offer a range of business development services, full-access to spaces on flexible terms and to meet the needs of new businesses. These packages are designed to enhance the success and growth rate of new enterprises hence maximizing their impact on poverty, economic growth and development (Bhardwaj, 2021).

According Pitch Deck Creators, there are many business incubators around the globe but some of the best business incubators globally include: StartX, CodeBase, SOSV, ACE Incubator, The DMZ, 25Madison, Idealab, Capital Factory, DreamIt Ventures, The WorcLab, Founders Institute, Station F, Z80Labs Technology Incubator and so on. Many of the top businessmen and entrepreneurs had little help when they started but their help and support came from some of these business incubators. Many of these incubators can boast of many impressive startups. They provided networking opportunities, access to funding, low-cost space and equipment, structure for business focus, accelerated growth, brand recognition etc.

Business incubation is about nurturing start-up enterprises to grow and become sustainable competitive companies. Incubation intends to increase commercialization of ideas and increase the survival rate of promising start-ups by building capacity and networks and reducing the risk and cost of starting a new business (www.infoDev.org). A significant factor contributing to the perpetuation of poverty is lack of training and education in recognizing and capitalizing on entrepreneurial opportunities like business incubators.

Business Incubators in North East

- a. North East 1 Incubation Center Maiduguri Study Center Borno State
- b. North East 11 Incubation Center Bogoro, Bauchi State
- c. North East Entrepreneurship and Innovation Hub Gombe, Gombe State
- d. North East Humanitarian Innovation Hub Jimeta-Yola , Adamawa State
- e. Development HUB Maiduguri, Borno State
- f. Blue Sapphire Hub Bauchi, Bauchi State
- g. Cedeed Innovations (Technology and Business Incubation) Gombe, Gombe State
- h. DBN Innovation Programme All the States, Coordinated from Abuja

At the African level, EDCs have become essential drivers of the economy providing innovative solutions to society problems thus creating employment opportunities that reduce poverty. These centers offer training, mentoring, funding, innovation and other resources and services to empower youths and other individuals to transform business ideas into successful business enterprises. Some of these centers include: Tony Elumelu Foundation (Nigeria), Mara Foundation (Pan-African), Anzisha Prize (South Africa), iHUB (Kenya), Entrepreneurship Development Center by CBN (Nigeria), Meltwater Entrepreneurship School of Technology (MEST) - Ghana. These centers focus on industry specific training, global networking and sustainability focus: Top Entrepreneurship Development Centers in Africa: <https://www.alueducation.com/top-entrepreneurship-development-centres/>

Business Incubators' Range of Services

According to Flavel and Kalenda (2008), business incubator services range from providing rental space to financing projects of their clients or customers. Specific services are provided by each type of business incubator (based on the duration of existence, industry affiliation, personal characteristics of the management etc.). Most of the popular services that are commonly provided by BIs include:

- a. Writing a business plan and models;
- b. Developing a business concept;
- c. Assisting in the commercialization of technologies;
- d. Providing administrative and office services;
- e. Training and capacity building;
- f. Mentoring and coaching;
- g. Technology and digital skill acquisition;
- h. Access to finance and investors;
- i. Marketing and networking opportunities and
- j. Infrastructure and facilities.

Five of these core services: training and capacity building, access to finance and investors, infrastructure and facilities, innovation and technology, income generation, and job creation were chosen as variables or mediators for the research. Modern business incubators are usually led by experts who are experienced in supporting MSMEs and are determined to add new services. These services include expanding the range of technological services like video conferencing, crowd-funding platform services, software testing etc., creation of multifunctional centers for businesses, evaluation of start-ups by experts, preparation of packaging of projects for entry into a country, structuring of investment transactions, conducting technology audit, business and property evaluation.

Others services are timely legal assistance, provision of co-working services, merchandising expertise, export-oriented services for start-ups to foreign markets, micro financing, search for foreign partners/accelerators and paid services including entrepreneurship courses and services for large businesses etc. BIs are evaluated based on financial indicators, number of jobs created, volume of investment attracted, level of utilization of business space, profit from technological development etc.

Types of Business Incubators

Repsol (2023) and KUMAR (2025) state that there are various types of business incubators. For this study the following types are considered and briefly discussed below.

University Business Incubators

Tylzanowski (2023) states that university business incubators are “non-profit institutions that support academic entrepreneurship at the pre-incubation stage by providing appropriate conditions for conducting business activity initiated by students, graduates, or researchers” Therefore, UBI “support academic entrepreneurship, leading to marketisation of activity, legal protection, technical and organizational support, striving for regional development and reducing local unemployment” thereby contributing to poverty reduction. University or academic incubators are the most common of all business incubator models in the world. Many of modern incubators originate from the Universities as they serve as institutions of scientific development which can

become the core of an innovative company. They usually carry out research in scientific laboratories. These educational and scientific institutions have high potential of ideas and scientific development that has the capacity to develop for implementation which often requires organizational, legal and financial support. Although academic BIs are primarily meant to benefit students: access to resources, hands-on-learning, collaboration and community, networking opportunities, funding and investment, skill development, reduced risks, mentoring and coaching, success stories etc. (<https://www.mangalayatan.in>blog>), They also serve as a link to startups. Examples of academic incubators in Nigeria are: Technology Incubation Center, Obafemi Awolowo University and all entrepreneurship Development Centers in all Nigerian Universities and Polytechnics.

Non-profit organization incubators

Non-profit incubators (NPI) are specialized programs designed to support the development and growth of non-profit organizations from startups. They are an aggregation of several nongovernmental organizations which operate with contributions (financial and otherwise) from international and domestic charity foundations, government agencies, enterprises and academics. They promote innovation and cultivate social entrepreneurship by giving support to startups and small to medium scale nongovernmental and social enterprises. They are involved in mentoring, workshops, training, networking, office space, funding and technical assistance and so on (Paybee, 2024). Examples of non-profit organization incubators in Nigeria include: Tony Elumelu Foundation Entrepreneurship Programmes, FATE Foundation, LEAP Africa, Enterprise Development Center, Wennovation Hub etc.

Corporate incubators

According to Corporate Guide (<https://www.bundl.com>) corporate incubators are incubator organizations established by large or very big companies to foster innovation and offer support to the development of new businesses. These types of incubators provide resources such as funding, mentoring, office space, access to the parent company's network. The main objective of corporate incubators is to accelerate the growth of startups. Corporate incubators are also involved in mentoring, provision of access to resources, funding, networking opportunities, strategic alignment etc. examples of corporate incubators in Nigeria include: Lagos Innovates, Green House Capital, CcHub (Co-Creation), MTN Nigeria;s Y'ello Startup, Sahara Group's Grooming Talent etc.

Technology incubators

Israel Innovation Authority (2024) defined a technology incubator as “an organization designed to support the growth and success of startup companies in the technology sector”. The objective of technology incubators is to help early-stage companies develop their products, business models and market strategies more effectively and efficiently than might be able to on their own. Therefore, they focus on fostering innovation and accelerating the growth of high-technology businesses especially for startups to thrive. Examples of technology incubators in Nigeria include: IDEA (Information Technology Development Entrepreneurship Accelerator), LeadPath Nigeria, Impact Hub Lagos, Enterprise Factory, L5Labs etc.

Virtual Incubators

Faster Capital as an example, is virtual incubators are those that operate online. They make their services accessible to a broader range of startups regardless of their geographical location. They offer similar services to those incubators mentioned above through digital platforms. Some of those digital incubators are MEST Africa, Seedstars, Fasrer Capital, Founder Institute, African Business Angel Network, VC4A (Venture Capital For Africa) etc.

General Business Incubators

These are organizations established to support the development of startups and small businesses across various industries. Their services are not limited to a particular sector. Their goal is to provide a range of resources to

help entrepreneurs build and scale their businesses. Examples of general business incubators include Lagos Innovates, Enterprise Development Centre, SME.NG, Think Nigeria, Tony Elumelu Foundation, Startup Wise Guys, Itanna, Adaverse, etc.

Manufacturing incubators

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT, 2024) states that manufacturing incubators are specialized programs designed to support the development and growth of startups and small businesses in the manufacturing sector. They provide resources especially to manufacturing equipment and so on. Manufacturing incubators provide access to shared facilities for startups to support innovative products development and early-stage manufacturing, paving the way for growth and scaling up of the ecosystem. They can be set up by various entities such as corporate bodies, academic and research institutions. Examples of this type of incubator include National Board for Technology Incubation (NBTI), Federal Institute of Industrial Research (FIRO), Technology Incubation Centre (TIC,) and Enugu Technology Incubation Center (ETIC). Few of these type of BIs are in North East. The commonest ones are the Academic (University) BIs that are located in the higher institutions in urban cities.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: BUSINESS INCUBATORS

Social Network Theory

Social network theory presupposes that entrepreneurs will be successful to the extent that they obtain adequate and timely resources through their social networks (Woodward, 1988). The theory focuses on the role of social relationships in transmitting information, channeling personal or media influence, and enabling attitudinal or behavioral change (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com>pdf>). Drummond et al, (2018) states that social network is crucial in overcoming challenges, obstacles, difficulties, survival etc. in conducting businesses. It provides low-cost, fast access to resources (information technology, financial capital, physical assets and so on). Social network further provides an effective communication channel between the business and external organizations for timely and valuable information for achieving growth and high performance. Research findings by Huatao, et al 2022, suggests that both network size and tie strength have positive influence on the growth of entrepreneurial activities.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory

Dynamic theory (Lewin, 1935, Harrod, 1939 and Maxwell, 1865) emphasizes the evolving nature of business incubators over a given time. The theory suggests that BIs are dynamic systems. They are not static and can change and adapt as they respond to various internal and external factors. This goes to show that startups should not only depend on providing physical facilities, they should also provide room for innovation and adaptation and be willing to respond to the external environment. Factors like life cycle stages, resource management, performance metrics, adaptation and learning, ecosystem interaction and innovation and value creation affect BIs. Therefore, the dynamic capabilities theory of BIs provides a comprehensive view of how these organizations evolve, adapt, and create value in a changing business environment.

The services provided by BIs strengthens the ability of the entrepreneur to look out for opportunities and reconfigure resources available. This theory helps improve business survival, innovation, income generation and ultimately the possibility of poverty reduction. This theory emphasis that business incubators help entrepreneurs to learn and organize their resources for business survival under a dynamic or changing environmental conditions in order to take achieve competitive advantage.

New Business (Venture) Theory

New venture theory refers to “modern frameworks explaining how startups launch, scale and disrupt markets under extreme uncertainties”. The theory attempts to look at an effective means of linking capital, innovation and technology, and know-how in order to leverage entrepreneurial talent, accelerate the development of new

businesses and speed up exploitation of technology. According to Karitu & Muathe (2023), new ventures are sources or vehicles of innovation and change.

Real Options Driven Theory

Hackett & Dilts' (2004) theory attempts to not only predicts but also explain how BIs and the processes of incubation increases the likelihood that new ventures will survive during the early stage of business development. It regards incubators as a series of options (opportunities) for startups rather than as fixed investments. In this case option, the incubator provides a flexible environment for the development of business ideas with reduced risk and increase adaptability. The word "option" as used in this context implies that there are more than one simple alternative or possibility to take: business model, scale operations, seeking additional funding etc.

Resource Based Theory

Wernerfelt (1984) proposed the resource based theory. The holds that theory holds that companies gain competitive advantage if they possess valuable, rare, inimitable and non substitute resources. In business incubation, the theory emphasized the importance of the internal resources that incubators provide to startups and how these resources contribute to the success and sustainability of business startups. Resources in this context imply the following: physical infrastructure, financial, mentoring and expertise, network access, brand reputation, management support, knowledge sharing, market access, sustainability etc. All these theories are relevant to the understanding of the operations of business incubators.

Relevance of BI and EDC Theories to Poverty Reduction

These theories jointly provide theoretical explanation not just assumption that BIs and EDCs support incubation and entrepreneurial development, training and human capacity development, finance and investment, infrastructure, networking, income generation, employment creation and innovation that lead to improved livelihoods of individuals and the community and ultimately reduced poverty in a region.

Furthermore, the theories explain the processes or the mediating variables through which poverty can be reduced in the community. Such mediating variables include training and capacity building, innovation and technology, income generation, job creation, access to funds and investors etc. The BI and EDC theories help to select the mediating that were used and also to determine what should be measured. In addition, the theories assist greatly in explaining the findings of research. Findings from the data collected are compared with the predictions of the theories. For instance, these theories help in explaining how a variable may supports the relevant theoretical proposition.

Theories assist in establishing the academic contribution to the research project. It is through theories that a research determines if the a theory contradicts, supports or even extends an academic contribution to knowledge. Lastly, these theories provide the basis for a conceptual framework and models (as shown above). For the purpose of this research, these theories provide the reasoning behind the relationship and how these variables are supposed to relate to one another especially in a model.

In summary, the relevance of BI and EDC theories as they affect poverty reduction is that they assist in explaining the processes involved to support entrepreneurs on how they can create their businesses, employ people, train them, bring about innovative ideas, source for funding and investors with the aim of improving the economic well being of individuals and communities so that poverty would be reduced.

Implications of BIs and EDCs Theories to Poverty Reduction

The implication of these theories to poverty reduction steams from the fact that poverty reduction is not addressed by direct financial support only. There are other strategies of reduction poverty by creating a supporting environment whereby individuals can acquire skills, set up new businesses, expand new businesses, innovate and be creative, access funds, collaborate and network with others, and generate sustainable household income. Another implication is that BIs and EDCs should also be in the forefront to access loans, aids and grants,

investment opportunities, financial literacy and management and collaboration with banks, government and other financial institutions.

In addition, the innovative aspect of the theories should encourage the development of new products, improvement in process of production, adaptation to new and appropriate technologies or improvement in service delivery. This can lead to competition, better quality products, increase productivity and competition which can ultimately impact positively on poverty reduction. Furthermore, these theories as a testing ground to determine whether there actually exist a relationship among the variables that examined in the research for poverty reduction. Each variable is tested to assess the extent to which poverty is reduced.

Therefore, in summary the major implication of these theories is that poverty reduction can be assessed through productive economic empowerment needed to transform potential business men and women to acquire productive skills, sustain businesses, generate income, improve the living standards of individuals and the community so that poverty will be reduced significantly. For the purpose of this research, BIs and EDCs are not end to themselves but strategies and means through which poverty reduction can be achieved in a region or country.

Review Of Entrepreneurship Development Centers

Entrepreneurship generally, is the ability and willingness to develop, organize and operate a business (enterprise), along with any of its uncertainties or risks in order to make a profit, (Ostonokulov et al, 2023). Therefore, EDCs are institutions or programs designed to provide training, resources and support to aspiring or potential entrepreneurs to assist them develop the skills and knowledge required to start, operate and grow their businesses. They are basically created to nurture entrepreneurial talents and youths by giving them essential resources bridge the gap between aspiring entrepreneurs and the tools or skills required to successful businessmen. NUC and SMEDAN consider EDCs as specialized hubs that provides capacity building, business incubation and vocational skills training. These centers serve as frameworks for fostering entrepreneurial culture, nurturing business ideas and creating an enabling environment for MSMEs to thrive (<https://www.smedan.gov.ng>). A hub is a designated geographic area, building or organization that brings together entrepreneurs, investors and freelancers to collaborate, share resources and bring about innovation. It is central to connecting activities that gather resources, companies or ideas and distributes them outward. Therefore, the primary objective of EDCs is to foster a robust business ecosystem by providing aspiring and existing entrepreneurs with the necessary tools, practical training, mentoring and resources to successfully start and sustain a new business or venture, Ahlin et al, (2014) This process is influenced by the mediating variables as presented in the model below:

Training and Capacity Building

Entrepreneurship training and capacity building has been acknowledged in international literature as essential to entrepreneurship development, (Azila-Gbetor & Harrison 2013, Bygrave & Zacharakis, 2007)..Entrepreneurship training and capacity building involves a systematic process of equipping potential and existing entrepreneurs with the knowledge, skills, understanding, attitudes, and competencies required to commence, operate and grow successful businesses. It refers to the organized knowledge aimed at developing the entrepreneurial mindset and capabilities of individuals for effective business creation, management and sustainability. When properly conducted, entrepreneurial training can enhance skills and competencies, promote self-employment, improve income generation, increase the chances of survival of the business, encourages innovation and creativity, (Ogwunte, Godspower & Uranta, 2025).

Closely related to training and capacity building is skill acquisition. A skill is defined as “the technique or ability to do something well”. It is the systematic process of learning, developing, and mastering new abilities to perform tasks effectively. It is the art of learning to do something in order to earn a living and or to survive. Therefore, skills acquisition requires effort, discipline and practice. Therefore, skills acquisition bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practice empowering individuals to solve problems, increase their employability, generate income and become more self-reliant and reduce poverty. The process of skill acquisition can be broken

into components: types of skills (hard skills and soft skills), the learning stages (cognitive, associative and autonomous) and real-world application (knowing not just to do things but also when and why) to apply the skills in different real-life situations or business environments (Pawners Paper: <https://www.pawnerspapper.com>).

Job (Employment) Creation

Job creation refers to the process of providing new job for people who were previously unemployed or in active. Bhorat et al (2025) state that Sub Saharan Africa need to overcome the challenge of creating large scale jobs. Therefore, job creation is key to the Nigerian economic development and vital on many levels. For example, politically, creating jobs provides employment opportunities to the population and provides youth with an alternative for violence or anti-social behaviors. In economic terms, job creation provides income to poor people, revives domestic demand for goods and services, Barroso-Hurtado et al (2022). Socially, job creation promotes social healing and improves social welfare (United States Institute for Peace:)

The concept of job creation encompasses entrepreneurship and small business development, economic growth, labour market policies, investment and innovation, demographic and societal shifts, targeted industry support, globalization, trade etc. by creating jobs, the income of those employed can help reduce poverty. Closely related to training is skills development. Skills development focuses on the entrepreneurial skills of individuals especially those from disadvantaged or marginalized communities. Individuals are better equipped when their skills are improved to engage in income-generating activities. Skill development helps individuals to be employable and earn income thereby reducing poverty, Wills & Hughes (2025).

Income Generation

Income is very vital to any business. Therefore, Wills & Hughes (2025) and other studies defined income generation to include the process of earning money through business operations, investment or employment. It also refers to the process of acquiring entrepreneurial skills, establish businesses and engage in productive economic activities that enable them to earn regular income, improve standard of living and reduce poverty. EDCs facilitate income generation through: training and capacity building, business mentoring and advisory, access to finance, skills acquisition and business collaboration as well as networking.

Innovation and Technology

This is the process of transferring creative ideas into practical, actionable solutions that create value (UNESCO). Walker, (2026) states that innovation is a process of creating and implementing new or improved ideas to deliver value, solve problems, boost growth, efficiency, and social impact. Innovations turn creative thinking into practical solutions and enhance products, services, and processes. This enables individuals and organizations adapt to change and remain competitive and relevant. Specifically, innovation is woven into daily life and is not about major inventions but about improving what already exists in smarter and more meaningful ways. To many experts, innovation is the application of better solutions that meet new requirements, inarticulate needs or existing needs.

Innovation has a number of general characteristics which include: a. **Newness:** Innovation involves introducing something new or modifying an existing idea (product, service, system or process). b. **Implementation:** In innovation, creative ideas must be applied or brought to market and c. **Value Creation:** Innovation serves a purpose, fulfil a market need, or generate a positive outcome.

Furthermore, the Elevate Ventures in their contribution, outlined Five (5) characteristics of innovation to include: novelty, value creation, implementation, scalability and adaptability. While Becker, (2024) emphasized Peter Drucker's 7 sources of innovation: the unexpected, incongruities, process needs, industry/market structures, demographics, changes in perception, and new knowledge. The first four sources are internal (within the organization/industry) while demographic changes, changes in perception and new knowledge are external

sources (social environment). Generally, there are four types of innovations: incremental, disruptive, radical and architectural.

Technology as it relates to entrepreneurship is about “what things are made and how things are made”. Technology is one of the keywords of our world.

Ford, Wood & Cena, 2026 state that technology is the practical use of human knowledge, tools, and methods to solve real problems, complete tasks and extend what people can do. Core concepts of technology according to them, include application of knowledge, problem-solving and continuous evolution. Hafizh (2023) defined technology as “the knowledge and skills used to create tools and devices that improve our lives”. In today’s world, technology is synonymous with innovation, modernization or progress.

Technology and innovation have changed the way we live, work, communicate and continues to evolve rapidly, impacting every aspect of our lives. Therefore, experts in technology suggest that technological change has four components: uncertainty, dynamic, systematic and cumulative.

Innovation plays a unique role and changes in our daily life. As technologies evolve, change or grow, they shape the world in many ways we cannot fully imagine. Different types of technologies: information and communication technology, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, energy technology, robotics and automation exist for use by entrepreneurs.

The frequently asked question that is: “How can technology change our lives”? The answer can be seen through communication (smartphones, social media, video conferencing tools, phone chat etc) can access knowledge from one’s comfort zone, study or education resources, use of drones to assist engineers, ease of travelling, health care, clothing and foot wears, housing, shelter and furnishing, entertainment etc.

In summary, the integration of technology has not only brought comfort and speed to individuals and entrepreneurs but also opened up ways to solve difficult problems, improve quality of life and connect people across the globe. Solving such difficult problems can transform every aspect of our lives: how we communicate, access information, travel and conduct businesses to some extent may include income generation and poverty reduction. Therefore, innovation and technology are everywhere in our daily business lives.

Access to Funding and Investors

Tshehla (2026) opined that entrepreneurial financing is a challenge startups and small business enterprises. Entrepreneurs and business managers encounter many funding obstacles that impede their sustainability and expansion.

In Nigeria, EDCs are established in all tertiary institutions (Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education) either as independent centers or merged with other departments or units. Below is a comprehensive list of EDCs in tertiary institutions in North East Nigeria, (NUC).

University EDCs

- a. Center for Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Development: University of Maiduguri.
- b. Center for Entrepreneurship Development: Modibbo Adama University, Yola
- c. Entrepreneurship Development Center: Abubakar Tafawa University, Bauchi.
- d. Centre for Entrepreneurship and Service-Learning: Federal University of Kashere, Gombe.
- e. Centre for Entrepreneurship Development: Federal University of Wukari, Taraba State
- f. Center for Entrepreneurship Studies: Federal University, Gashua, Yobe State
- g. Entrepreneurship Development and Skills Acquisition Center: Taraba State University

- h. Entrepreneurship Development Center: Adamawa State University, Mubi, Adamawa State
- i. Entrepreneurship Development Center: Yobe State University, Damaturu, Yobe State
- j. Entrepreneurship Development Center: Gombe State University, Gombe, Gombe State
- k. Entrepreneurship Development Unit: Borno State University,
- l. Entrepreneurship and Skills Acquisition Unit: Bauchi State University, Gadau
- m. Center for Entrepreneurship: Amerian University of Nigeria, Yola, Adamawa State

Polytechnic EDCs

- a. Entrepreneurship Development Center: Federal Polytechnic Bauchi, Bauchi State.
- b. Center for Entrepreneurship and Skills Development: Adamawa State Polytechnic, Yola
- c. Entrepreneurship Development Center: Federal Polytechnic Mubi, Adamawa State
- d. Center for Entrepreneurship Development: Abubakar Tatari Ali, Bauchi
- e. Entrepreneurship Development Center: Ramat Polytechnic, Maiduguri, Borno State
- f. Center for Entrepreneurship Development: Taraba Polytechnic, Suntai, Taraba State
- g. Entrepreneurship Development Center: Federal Polytechnic, Damaturu, Yobe State
- h. Entrepreneurship Development Center: Federal Polytechnic, Kaltungo, Gombe State

Colleges of Education EDCs

- a. Center for Entrepreneurship Development: Federal College of Education, Yola
- b. Entrepreneurship and Skills Acquisition Unit: College of Legal and Islamic Studies, Yola
- c. Entrepreneurship Development Center: Tafawa Balewa College of Education, Kangere
- d. Center for Entrepreneurship & Vocational Studies: Aminu Saleh College of Education, Azare
- e. Center for Entrepreneurship Development: Federal College of Education, Bama, Borno State
- f. Center for Entrepreneurship Development: Federal College of Education (Technical), Gombe
- g. Entrepreneurship Development Center: College of Education, Zing, Taraba State
- h. Center for Entrepreneurship Development: College of Education, Gashua, Yobe State.

Private Entrepreneurship EDCs (Hubs)

- a. Co-Development Hub, Maiduguri, Borno State
- b. Borno Innovation Hub, Maiduguri, Borno State
- c. North East Entrepreneurship and Innovation Hub, Gombe, Gombe State
- d. American University of Nigeria Entrepreneurship and Innovation Hub, Yola

- e. Young Entrepreneurs Development Association of Nigeria, Bauchi, Bauchi State
- f. Taraba Business and Entrepreneurship Support Initiatives, Jalingo
- g. DBN Innovation Hub (all States in North East)

The overall goal of these EDCs is to create a robust ecosystem that supports potential entrepreneurs at every stage of their entrepreneurship journey from idea generation to scaling their businesses. In summary therefore, EDCs activities and services are common to all the centers and are hereby outlined below:

- a. Entrepreneurship education and training to cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset;
- b. Skills acquisition programmes;
- c. Business incubation and mentoring;
- d. Innovation and creativity development;
- e. Support services for startup;
- f. Income generation;
- g. Poverty reduction;

Employment creation initiatives;

- h. Policy advocacy;
- i. Sustainability of good business practices;
- j. Community development as an empowerment tool to local communities;
- k. Research and development to identify emerging trends, opportunities and challenges and
- l. Linkages/collaboration: SMEDAN, Bank of Industry, Central Bank of Nigeria, TetFund and other EDCs in other parts of the country.

In the model above, training and capacity building, access to finance and investment, technology and digital skill acquisition, and infrastructure and facilities act together as mediators to influence poverty reduction in North East Nigeria. In order to equip participants with the necessary skills, the following supporting activities are aimed at creating jobs and generating income are hereby suggested (Dugguh, 2016)

- a. Food Processing
- b. Tailoring and Interior Decoration
- c. Auto Mechanic
- d. Masonry
- e. Electrical Repairs
- f. Metal Work (Welding/Fabrication)
- g. Computer Repairs

- h. Handset (Mobile Phone) Repairs
- i. Carpentry and Woodwork
- j. Solar Panels construction and installation
- k. Literacy and numerical teaching
- l. Hairdressing and Barbing
- m. Pedicure and Nail polishing
- n. Painting and Arts Work
- m. Vulcanizing
- n. Provision Stores
- o. Entertainment and Music
- p. Motor Cycle Repairs
- q. Fish Production etc

Review Of Poverty

The World Bank (2023) described poverty as a “pronounced deprivation in well-being”. Ucha, (2010), offers a comprehensive definition of poverty when he state that poverty “is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to; not having the land on which to grow one;s food or a job to earn one;s living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living on marginal or fragile environments without access to clean water or sanitation”.

Other definitions consider poverty as people who do not have enough income or consumption to put them above some adequate minimum threshold. For this study poverty is considered as the condition where people lack sufficient income or resources to maintain a basic standard of living. This means people struggle to afford essential needs like food, shelter, clothing, healthcare, education and other necessities for a decent life Alemu (2019), Oluwatayo (2008) and Collier (2007). Poverty also encompasses a lack of access to opportunities, services, and resources that can help improve their situation and increase their life expectancy. Poverty is a cause and consequence of critical social and cultural issues including unemployment, poor education, discrimination and economic inequality. It impacts negatively individuals, families, communities or nations perpetuating a cycle that is hard to break without serious interventions.

Poverty is caused by many interconnected factors that vary from one community or nation to the other. Some of the factors include unemployment, economic inequality, inflation, economic recession, lack of access to education, gender discrimination, family structure, poor governance, corruption, political instability, conflicts, natural disaster, climate change, lack of or inadequate healthcare, disability, demographic factors, urbanization, historical injustice and so on. Each of these factors may interact bringing about complex and enduring poverty cycles that may be difficult to break without vigorous and comprehensive intervention from government, non-governmental organizations, business organizations and other stakeholders, Dugguh (2015).

The first goal of the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development is targeted at ending poverty by 2030. Out of the six geopolitical regions in the country, the North East Region has the lowest number of businesses. On the contrary, the region has the highest rate of poverty (The World Bank Report, 2023. Poverty makes life

very unbearable and is capable of killing off life and can as well reduce the existence of an individual to a merely scrapping for survival instead of enjoying the fullness of life possible on earth.

Types of Poverty

Odeh (2014), Abubakar, (2002), Wolff (2021) and Adamu, (2022) have separately identified types of poverty to include the following: multidimensional, absolute, situational, relative, generational, urban, rural, child, structural and transient. Below is a brief explanation of the various types:

Absolute Poverty

It is defined as a condition in which people lack the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, and healthcare. Absolute poverty is often measured by looking at the percentage of people who live below the poverty line, which is set at an income level that is necessary to meet basic needs. There are different poverty lines from country to country, but the international poverty line is usually set at around \$1.90 per day. In 2017, the World Bank reported that 10 percent of the world's population lived in absolute poverty. This means that about 767 million people were living on less than \$1.90 a day. Extreme poverty is a more severe form of absolute poverty and is defined as a condition in which people lack the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, and healthcare, and live on less than \$1.25 a day. In the same report as in 2017, the World Bank said that 3 percent of the world's population was living in extreme poverty. This means that about 200 million people were living on less than \$1.25 a day. Absolute poverty means not having basic necessities for survival, like food, clean water, shelter, or access to healthcare. If someone is living in absolute poverty, they're not just broke, they're at risk of death from hunger, disease, or exposure.

Nigeria, despite being one of Africa's largest economies, faces a high level of absolute poverty. According to estimates by the National Bureau of Statistics, a significant proportion of Nigerians live below the poverty line. Absolute poverty remains a critical global challenge, though progress has been made in reducing its prevalence worldwide. In contrast, Nigeria continues to face persistent and widespread poverty due to structural economic weaknesses, governance issues, and demographic pressures. Addressing absolute poverty requires sustained economic growth, inclusive policies, investment in human capital, and effective governance both globally and within Nigeria.

Multidimensional Poverty

Omoniyi (2018) and Addae-Korankye (2014) states that multidimensional poverty is not only lack of income, it is a deprivation in health, education, housing and living standards. In Nigeria, multi-dimensional poverty accounts for about 63% of the total population. This is a more modern way of understanding poverty as it combines income, education, healthcare, housing, and access all into one. Someone may not be "poor" in money but may lack everything else: clean water, security, education, and dignity. That's multidimensional poverty, and it's the most realistic way to measure suffering in places like Nigeria. The United Nations and other global agencies now use this model to design better policies. The MPI, which has been used since 2010, is based on three broad dimensions: education (years of schooling and child school attendance; health (child mortality and nutrition); and living standards (access to electricity, sanitation, drinking water, type of floor of dwellings, fuel/gas for cooking and assets

Relative Poverty

It is defined as a condition in which people lack the resources to participate fully in society. Relative poverty is often measured by looking at the gap between the rich and the poor. In developed countries, the poverty line is typically set at 50 percent of the median income. This means that if the median income in a country is \$50,000, then the poverty line would be set at \$25,000. In 2017, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reported that 17.2 percent of the population in its member countries lived in relative poverty. This means that about 1 in 6 people in OECD countries were living on less than half of the median income in their country (Jolliffe, et al. 2022).

This one is more common, especially in urban cities. Relative poverty means someone earns or owns far less than others in their society. They may have food and shelter, but they can't afford basic opportunities, like internet, school fees, transport, or good healthcare. Relative poverty refers to a condition where individuals or households have incomes or living standards significantly below the average in a given society. Unlike absolute poverty (which is based on a fixed minimum threshold), relative poverty is context-specific and reflects inequality and social exclusion within a country.

In Nigeria, relative poverty is particularly important because even individuals above the international poverty line may still live far below the average national standard of living.

Northern Nigeria generally experiences higher poverty levels compared to the South, reflecting uneven development. For instance, person in Gombe who earns \$60.00 a month might not be absolutely poor, but compared to rising costs of living, he is relatively poor because he can not fully participate in society. Therefore, relative poverty is about social inequality. It exists even in wealthy and economically developed nations.

Relative poverty highlights the importance of inequality and social inclusion in understanding poverty. While absolute poverty focuses on survival, relative poverty emphasizes the ability of individuals to live with dignity and participate fully in society. In Nigeria, tackling relative poverty requires addressing structural inequalities, improving access to opportunities and ensuring that economic growth benefits all segments of the population.

Situational Poverty

Situational poverty is usually defined as a lack of resources at a particular time. This could be due to an unexpected event, such as an illness, a job loss, a natural disaster, or it could be the result of living in a disadvantaged community. Situational poverty is often temporary, but it can also become chronic if people are unable to find a way out of it. This type of poverty happens because of a sudden crisis or disaster, and it can hit anyone.

Situational poverty is characterized by: Job loss (dismissal, termination, drop in income etc.); Health issues (severe illness, injury, major health expenses); Family changes (death of a primary bread winner, divorce, separation etc) and Natural environmental disasters (flood, fire outbreaks etc). Situational poverty is usually temporary, but it's still damaging, especially if the person does not have a safety net. Many people experienced this during the COVID-19 pandemic when businesses shut down overnight.

Urban Poverty

Urban poverty is a type of poverty that is specifically tied to living in an urban area. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), urban poverty "refers to the condition of people who lack the resources to secure the minimum necessities of life, including food, clothing and shelter" in an urban area. There are a number of factors that can contribute to urban poverty, including a lack of access to education and employment opportunities, poor housing and living conditions, and a lack of access to basic services like healthcare and sanitation. According to the UNDP, there are an estimated 1.4 billion people living in urban areas that are considered to be impoverished (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2024). This represents a significant increase from the estimated 400 million people who were living in poverty in 1990.

While urban poverty is a global problem, it is particularly prevalent in developing countries like Nigeria. In fact, according to the World Bank, approximately 60% of the world's urban poor live in developing countries (UNDP, 2024). This is the kind of poverty you find in cities. It is not just about being poor, it is about being poor in an expensive environment.

Urban poor people deal with the following challenges: Overcrowded housing, High food and transport costs, Unsafe neighborhoods, Limited access to healthcare and jobs and so on. Even though cities have more opportunities, the cost of living can trap people in debt or prevent them from ever "catching up" with modern life.

Generational Poverty

It is a type of poverty that is passed down from one generation to the next. Generational poverty often results in a cycle of poverty that is difficult to escape. This is because children who grow up in poverty often lack the resources and opportunities that are necessary to break out of it. They may not have access to quality education, healthcare, good jobs, lack of access to resources, and discrimination. As a result, they are more likely to live in poverty as adults. Breaking the cycle of poverty requires breaking down these barriers. Investing in education, healthcare, and social services can help to break the cycle and lift people out of poverty.

Generational poverty happens when families have been poor for two or more generations. It's not just about money, it's about mindset, lack of access, and systems that keep people stuck. Children grow up with no education, no network, and no support. They become adults with limited options, and the cycle continues. Breaking out of generational poverty takes more than hard work. It often requires policy changes, education, and community support.

Rural Poverty

Rural poverty is a type of poverty that is specifically tied to living in a rural area. Rural poverty is often caused by a lack of access to essential services and opportunities, such as education, healthcare, and employment. This can be due to a number of factors, including a lack of infrastructure in rural areas, distance from urban areas, and a lack of resources.

According to the World Bank, an estimated 1.3 billion people live in rural areas that are considered to be impoverished. This represents a significant increase from the estimated 700 million people who were living in poverty in 1990. While rural poverty is a global problem, it is particularly prevalent in developing countries. In fact, according to the World Bank, approximately 70% of the world's rural poor live in developing countries (UNDP, 2024). There are a number of initiatives that have been launched in an effort to address rural poverty. The World Bank's Rural Development Strategy is one such initiative that is working to improve the lives of those living in poverty in rural areas. Rural poverty is about isolation and lack of access. People in rural areas might grow their own food, but have no income, lack schools, hospitals, or roads or have limited electricity or internet.

Transient Poverty

Refers to a short-term decline in a household's income or consumption below the poverty line due to unexpected shocks or cyclical factors. Unlike chronic poverty, which persists over long periods-transient poverty is episodic and households may move in and out of poverty over time. In Nigeria, transient poverty is widespread due to economic instability, dependence on informal employment, and exposure to shocks. Many households are not chronically poor but remain highly vulnerable.

Transient poverty highlights the dynamic nature of poverty, where households move in and out of poverty due to shocks and uncertainties. In North East Nigeria, a large segment of the population remains vulnerable to such fluctuations. Therefore, effective policy responses must therefore focus on building resilience, reducing vulnerability, and providing safety nets to prevent temporary shocks from turning into long-term deprivation.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) the multidimensional, generational, child, relative and rural poverty are the most prevalent in North East Nigeria

Structural Poverty

Refers to long-term, persistent poverty that arises from systemic inequalities embedded in the economic, social, and political structures of a society. Unlike transient poverty (temporary shocks) or relative poverty (inequality-based comparison), structural poverty is deep-rooted and self-reinforcing, making it difficult for affected individuals or groups to escape. Structural poverty is grounded in the idea that poverty is not merely an individual

failure but a consequence of institutional arrangements and structural barriers. It is closely linked to development theories that emphasize inequality, dependency, and exclusion.

Institutions such as the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme highlight structural constraints, like lack of access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, as key drivers of persistent poverty. Structural poverty is a major challenge in Nigeria, where poverty persists despite economic growth. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics show that poverty is deeply entrenched in certain regions and populations.

A Model of BIs, EDCs and Poverty Reduction

From the review above, a model of BIs and EDCs-Poverty Reduction is designed for the research paper and presented below:

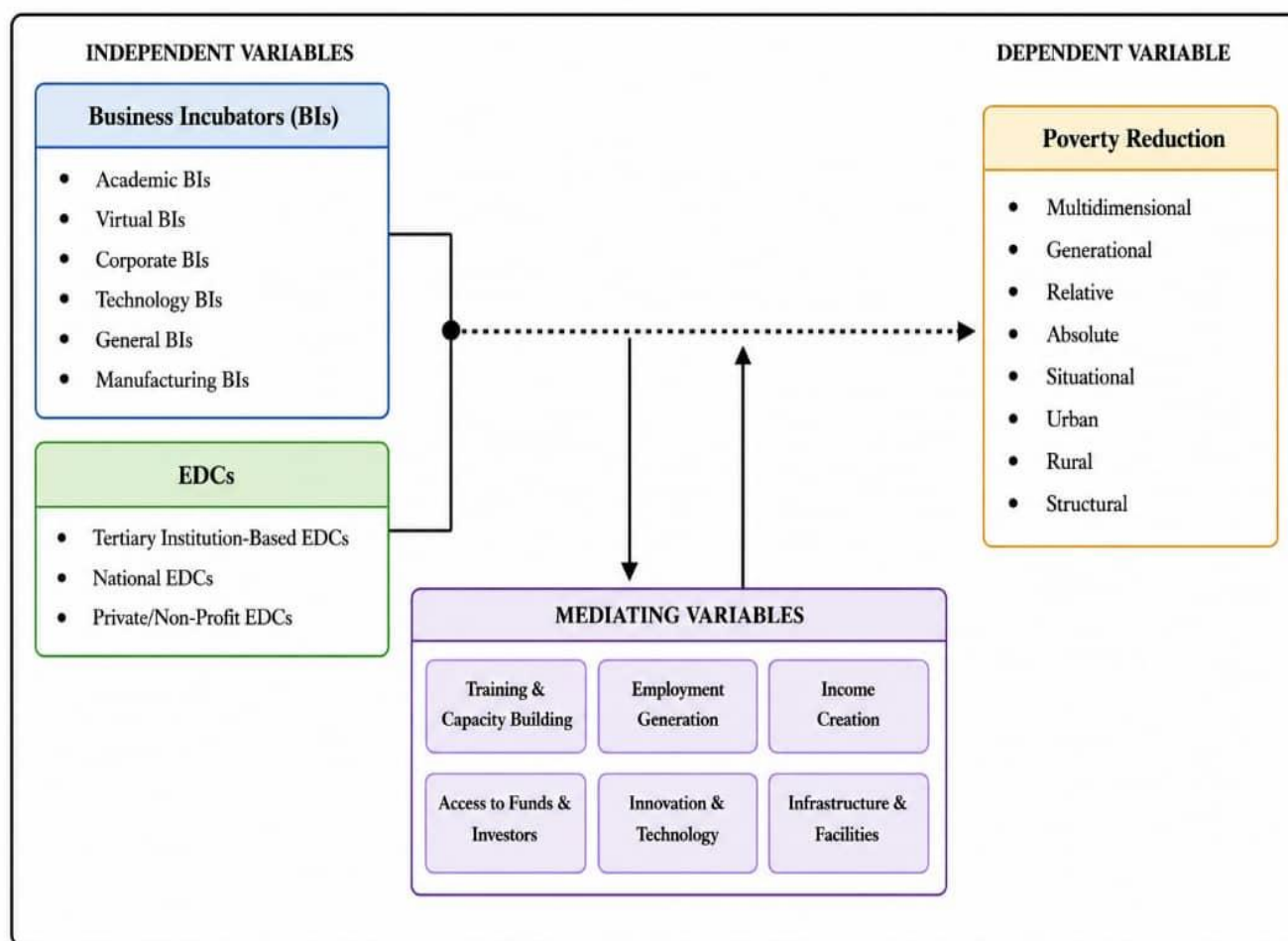


Figure 1: A composite Model of Business Incubator and EDC-Poverty Reduction

Source: The Researchers Model, 2026

Determinants of Poverty in North East Nigeria

There is no one cause or determinant of poverty in North East Nigeria. A combination of several complex factors determines poverty. Prominent among these factors include: Low economic growth performance, Labour Market Deficiencies, Policy failures and macroeconomic uncertainties, Human Capital Development, Migration, Ill-health and diseases Unemployment and underemployment, Debt burden , Level of governance, Crime and conflict, Insurgency and banditry, Level of governance, Unemployment and underemployment, Youth laziness

Household Determinants of Poverty

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and Olofin et al (2015) state a number of factors work to determine the annual threshold of poverty per household in North East, Nigeria. This threshold is determined by: age and education of different household members (head); number of income earners; household composition and size; assets owned by household; access to basic social services; sex, ethnicity of head; location variable (rural or urban); sector of employment; remittances to households, individual ability (laziness) begging etc (Manyo, 2025).

Theories Of Poverty Reduction

- a. Empowerment Theory:** Zimmerman (2000) argues that empowerment is a value creation and model for understanding the consequences of efforts to exert control over decisions. It states that poverty is reduced when people and communities gain control over resources and decisions that affect their lives. Therefore, people's capacity to make decisions and control their resources must be strengthened.
- b. Sustainable Livelihood Theory:** Chambers & Conway (1992) are of the view that building sustainable sources of income and resilience should be the basis for poverty reduction. Therefore, poverty reduction depends on people's ability to access and sustain various livelihood assets and resources.
- c. Human Capital Theory:** Becker's (1964) theory focuses on investment in education, skills and training which increase productivity and income thereby reducing poverty. Emphasis in this theory is on expanding people's opportunities instead of focusing only on income generation. Nickolas (2026) asserts that human capital are the skills, knowledge and experience that workers contribute to an economy. Human capital and economic growth have a strong correlation. Therefore, human capital can assist to develop an economy by expanding the knowledge and skills of its people leading to increased entrepreneurship, productivity and GDP growth.
- d. Basic Needs Theory:** This theory by Streeten et al, (1981) argues that development in the economy should focus on satisfying basic needs: food, health, education and shelter. The central idea is that there should be access to essential needs required for human well-being.

These theories provide strong foundations for reviewing the contributions of EDCs to poverty reduction through employment creation, training, income generation, innovation and improved livelihoods. The theories are also suitable because they explain directly how EDCs can reduce poverty. While the Capability Approach Theory and the Basic Needs Theory are mostly applied to poverty because they help to explain poverty reduction strategies, systems and processes. Specifically, and most importantly, the review anchored on Human Capital Theory which is the most suitable and widely applied in poverty reduction cases. This is because the primary focus of the theory is on training, skills acquisition, capacity building and enhancing employment opportunities and income generation. In addition to human capacity building, empowerment theory also plays a strong role in poverty reduction, the combination of the two assist in reducing poverty in a region and can be easily sustainable.

Theoretical Framework of BIs, EDCs and Poverty Reduction: Implications

Although BIs and EDCs do not have their specific theories, some theories relating to entrepreneurship, innovation and management are applicable to those of BIs and EDCs. For this paper, the following theories are essential.

- a. Human Capital Theory:** Becker (1964) and Ogwu (2025) emphasize that education, training, and skills acquisition improves individual's productivity and earning ability and capacity which BIs and EDCs are capable of providing. This theory is core to entrepreneurial activities.
- b. Innovation Theory:** Schumpeter's theory emphasized that entrepreneurs are innovators. They introduce new products, processes, systems, services and markets. Therefore BIs and EDCs encourage innovation, creativity and business development. This is in line with the objectives and functions of BIs and EDCs.

- c. **Need for Achievement Theory:** This theory suggests that individuals with strong desire to achieve are more likely to become businessmen and entrepreneurs (McClelland, 1961). BIs and EDCs are established to satisfy this need and also help to motivate and develop entrepreneurial attitudes in young people.
- d. **Institutional Theory:** BIs and EDCs are institutions established by government and private individuals. These are formal and informal institutions that encourage economic and entrepreneurial activities. North et al (1990) theorized that EDCs especially serve as institutional mechanisms that support enterprise development and poverty reduction.
- e. **Social Learning Theory:** Bandura's theory states that people acquire entrepreneurial behaviors through observation, interaction and experience. Therefore, BIs and EDCs serve as a hub for mentoring, incubation and practical demonstration.

All the theories mention above are useful in understanding how BIs and EDCs operate in Nigeria. From the theories reviewed, the human capital theory has the most impact on entrepreneurship development. This is because it emphasizes training, education and skill-building which directly affects the success of any business. However, the application of the theory depends on the type of business and the prevailing market conditions. The best theoretical approach that works best in any situation is a combination of several theories.

Importance of Strategy to BIs and EDCs and Poverty Reduction

In the words of Hill and Jones (1998) a strategy "is a specific pattern of decisions and actions that managers or entrepreneurs take to achieve an organization's goals" that are intended to achieve superior organizational performance. Strategic impact for this research is "the significant, long-term positive effect that an action, decision or project has on an organization's core goals, competitive edge, or overall vision". Therefore, BIs and EDCs represent strategic ecosystem designed to accelerate the growth and development of startup businesses. They provide a clear way to support startups.

If example an organization has an overriding goal to achieve 10 percent annual profit, it strategies would for attaining this goal could be increase in price of product or service, developing new product, expanding the business, reducing costs etc. Therefore, this research is about the strategies or process BIs and EDCs can pursue to reduce poverty. According to Slimani (2025), the main strategic impact of BIs and EDCs on poverty reduction is "transform raw ideas and marginalized human capital into sustainable micro, small and medium enterprises, generating local jobs, building community wealth and fostering economic self-reliance". Specifically, the strategic impact of BIs and EDCs can be seen from the following perspective:

- a. It provides a direction which clearly defines entrepreneurial objectives, set out priorities, and the specific needs that must be addressed;
- b. It enhances entrepreneurial skills by designing specific training and capacity building programs to incorporate areas like business planning, digital skills, financial management, innovation, marketing etc.
- c. It also helps in allocating scarce resources like finance, infrastructure, facilities, trainers, mentors, technology to areas that generate the highest pay offs.
- d. A strategic impact can be seen in encouraging innovation, technology and creates an enabling environment where entrepreneurial activities can lead to the development of new products, technologies, services and business models.
- e. Strategy can connect startups with financial institutions, government funding agencies, investors, other financing organizations and also strengthen networking agencies like industries, government agencies, NGOs etc.
- f. Strategy also assist in creating employment opportunities by strategically supporting new enterprises that can contribute to the creation of both indirect and direct employment that leads to business survival, competition,

profit and sustainability. This can be achieved through mentoring, market support, monitoring and capacity building thereby reducing poverty level in North East Nigeria.

Determinants of Household Poverty in North East Nigeria

In general terms, there is no one cause or determinant of poverty in North East Nigeria. A combination of several complex factors determines poverty. Prominent among these factors include: Low economic growth performance, Labour Market Deficiency, Policy failures and macroeconomic uncertainties, Migration, Human Capital Development, Ill-health and diseases, Unemployment and underemployment, Debt burden, Level of governance, insecurity and banditry, Level of governance, Unemployment and underemployment, Youth laziness etc.

Specifically, certain factors work to determine the annual threshold of poverty per household in North East. This threshold is determined by: age and education of different household members (head); number of income earners; household composition and size; assets owned by household; access to basic social services; sex, ethnicity of head; location variable (rural or urban); sector of employment; remittances to households, individual ability (laziness), insecurity, culture of begging etc.

These theories provide strong foundations for reviewing the contributions and impact of BIs and EDCs on poverty reduction through training and capacity building, employment creation, income generation, innovation and technology, access to funds and investment, infrastructure and facilities etc that often times impact on livelihoods and poverty reduction. These theories are also suitable and appropriate because they explain directly how BIs and EDCs can reduce poverty. Essentially, the Human Capital Theory is the most suitable for understanding BIs and EDCs as institutions because their primary focus is on training, skills acquisition, capacity building and enhancing employment opportunities, income generation and access to funds. While the Capability Approach Theory and the Basic Needs Theory are mostly applied to poverty because the help to explain poverty reduction strategies, systems and processes. Therefore, this combination provides a strong theoretical foundation for the review.

How BIs and EDCs impact Poverty Reduction

From the review, it clear that BIs, EDCs and poverty reduction operate as a process. The process is mediated by certain variables like training and capacity building, income generation, employment creation and innovation and technology, access to funding and investment, infrastructure and facilities and so on. Therefore, effective utilization of BIs and EDCs would lead to a significant reduction in poverty level. BIs and EDCs provide youth with skills, training, income, additional employment opportunities and innovated and creative ideas that would contribute to the development of the individual and society. If people are not trained for example, they may not see business ideas to enable them become innovative. As a process, low entrepreneurial activities in BIs and EDCs would have adverse contributions to poverty. Therefore, as earlier observed, all entrepreneurial activities in BIs and EDCs are generally geared towards poverty reduction.

CONCLUSION

BIs and EDCs have become very important instruments for poverty reduction through the help of entrepreneurship training, skills acquisition, income generation, employment creation, innovation etc. By equipping youths with the necessary knowledge and capacity required for self-employment and business development, these centers contribute to income generation, promote innovation, improve standard of living and ultimately reduce poverty. This can be made through training and capacity building, income generation, job creation, innovation and technological development, access to funding and investment, provision of necessary infrastructure and facilities. Other important aspects include mentoring, networking, coaching, etc. Therefore, BIs and EDCs represent an effective strategy for poverty reduction thus fostering sustainable socioeconomic development especially SMEs. Funding these centers and making them more accessible and innovative is essential for maximum strategic impact on poverty reduction as existing literature supports that there is significant positive influence of BIs and EDCs on poverty reduction in North East Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study problems and objectives the following important recommendations are hereby made:

- a. BIs and EDCs should be expanded to cover rural and economically disadvantaged areas where poverty rate is high instead of concentrating them in state capitals and other big towns where tertiary institutions are located. This would create more room for effective participation from youth in rural areas and who might not be fortunate or qualified for admission into higher institutions like GEN. Stakeholders should upgrade BIs and EDCs to African and global standards.
- b. Government and other stakeholders should fund these centers adequately, provide the required infrastructure to support BIs and EDCs to enhance the quality and effectiveness of their programs. These would make more attractive and comparable to the established in developed countries like Station F (France), StartX (USA), The DMZ (Canada) and EWOR (Germany). These are some globally recognized business incubators that house and fund many startups.
- c. BIs and EDCs should increase their practical and skills based training methods that equip trainees with the required competencies for business creation, self-employment and wealth generation. This also requires the right mentoring and incubation programs that provides guidance and technical support for graduates in North East Nigeria.

Contribution To Knowledge And Practice

The paper contributes to knowledge by synthesizing existing literature on the contributions of BIs and EDCs to poverty reduction emphasizing how entrepreneurial training, skills acquisition, innovation etc can facilitate income generation and reduce poverty in North East Nigeria. Specifically, the paper shows how training, skills acquisition, innovation, employment creation etc provided by BIs and EDCs can enhance the capacity of youths to engage in productive activities and generate income instead of being call “lazy youths”.

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