



Entrepreneurship and Skills Acquisition Disparities in Emerging and Established Continents: Perspectives from African and European Economies

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Abstract

This study explores the disparities in entrepreneurship and skills acquisition between Africa and Europe, analysing their theoretical and practical dimensions. It aims to understand the root causes of these disparities and propose strategies for improving Africa's entrepreneurial landscape and skill development experiences. The urgency of this investigation stems from the historical context of European colonisation, which introduced various lingua francas, educational systems, and frameworks for business, entrepreneurship, and skill development in Africa. Despite ongoing advancements in technology, science, business, and the economy in Europe, Africa continues to be an economically emerging continent that remains import-dependent and grapples with challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and technological stagnation. Employing a desk-study research approach, this study conducts a critical analysis and comparison of the geographical, historical, educational, technological, and entrepreneurial contexts of both regions. The findings indicate that factors such as colonialism, an inadequate educational structure, outdated technology, and necessity-driven economic conditions significantly contribute to Africa's current challenges in entrepreneurship, skill acquisition, unemployment, economic stagnation, and limited technological progress. The study recommends a paradigm shift from necessity-driven entrepreneurship to opportunity-based entrepreneurship, fostering collaboration with their European counterparts to become more technology-focused, research-oriented, and opportunity-driven, while integrating curricula that feature skill acquisition and entrepreneurial development in African educational institutions.

Key Words: *Entrepreneurship, skills acquisition, necessity-driven entrepreneurs, opportunity-based entrepreneurs, innovation*

1. Introduction

Africa's economic landscape presents a mixed picture of challenges and opportunities. The continent possesses abundant human, agricultural, and natural resources, along with numerous prestigious higher education and research institutions. However, the main challenge lies in Africa's struggle to effectively exploit and manage these abundant resources to foster growth and development across the continent (UNCTAD, 2024).

Despite pockets of high-profile entrepreneurs and business magnates, Africa is still plagued with unemployment, poverty, low or primitive technology, and import dependency, with low entrepreneurial development and skill acquisition levels by its youth and graduates. Economically, the region is still burdened by high global borrowing, low production levels, a downturn in global demand,

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and lower prices for key commodities, which have increased economic uncertainty on the continent. Overall, Africa stands at a critical juncture in its development, with immense potential driven by a youthful population, rich natural resources, and expanding consumer markets (UNCTAD, 2024). However, these can only be achieved with enhanced entrepreneurship development and skills acquisition, which can lead to increased business startups, high productivity, and robust employment opportunities for its youth and graduates.

This study examines the differences in entrepreneurship development and skill acquisition between Africa and Europe, focusing on both theoretical and practical aspects. The goal is to understand the root causes of these disparities and to propose strategies for improving the entrepreneurial landscape and skill development experiences in Africa. The urgency of this investigation arises from the historical context of European colonization, which introduced various lingua francas, educational systems, and frameworks for business, entrepreneurship, and skill development in Africa. Despite significant advancements in technology, science, business, and the economy in Europe, Africa remains an emerging continent that is largely dependent on imports and faces challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and technological stagnation.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Africa is characterized by a wealth of resources and prestigious educational institutions, yet the continent struggles to effectively exploit and manage these assets to foster growth and development. Despite the presence of high-profile entrepreneurs, Africa faces significant challenges such as unemployment, poverty, low technology, and import dependency. The region is burdened by high global borrowing, low production levels, and economic uncertainty due to fluctuating global demand and commodity prices. The continent's immense potential, driven by a youthful population and expanding consumer markets, can only be realized through enhanced entrepreneurship development and skills acquisition. This study aims to investigate the disparities in entrepreneurship development and skill acquisition between Africa and Europe, with a focus on understanding the root causes and proposing strategies for improvement. The urgency of this investigation is underscored by the historical context of European colonization, which introduced various frameworks for business and education in Africa, yet the continent remains largely dependent on imports and faces ongoing challenges.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study utilized multiple theoretical frameworks to provide richer and comprehensive understanding and basis for the disparities between entrepreneurship and skill development tendencies in emerging and established economies:

Opportunity-Based Entrepreneurship Theory: This theory posits that individuals engage in entrepreneurial activities primarily to exploit business opportunities. The theory was notably presented by Peter Drucker in 1985, who characterized entrepreneurs as individuals who seize opportunities created by change rather than those who initiate change themselves (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2022). Opportunity-driven entrepreneurs are motivated by the desire to identify and capitalize on business opportunities. Drucker emphasized the importance of resourcefulness in entrepreneurial management, focusing on exploiting opportunities without being constrained by existing resources. The core elements of opportunity-based theory include: (1) Identifying potential opportunities, often hidden or multifaceted, (2) Leveraging resources to exploit these opportunities, (3) Introducing new products, services, or processes, (4) Venturing into unknown territories to seize opportunities.

The significance of this theory in entrepreneurship and skill development is threefold: (1) It is recognized as a major factor in achieving economic and social development, contributing to sustainability and innovation, (2) It highlights the importance of an entrepreneurial spirit, willingness to take risks, and dedication to finding solutions, and (3) It drives business growth and progress by identifying and leveraging opportunities, often creating new markets, products, or services.

Necessity-Based Entrepreneurship Theory: This theory focuses on individuals starting businesses out of necessity, often due to unemployment, poverty, lack of better opportunities, or economic pressures (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), 2020a). Necessity-driven entrepreneurs are motivated primarily to generate income and sustain their livelihoods. Their entrepreneurial activities typically increase during economic downturns (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2022). The distinction between necessity-driven and opportunity-driven entrepreneurship gained prominence through the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) research program, initiated in 1999 by Babson College and the London Business School. Scholars contributing to the GEM project, including David Birch, Scott

Shane, and Frederic Delmar, have significantly advanced the understanding of necessity-driven entrepreneurship. The core elements of necessity-based entrepreneurship include: (1) Necessity-driven entrepreneurs often start businesses to meet basic needs, (2) They are motivated by a lack of better job opportunities, (3) Their efforts are strongly influenced by economic conditions, including poverty and unemployment (GEM, 2020a).

The theory highlights the diverse motivations behind business creation and can help relevant authorities to formulate policies that support entrepreneurship development, particularly in contexts with high unemployment and poverty rates.

Economic Theory of Entrepreneurship: The Economic Theory of Entrepreneurship encompasses both opportunity-driven and necessity-driven entrepreneurship. It examines how economic conditions, such as unemployment rates and economic cycles, influence the motivations and behaviors of entrepreneurs (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2022). The theory emphasizes the vital role of entrepreneurs in driving economic growth, innovation, and development. It is rooted in the works of several prominent economists: (1) Richard Cantillon (1680-1734)- An Irish-French economist who first introduced the concept of entrepreneurship in economic theory, highlighting the entrepreneur's role in bearing risk and uncertainty, (2) Jean-Baptiste Say (1767-1832) - A French economist who developed the concept further by emphasizing the entrepreneur's role in combining factors of production to drive economic progress, (3) Joseph Schumpeter (1883-1950)- An Austrian American economist who made significant contributions to the theory, focusing on the entrepreneur's role in innovation and creative destruction, and (4) Israel Kirzner- A British-born American economist who built on Schumpeter's work, highlighting the entrepreneur's role in discovering and exploiting opportunities. The economic theory of entrepreneurship is significant in the following ways: (1) It adequately combines the concept of opportunity driven and necessity driven entrepreneurship, which largely explains the disparities between sets of entrepreneurs, (2) It shows that entrepreneurs drive economic growth by introducing new products, services, and processes and play a crucial role in innovation, experimentation, and creative destruction (Kwabena, N. K. 2011; Badi & Badi, 2013)

Push and Pull Theory: This theory also combines opportunity-based and necessity-driven theories of entrepreneurship. It differentiates between "push" factors (necessity-driven) and "pull" factors (opportunity-driven) that motivate individuals to become entrepreneurs. Orhan M. Gilad and Peter

R. Levitt explored the push-pull framework in the context of entrepreneurship, highlighting the role of negative external factors (push) and positive internal motivations (pull).

The Push factors include unemployment, dissatisfaction with current employment, and economic necessity, while the Pull factors encompass the desire for independence, financial success, and the recognition of business opportunities (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2022).

These theories provide a comprehensive understanding of the various motivations behind entrepreneurial activities and how they vary based on individual circumstances, economic development and geographical location, which are all applicable to the focus of this study.

2.2 Entrepreneurship

Several works of literature on entrepreneurship revealed that the term *entrepreneur* was derived from the French word *entreprendre* which means "to undertake", or someone who initiates, manages, and assumes the risk of a business venture. The word was first recorded in the French dictionary in 1723 and was adopted into the English language in the mid-19th century (Badi & Badi, 2013). The concept of entrepreneurship was first introduced by the Irish economist Richard Cantillon in the 18th century, who defined an entrepreneur as a person who engages in economic activities under uncertainty and seeks profit opportunities (Costa, 2023). In 1800, Jean-Baptiste Say, a French economist, refined the concept of entrepreneurship as the process of combining and reallocating productive resources to create new goods and wealth. He also described entrepreneurship as "shifting economic resources out of an area of lower and into an area of higher productivity and greater yield" (Carlen, 2016, Muntasir, 2024).

The historical development of entrepreneurship shows that the term originated in Europe, where the academic study of entrepreneurship began in the 18th century (Investopedia, 2022; Costa, 2023). In contrast, at that period, Africa was still under the influence of colonialism, slavery, and illiteracy.

Entrepreneurship and skills acquisition are closely related concepts but with different definitions and dimensions. According to the World Bank (2023), entrepreneurs are "people who perceive profitable opportunities, are willing to take risks in pursuing them and have the ability to organise a business." In the same vein, The Business Dictionary (2022) defines entrepreneurship as "the capacity and willingness to develop, organise and manage a business venture along with any of its risks to make a

profit." However, entrepreneurship in the 21st century goes beyond trading, managing a business, and making profits; it also involves problem-solving, innovation, and social change. The modern entrepreneur must possess relevant skills and the desire to take risks, persevere, and succeed in making a positive difference in society (Dough & Medina, 2019), and above all, he must be innovative in several ways, as propounded by Joseph Schumpeter.

Joseph Schumpeter, the "prophet of innovation", developed the theory of entrepreneurship based on innovation, which drives the entrepreneurship programs of most nations and forms the core of skills acquisition and technology entrepreneurship. Schumpeter identified five types of entrepreneurship based on innovation as follows (Stokes, Wilson & Mador, 2010): (1) The introduction of new products or services (which is the competitive advantage that European and other developed countries have over African countries). (2) The introduction of new processes or methods of production (European countries are also more advanced in this type of entrepreneurship than African countries). (3) The creation of new businesses, trading companies, or markets (This is the hallmark of African entrepreneurship, and is commonly called "buying and selling" in Nigeria). (4) A new source of supply of raw materials (European countries are also more efficient in this area than African countries). (5) The complete restructuring of an entire industry or the breaking up of a monopoly (Africans are good at this type of entrepreneurship, as most African millionaires have achieved their wealth by disrupting existing markets or industries).

2.3 Skills Acquisition

Skill acquisition is the process of learning and acquiring new skills or abilities to perform certain tasks or professions. Skills are acquired (usually through apprenticeship) for several reasons, especially for cultural, economic and survival reasons. According to the Pawnserspaper (2024), modern skill acquisition involves both cognitive and physical skills, which can be classified into hard and soft skills. Hard skills are technical skills or abilities that are specific to a job or industry, and they include computer programming, graphic design, engineering, accounting, data analysis, digital marketing, cloud computing, cybersecurity (World Economic Forum, 2020) Hard skills are usually acquired and improved through formal education, training, or experience. On the other hand, soft skills are personal attributes or qualities that enhance an individual's performance, communication, and collaboration, such as creativity, empathy, teamwork, problem-solving, critical thinking, time management,

adaptability, etc. Soft skills are often developed and refined through informal learning, practice, and feedback (Kevin, 2018).

Today, the purpose of skill acquisition is to enhance entrepreneurial potential and competencies, prepare and equip individuals with a learned ability or skill that can be used in producing specific goods or services for human consumption, and to make profits, create wealth, and generate employment opportunities. For this paper, we shall regard skill acquisition as an entrepreneurial function. According to Wei, Liu, and Sha (2020), functional entrepreneurship education can aid the development of such skills as creativity, digital communication, innovation, and sustainability-mindedness.

From the foregoing, entrepreneurship and skills acquisition are vital for both individuals and nations, as they generate value, create wealth, and develop a positive social impact. Some of the benefits of entrepreneurship, according to Stokes, Wilson and Mador (2010) and GEM (2020) are: (1) Creation of value and an increase in economic growth. (2) The satisfaction of various human needs and finding a solution to societal challenges. (3) Stimulation of self-employment and leadership roles. (4) Increase in industrialisation using factors of production. (5) Creation of employment opportunities. (6) Improvement of the standard of living. (7) Improvement of old technologies and the development of new ones. (8) Improvement in the business culture of the people. (9) Expansion of commercial activities. (10) Development of achievement orientation, especially for the youth, and the conversion of waste to wealth through creativity and innovation.

2.4. Historical and Contemporary Perspectives of African and European Educational Systems as they Relate to Entrepreneurship and Skills Acquisition

This study relied on the following key historical and contemporary facts that underlie the present positions of both continents on entrepreneurship and skills acquisition. The old perspectives existed before, during, or after the Industrial Revolution, while the new perspectives are in the current 21st century:

2.4.1. Historical Perspectives of European Entrepreneurship and Skills Acquisition

Europe is a continent that covers about 10.18 million km² or 2% of Earth's surface, with a population of 745 million and fifty sovereign states, and is considered the origin of western civilisation

(Worldometer, 2023a). Most European countries are powerful with standard education, vast industrial complexes, modern technologies, and a stable economy. Europe played a predominant role in global affairs with multiple explorations and conquests around the world. Indeed, between the 16th and 20th centuries, Europe colonised the Americas, Oceania, almost all of Africa, and the majority of Asia (WorldAtlas, 2024) The Industrial Revolution, which signalled the advent of formal entrepreneurship and skills acquisition, began in Europe at the end of the 18th century and gave rise to radical economic and social change across the world. Europe has a long history of human development, with a literacy level of 98.76% and over 2,706 universities. It is home to some of the oldest universities in the world (e.g., The University of Bologna, Italy, established in 1088; the University of Oxford (1096), and the University of Cambridge (1209). Europe has a highly organised and functional European Union – an economic and political union of 27 European countries, which used to include the United Kingdom until 31 January 2020 (European Union, 2024).

(A) The Old Perspectives

The European perspective of entrepreneurship and skills acquisition before and during the Industrial Revolution was influenced by the transatlantic trade in gold, spices, and slaves, with emphasis on wealth accumulation. During this period, skill acquisition was mainly in hard skills for labourers and handlers/operators of machines in the plantations and industrial complexes, such as textiles, iron, coal, railways, and engineering, where goods were being produced. Hence, entrepreneurship and skill acquisitions were seen as drivers of economic growth, wealth creation, social changes, and technological innovation. In this period, inventors, merchants, and craftsmen emerged as the main agents of entrepreneurship, while apprentices, workers, and engineers acquired the skills needed to operate the new machines and processes (Pawnerspaper, 2024).

(B) The New Perspectives

The 21st-century European perspective of entrepreneurship and skills acquisition is based on entrepreneurship education and innovative competencies in both hard and soft skills for the personal development of its citizens, economic growth of the continent, as well as for the competitiveness of Europe's economy to other continents. Entrepreneurship education in Europe now plays a vital role in fostering entrepreneurial mindsets, skills, and behaviors among learners of all levels and disciplines. According to the European Commission (2024), "Entrepreneurship is an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation, risk-taking, and the ability to plan and manage

projects to achieve objectives". European Entrepreneurship or EUropreneurship refers to the common principles of all fields and sectors of society, economy, and culture of the Member States of the European Union. It promotes European values and supports inclusion and equal opportunities, and the creation of small-scale enterprises as the foundation for medium and large-scale enterprises (European Union, 2020).

The European Union (2020) noted that small-scale enterprises, which are defined as having fewer than 50 employees, make up most enterprises in the EU, ranging from 97% in Germany and Luxembourg, 95% in Switzerland, to 98% and above in the remaining EU Member States. They account for about half of employment and value-added in Europe.

The state of entrepreneurship in Europe today is diverse and dynamic, reflecting the different historical, cultural, and institutional contexts of each European country. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM, 2020), Europe has a lower rate of early-stage entrepreneurial activity (TEA) than other regions, such as North America, Latin America, and Africa, but a higher rate of established business ownership (EBO). This suggests that European entrepreneurs face more barriers to starting a business but are more likely to survive and grow once they do due to the availability of supportive resources and organizations. Moreover, European entrepreneurs tend to be more opportunity-driven than necessity-driven, meaning that they start a business to exploit a market opportunity rather than to escape unemployment or poverty as in Africa.

The main challenges for entrepreneurship in Europe include the regulatory environment, the taxation system, access to finance, access to skills, and the cultural attitudes towards entrepreneurship. The European Union has been implementing various policies and initiatives to support and promote entrepreneurship in Europe, such as the Small Business Act, the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan, the European Innovation Council, and the Startup Europe Partnership. These policies and initiatives aim to create a more favorable and conducive environment for entrepreneurship in Europe by reducing administrative burdens, simplifying tax rules, facilitating access to finance, enhancing skills development, and fostering a culture of entrepreneurship (Statista, 2024a).

Entrepreneurship and skills acquisition in Europe are highly functional and productive, and are a vital force for the competitiveness and prosperity of the continent and its position as a developed continent (GEM, 2020).

2.4.2 The African Perspective of Entrepreneurship and Skills Acquisition

Africa is a continent that covers an area of about 30.3 million km² with a population of 1.460 billion people and 54 constituent countries, making it the world's second-largest and second-most-populous continent, after Asia. Africa is rich in both agricultural and mineral resources, such as gold, uranium, crude oil, cocoa, groundnut, palm oil, etc. (Worldometer, 2023b). Despite these natural endowments, most African countries are regarded as developing countries in education, industry, economy and civilisation, having been misunderstood, enslaved, colonised, divided, suppressed, and racially discriminated against for many years before many of them struggled for independence in the late 1950s. Africa has about 1,279 universities but is the least industrialised and the least wealthy continent in the world, with an average literacy level of 67.4%. (Statista, 2024b). Many African countries are considered developing, with the following characteristics: A low per capita income, a high consumption rate, low levels of technology, low levels of productivity, high levels of corruption, a high rate of population growth, low life expectancy, substantial dependence on agricultural products, inadequate health services and facilities, high and rising levels of unemployment, inadequate and epileptic basic amenities, inability to process most primary products into secondary finished products, lack of significant entrepreneurship education and development among the populace, and lack of significant technology-based small and medium enterprises (UNCTAD, 2024).

Despite these challenges, many African entrepreneurs, especially the youth, have managed to succeed in various sectors, such as energy, agriculture, information and communication technology, manufacturing, finance and banking, and services. Africans are hopeful and resilient and can make the best out of a gloomy situation if they can understand and leverage on the European formula and strategies.

(A) The Old Perspectives

The history of entrepreneurship and skills acquisition in Africa can be traced back to the pre-colonial era, when Africans learned various skills and trades through informal and apprenticeship systems, often within their own families and communities. Some of the common skills that people in pre-

colonial Africa acquired include farming, wine tapping, cooking, dancing, herbal medicine, wood carving, bronze casting, cane furniture making, and others (ILO, 2012).

However, the colonial and post-colonial periods disrupted the indigenous entrepreneurial culture among Africans. Colonial powers imposed their education systems on the colonized populations, which were designed to serve their interests and prevent any resistance or uprising. Colonial education was mostly based on vocational training that neglected professions such as engineering, technology, or similar subjects, and prepared Africans mainly for low-skilled jobs as workers and civil servants in colonial companies, industries, ministries, and parastatals (Rodney, 1972). Moreover, colonial education created a division of labour and status between Africans and Europeans, and among different regions and ethnic groups within Africa, which affected the opportunities and rights of African entrepreneurs (Malisa & Missedja, 2019).

(B) The New Perspectives

The African perspective of entrepreneurship and skills acquisition in the 21st century is that they are essential for the continent's transformation, as well as for the empowerment and employment of its youth. Entrepreneurship is now seen as a way of harnessing the intelligence, creativity, knowledge, and technological skills of young Africans to address the challenges and opportunities in society (GEM, 2023). Skills acquisition is seen as a way of enhancing the productivity, competitiveness, and innovation of African youth and graduates, especially in the establishment of micro, small, and medium enterprises that constitute a major part of the private sector. Skill acquisition and apprenticeship, which were seen as the only options for the uneducated youth to survive, have now been embraced even by the highly educated Africans. This is because the definition of skills has gone beyond that of vocational skills of sewing, carpentry, welding, or tailoring to include highly digital skills such as web designing, cloud computing, data and machine learning, artificial intelligence, etc., which form the elements of the 21st-century fourth industrial revolution (Industry 4.0). The 21st-century entrepreneurship skills acquisition perspective of Africa is influenced by the rapid growth of the population, the democratization of the continent, urbanization, advent of the Internet, digitalization, globalization and the introduction of entrepreneurship education into the curriculums of most tertiary institutions (AfDB, 2020).

However, despite the similarities in the European and African perspectives of entrepreneurship and skill acquisition in the 21st century, there still exists a big gap in development between Europe and Africa.

2.5 Empirical Review

Some studies have shed some light on the disparities in entrepreneurship and skill acquisition between genders and geographical locations, exploring various factors that influence these differences.

Abdul (2018) provided an insight through a comparative analysis of the entrepreneurial experiences of Nigerian entrepreneurs and minority entrepreneurs in the United Kingdom. This research found that the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills plays a significant role in the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in both regions. However, there were notable differences in emphasis: Nigerian entrepreneurs highlighted the importance of skills such as creative thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication for fostering SME growth. In contrast, minority entrepreneurs in the UK emphasized the necessity for a balanced skill set across various competencies. Abdul's study underscores the existing disparities in how entrepreneurial skills are acquired and applied between Nigeria and the UK, shedding light on the unique challenges faced by entrepreneurs in different contexts.

In another significant study, Nyakuda, Simba, and Henrrington (2017) explored the gender gap in entrepreneurship within developing economies, specifically focusing on South Africa. Utilizing the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) South Africa databases, which contained a substantial number of usable cases, the authors examined how factors such as risk aversion and entrepreneurial ability corresponded with individual entrepreneurial intentions, particularly across gender lines. Their findings indicated that a notable portion of the gender gap can be attributed to lower levels of knowledge and skills among women. To address this disparity and foster economic development, the researchers recommended that efforts must be made to equip women with entrepreneurial-specific skills vital for successfully engaging in entrepreneurial activities.

Canton (2018) conducted a pivotal study that focused on the disparities in entrepreneurial skills acquisition between African and European universities. The research highlighted that, for graduates to thrive in the competitive job market, they require not only strong academic credentials but also

essential foundational skills. The study aimed to draw comparisons between the entrepreneurial intentions of university students in North Africa, specifically Algeria, and their counterparts in Canada, as well as in France and Belgium. By examining the psychological, sociocultural, and economic factors that influence these intentions, Canton emphasized the critical need for universities to prioritize the development of transversal skills and entrepreneurial competencies. These competencies are essential for equipping graduates to navigate and succeed in a variety of productive enterprises.

Lastly, Olumuyiwa, Kimweli, and Modise (2023) conducted a comprehensive exploration of the factors influencing entrepreneurial skills acquisition among rural university students in Nigeria and South Africa. This study revealed that several key elements play a role in shaping the acquisition of entrepreneurial competencies: robust university support systems, the presence of campus entrepreneurial networks, family background, the availability of mentors, and the design of the entrepreneurship education curriculum. The findings emphasized the necessity for universities to take proactive measures in addressing skill shortages faced by undergraduates, ensuring that students are adequately prepared for entrepreneurial endeavors.

Although these studies have provided important insights into the disparities in entrepreneurship and skill acquisition across different genders and geographical regions, highlighting the critical role of education and support systems in fostering entrepreneurial success, they have overlooked the historical origins of these disparities, especially between Europe and Africa. Additionally, they have not examined the predominant theoretical frameworks that shape entrepreneurial activities in various areas. A deeper understanding of these historical and theoretical contexts could help develop effective strategies for bridging the existing gaps and fostering economic development.

With these empirical insights, the historical and theoretical foundations that contribute to the differences in entrepreneurship and skills acquisition between Africa and Europe, we can uncover the underlying factors that perpetuate these disparities and propose targeted interventions that can effectively address the issues, ultimately promoting equity and growth in both continents.

3. Findings

This study discovered that Europe and Africa have different levels of development, resources, opportunities, and reasons for acquiring skills and venturing into entrepreneurship, which creates a gap between the two continents. While most Africans venture into entrepreneurship out of necessity for survival, most European entrepreneurs are pulled into entrepreneurship by identifying opportunities for innovation and change (Valerio, Parton & Robb, 2014).

It also discovered that necessity-driven entrepreneurs are pushed into entrepreneurship by certain necessities. The push reasons for venturing into entrepreneurship are usually fortuitous experiences that push people into starting a business or struggling for survival. This group of entrepreneurs includes those who inherited family businesses, or who lost or are faced with the possibility of a job loss, women and children who lost their breadwinners, people who lost their property to accident or natural disasters, dissatisfaction with their current positions, desire to make wealth, or lack of career or employment opportunities (Martin Trust Centre, 2022). Unlike European entrepreneurs, most African entrepreneurs are necessity-driven.

On the other hand, the opportunity-driven entrepreneurs are driven by positive and proactive reasons to engage in entrepreneurship, rather than by necessity or lack of alternatives. They are pulled into entrepreneurship and are usually referred to as opportunity-driven entrepreneurs. They are more common in developed countries, such as Europe, where the economic and institutional conditions are more favorable for entrepreneurial activity (Martin Trust Centre, 2022). However, to succeed in our contemporary society, both types of entrepreneurs would need some level of entrepreneurship development and skills acquisition. Entrepreneurship development aims to increase the number and quality of entrepreneurs in the society and to foster a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship by providing entrepreneurs with the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to start and grow their businesses (Stokes, Wilson and Mador, 2020), European countries have more advanced and well-equipped entrepreneurship development centers than African countries, reflecting their higher level of economic development and entrepreneurial culture (Martin Trust Centre, 2022).

The study also discovered that while most European entrepreneurs are balanced in both hard and soft skills, especially in digital and technological skills, which drive innovation, most African entrepreneurs are bereft in both skills, relying mostly on third parties as employees to provide such skills. The low

level of digital and technological innovation in Africa is also responsible for the low level of digital and technological advancement.

4.0 Discussion of Findings

The gap in entrepreneurial development, natural resource availability, and technology between Europe and Africa is a veritable potential for collaboration, where each continent can benefit from the strengths and complement the weaknesses of the other. Therefore, efforts can be made to foster a resource-rich and knowledge-based collaboration between Europe and Africa, especially in the field of entrepreneurship and skills development to unlock the potential of both continents. Such a collaboration, many of which are currently ongoing between the European Union and the African Union, can be based on the following principles:

Mutual benefit: The collaboration should aim to create value for both continents, by leveraging their comparative advantages and addressing their common needs and interests. For example, Europe can offer its advanced technology, expertise, and best practices to Africa, while Africa can offer its abundant natural resources, young population, and emerging markets to Europe.

Partnership: The collaboration should be based on a partnership approach, where both continents respect each other's sovereignty, diversity, and aspirations, and engage in dialogue, consultation, and cooperation. The collaboration should also involve all relevant stakeholders, such as governments, the private sector, civil society, academia, and international organizations.

Innovation: The collaboration should foster innovation, by supporting the development and diffusion of new ideas, products, services, and technologies that can address the specific challenges and opportunities of both continents. Collaboration should also promote a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation, by encouraging creativity, risk-taking, learning, and adaptation.

Skills Development: One of the key areas where the resource-rich and knowledge-based collaboration between Europe and Africa can have a significant impact is in skills development. Skills development is essential for enhancing both continents' human capital and employability, especially the youth, who represent the future workforce and leaders. Skills development can also support the

transition to a green and digital economy, which requires new and emerging skills in areas such as renewable energy, circular economy, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity.

The resource-rich and knowledge-based collaboration between Europe and Africa can also support skills development in the following ways:

Vocational Training: Developing high-quality vocational training programs that equip young people with the skills they need to start and grow successful businesses, especially in the green and digital sectors.

Exchange of Expertise: Facilitating the exchange of knowledge and expertise in entrepreneurship and innovation, by creating platforms and networks for collaboration, mentoring, and peer learning among entrepreneurs, educators, researchers, and innovators from both continents.

Access to Quality Education: Improving access to and quality of education and training by providing scholarships, grants, and equipment to students, scholars, and scientists from Africa, and by supporting the development of curricula, standards, and accreditation systems that are relevant and responsive to the needs of both continents.

Entrepreneurial Ecosystems: Supporting the creation and strengthening of entrepreneurial ecosystems by providing access to finance, markets, technology, infrastructure, and business support services to entrepreneurs and enterprises from both continents and by improving the business environment and regulatory framework that enable and encourage entrepreneurial activity.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Entrepreneurship education and skills development are crucial for driving economic growth and promoting sustainable development in both Europe and Africa. Therefore, it is imperative to formulate and implement policies and programs that create unique opportunities, knowledge-sharing, and mutually beneficial partnerships for cross-border collaboration between the two continents. Most importantly, in this collaboration, Europe should make genuine efforts to promote and develop African technology and productive capacities, by providing opportunities, scholarships, and grants to students, scholars, and scientists from Africa, and by supporting inter-university collaborations and research in entrepreneurship and skills development. However, for this collaboration to work, African

governments must also address the following common challenges to entrepreneurship and skill acquisition, which have negatively affected the potential of African students, entrepreneurs, and enterprises, and the cost and ease of doing business in the continent:

1. **Infrastructures:** Basic infrastructures that support entrepreneurial efforts, such as electricity, good roads, potable water, business incubators, etc., are not readily available or reliable in many parts of Africa, which hampers the productivity, efficiency, and innovation of entrepreneurs and enterprises.
2. **Education:** Adequate and effective entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurship development, and skill acquisition curricula should be introduced into secondary and tertiary educational systems, with the provision of supportive equipment and infrastructure. These will increase the African human development index, enhance the entrepreneurial potential, and increase the economic development of the continent.
3. **Funding:** More funding institutions, such as banks, microfinance, venture capital, and angel investors, should be established by African governments and private entities, to assist entrepreneurs and would-be entrepreneurs to access funds for starting and growing their businesses, especially in the green and digital sectors.
4. **Security:** The provision of adequate security for lives and property will increase the confidence of would-be entrepreneurs, investors, and small and medium business owners, and reduce the risks and costs of doing business in the continent.
5. **Policy:** Policies supporting entrepreneurship and skills acquisition should be enacted with the political will for implementation.
6. **Corruption:** Most well-meaning policies and schemes on entrepreneurship and skills acquisition in Africa have been made ineffective through the corrupt practices of the officers charged with the implementation of such policies. African governments must make genuine efforts to fight corruption for the continent's survival, growth, and development.

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