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ENTERTAINMENT EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper centred on the role of entertainment education (EE) as a tool for community empowerment and development in Nigeria. The paper explored the transformative potential of EE in fostering socio-economic growth, literacy, health awareness, political participation, and cultural preservation within Nigerian communities. It traced the historical evolution of EE in Nigeria, highlighting its increasing relevance in modern educational and developmental initiatives. The study identified major challenges hampering effective EE implementation, including limited funding, cultural sensitivity issues, inadequate infrastructure, shortage of skilled professionals, political and regulatory barriers, and audience engagement difficulties among others. To address the challenges, the paper proposed

strategic interventions such as promoting inclusive content creation, multimedia integration, strengthening collaborations among artists, adult education facilitators, and policymakers, embedding life skills into EE content, increasing government support, enhancing teacher training, and revising curricula. Furthermore, the paper suggested establishing community-based EE centres, integrating EE into all educational levels, encouraging localized content, setting up rural media platforms, and involving youths in programme design and implementation. It emphasized the need for supportive policies and sustained public-private partnerships to harness EE's full potential. The paper therefore affirmed that EE is a powerful instrument for empowering individuals, promoting inclusive community development, and building a culturally vibrant, socially conscious, and economically resilient Nigerian society.

Keywords: Community Empowerment; Cultural Preservation; Entertainment Education; Entertainment Industry; Public-Private Partnerships; Socio-Economic Development

Introduction

Entertainment education (EE) has emerged as a powerful tool for promoting social change, awareness, and community development. It is a communication strategy that uses entertaining content such as drama, music, films, radio, television, storytelling, and social media among others to educate the audience and promote positive social change. EE combines storytelling, drama, music, film, and other media to deliver educational content in engaging ways (Frank & Falzone, 2021; Akinwale & Onuoha, 2022). EE is especially effective in communities with literacy barriers or limited access to formal education, offering relatable platforms for empowerment (Eden et al., 2024). As a strategic communication approach, EE fosters reflection, dialogue, and action, influencing attitudes and behaviours for social good (Lutkenhaus et al., 2020; Alabi & Ogunleye, 2021). EE promotes behavioural change within the Nigerian community. The edutainment series, "MTV Shuga Naija" addresses issues like HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, and gender-based violence. A randomized controlled trial with nearly 5,000 young adults in Southern Nigeria showed that viewers had increased HIV knowledge, were more likely to get tested, and engaged in safer sexual practices, with women showing lower chlamydia infection rates (Banerjee et al., 2017; Ernest-Samuel, 2021). Similarly, the radio drama "Ruwan Dare", airing since 2011, promotes family planning and women's health, leading to increased contraceptive use and reduced fertility intentions (Awuzie, 2025).

EE continues to address social and ethical issues in Nigeria through various creative platforms. The Nigeria Integrity Film Awards (Homevida), for instance, has produced over 33 short films and trained more than 700 filmmakers to promote integrity and ethical values using Nollywood's storytelling techniques (Nigeria Integrity Film Awards, 2023). At Makurdi International Secondary School, a skit titled "Yahoo Trip" addressed internet scams and the importance of parental supervision, sparking meaningful discussions on responsible internet use. Similarly, in 2021, a pilot game jam engaged youths in designing video games that fostered empathy and social cohesion across ethnic divides (Schrier et al., 2021). These initiatives underscore the diverse and impactful applications of EE in contemporary Nigerian society.

In addition to modern media forms, traditional cultural expressions in Nigeria also serve as powerful tools of EE. Cultural dances, often showcased during events such as coronations, new yam festivals, and funerals of notable individuals, communicate intent and cultural identity, reflecting the geographical, religious, and historical heritage of various communities (Nwaru & Abakporo, 2024). Indigenous dances such as the Igede and Ikorodo Dances in Orba Town of Udenu Local Government Area, the Echo Dance in Eha-Ndiagu Community of Nsukka Local Government Area, as well as Egedege Dance by Theresa Onuorah, Atilogwu, and Odabara Dances are all rich vehicles for transmitting indigenous knowledge. Likewise, folklore, characterized by storytelling and communal gatherings, continues to play a significant educational role. Together, these traditional and contemporary EE initiatives promote societal values and foster positive behavioural change (Emakunu & Obire, 2020).

EE fosters social cohesion and community engagement by uniting individuals to address shared challenges. Initiatives like the Education and Youth Empowerment programme in Northwestern Nigeria promote inclusive education and strengthen community bonds (United Nations International Children's Education Fund [UNICEF], 2024). EE also empowers marginalized groups; for example, Ascend Studios supports women and youth through mentorship and skills training

thereby advancing community development (U.S. Agency for International Development [USAID], 2024). Therefore, EE plays a significant role in community empowerment and development.

Historical Evolution of Entertainment Education in Nigeria

Historically, entertainment and education were closely linked in Nigerian indigenous societies. Folktales, proverbs, and oral literature were used by elders to teach morals and values (Edosomwan & Peterson, 2016), while traditional dances, music, and songs served to preserve history and reinforce social norms (Abdulai et al., 2023). Masquerades and dramatic performances played a vital role in sustaining spiritual beliefs and clarifying societal roles (Asigbo, 2021). With the advent of Western education, missionaries adapted these traditional forms, employing drama and hymns to convey Christian teachings. Consequently, school and church performances became early forms of structured EE in Nigeria (zu Selhausen, 2019; Chirinos-Espin, 2021).

Building on this foundation, the early post-independence era (1960s–1970s) witnessed a transformation of EE through the expansion of modern mass media. Radio Nigeria and the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) introduced widely acclaimed educative serials such as “Village Headmaster”, “Cockcrow at Dawn”, “New Masquerade”, and “Mirror in the Sun”, which blended entertainment with moral, civic, and health education (Balogun, 2013; Obot, 2023). Radio also became a tool for promoting literacy and civic engagement through structured public enlightenment programmes (Sanusi et al., 2021). In Enugu State, the formalization of EE continued through radio and stage drama, as institutions such as the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) and Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) trained theatre professionals who effectively embedded social messages in their creative productions (Okoye, 2013).

During the 1980s–1990s, EE gained formal recognition as a development tool through institutionalization and international partnerships. Soap operas like “Behind the Clouds” and “Checkmate” addressed issues such as HIV/AIDS, family planning, and corruption (Mohammed, 2025). NGOs and agencies like UNICEF, UNFPA, and USAID supported EE projects on

reproductive health and education (Lewis, 2023; UNICEF, 2024). Indigenous languages like Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and Pidgin were used to broaden reach. Organizations such as Society for Family Health (SFH) and BBC Media Action partnered with community theatre groups to deliver impactful EE interventions (BBC Media Action, 2018; Society for Family Health [SFH], 2020). UNICEF's "Know Your Status" campaign used live performances across Enugu to promote HIV testing and reduce stigma (UNICEF, 2021).

The emergence of Nollywood in the 1990s–2000s created new opportunities for EE, with films tackling issues such as domestic violence, child abuse, trafficking, and political corruption (Evbierhoma, 2021; Nwaokolo, 2024). Nollywood's wide reach across Africa made it a powerful medium for social messaging. In the digital era (2010–present), EE expanded to platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and podcasts, using humour and satire for social commentary (Jaiyeola, 2025; Udugba & Alli, 2025). Campaigns like "Shuga Naija", supported by MTV and NGOs, educate youth on sexual health (Ernest-Samuel, 2021). Interactive tools like WhatsApp, Facebook, and online radio now engage audiences on health, education, and civic issues (Brown, 2022; Shagbaor et al., 2023). The Enugu State Broadcasting Service (ESBS) also contributed through programmes like "Radio Drama for Rural Health Awareness", which aired in English and Igbo, using humour and relatable content to educate on HIV/AIDS, sanitation, and family planning (Udeze, 2010).

In recent years, the rise of digital technology has significantly transformed the landscape of EE in Enugu State and across Nigeria. This transformation has enabled local filmmakers, many of whom received their training from institutions within Enugu State, to produce films that address pressing social issues such as domestic violence, human trafficking, and corruption (Nwosu, 2012). These impactful films are frequently screened in cinemas, churches, and at community events, fostering dialogue and awareness among diverse audiences. As a result, EE in Nigeria has evolved from its roots in oral traditions to embrace modern digital platforms, becoming a vital tool for health promotion, civic education, and inclusive community development (Ezeokoli & Okenwa, 2016).

Entertainment Education and Community Empowerment

Community empowerment is the process of enabling people to gain skills, knowledge, and confidence to improve their lives and influence decisions affecting their well-being. According to Obetta and Oreh (2017), community empowerment is the process through which individuals and groups gain the capacity and agency to influence decisions that impact their lives and environment. It involves inclusive participation in planning and implementing development initiatives, aiming to build skills, knowledge, and resilience (Rija, 2023). EE contributes significantly by promoting social inclusion, justice, and sustainable development (Boston et al., 2024). For example, the Community and Social Development Project (CSDP) adopted EE strategies to enhance grassroots participation in decision-making (Eze & Nnaji, 2021). Thus, EE empowers communities by promoting economic growth, literacy, social unity and health, political awareness, and cultural values.

Economic contributions: EE has significantly contributed to Nigeria's economic growth, especially through the entertainment industry comprising Nollywood, music, and comedy. Nollywood, one of the largest global film industries by volume, contributes billions of naira to the GDP and offers vast employment opportunities (Ezekiel, 2021; Igbinadolor, 2022). Similarly, Nigeria's music industry, led by Afrobeat, attracts foreign investments and boosts cultural tourism (Ojo, 2022; Vanguard News, 2024). The comedy sector, fueled by digital platforms like YouTube and TikTok, creates economic opportunities through monetized content, sponsorships, and performances (Bleier et al., 2024), reinforcing EE's role in economic development. EE fosters entrepreneurship by equipping individuals with creative skills for self-employment in industries like filmmaking, music, and digital content creation (Adebayo, 2023). Inspired by EE, many Nigerian youths and adults have entered creative careers. Musicians such as Burna Boy, Wizkid, Davido, and Phyno exemplify this trend (Centrala Live, 2024; Joshi, 2025). EE also boosts related sectors like fashion, event planning, and hospitality (Frank & Falzone, 2021; Grady et al., 2021). The entertainment industry contributes ₦154 billion to the GDP and creates 4.2 million jobs, thereby helping reduce reliance on oil (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2021), and promoting sustainable community development (Bankole, 2025).

Literacy contributions: EE has significantly impacted education in Nigeria by enhancing literacy, civic awareness, and digital learning. Campaigns like "Teach Her" and rural radio programmes have made education accessible and engaging (Abdulrahman & Okoro, 2017). Radio shows such as "Mooko Mooka" have improved adult literacy (Sanusi et al., 2021). The TV series "Super Story" effectively promotes moral values, with 71.4% of viewers maintaining interest due to its compelling narratives (Nasir et al., 2022). Additionally, digital tools and educational games have gained popularity, with 70% of students using online platforms and a 20% improvement in test scores (The Guardian, 2023).

Social and health contributions: EE plays a crucial role in health awareness and community empowerment by combining education with culturally relevant content. Nnamele et al. (2024) highlighted its effectiveness in addressing vaccine hesitancy among Nigerian university students. EE fosters behavioural change through engaging formats (Ojebode & Adegbola, 2018). Programmes like "MTV Shuga" raise HIV/AIDS and sexual health awareness among youth (Okonkwo & Adeyemi, 2020; Olawale & Ajibade, 2020). Radio shows such as Kauna Rural Radio engage rural communities on agriculture, women's rights, and health (Nwankwo & Okoro, 2019). EE thus promotes healthy lifestyles and boosts participation in community development and policy advocacy. EE promotes gender equality by challenging discriminatory norms through movies, talk shows, and skits (Seluman et al., 2024). Nollywood films address critical issues such as domestic violence, forced marriages, and women's rights, thereby stimulating public discourse and promoting positive changes in attitudes and behaviour (Eze & Musa, 2018).

In addition, EE promotes national unity and social cohesion by fostering cultural awareness and tolerance across Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups (Crooke et al., 2024). Through music, cultural dances, film, and drama, EE builds bridges between communities, encouraging peaceful coexistence. Television programmes showcase inter-ethnic friendships, model positive social interactions, and foster unity (Olawale, 2022). EE also influences public perception, sparks dialogue on societal issues and inspires change by integrating social messages into entertainment (Grady et al., 2021). Notably,

a game jam initiative aimed at enhancing empathy among youths promoted social cohesion by encouraging perspective-taking through interactive entertainment (Schrier et al., 2021). Together, these efforts demonstrate the power of EE as a unifying force capable of shaping a more inclusive, empathetic, and harmonious Nigerian society.

Political contributions: EE plays a vital role in shaping political discourse and promoting civic engagement in Nigeria. Through film, music, theatre, and social media, EE raises awareness about democracy, transparency, and political accountability (Vorwerk & Nilsson, 2023). It educates the public on voting, governance, and electoral malpractice (Andersen et al., 2020; Cole & Piotrowski, 2021). Nollywood films often depict political struggles and corruption, encouraging civic participation (Ezekiel, 2021). In the same vein, Ogbonna and Ihentuge (2024) observed that during the 2023 elections, new media skits enhanced political awareness. Similarly, political-themed TV and radio programmes help demystify governance and empower citizens to engage in democratic processes. Music has long been a powerful tool for political education and activism in Nigeria (Vanguard News, 2023). Artists like Fela Kuti (Afrobeat man), Andy Shurman (The Kinky Reggae man), and Ras Kimono (The Rub-a-Dub Master) used music to challenge oppression and advocate for justice (Sebastine, 2017; Onwuka, 2023). Contemporary musicians like Burna Boy and Falz continue this legacy, addressing governance and social issues (Olumide, 2020).

EE has enhanced political engagement through social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, where political discussions now thrive (Boulianne et al., 2024; Durotoye et al., 2025). Online skits, satire, and digital storytelling have made complex political issues more accessible (Bossetta, 2018; Saaida, 2023), encouraging especially youth participation in debates and reforms. The #EndSARS movement showcased EE's power in mobilizing political action (Agbashi et al., 2021). EE, through documentaries, investigative journalism, and political shows, empowers citizens to demand good governance (Oyinloye & Omotayo, 2023; Oghogho & Osazuwa, 2024), strengthening democratic values and nation-building efforts (Idowu & Odeyemi, 2021; Omar & Ondimu, 2024).

Cultural contributions: EE serves as a vehicle for cultural preservation and transformation, thereby playing a significant role in shaping attitudes, behaviours, and practices necessary for the holistic development of communities. EE significantly supports community development by preserving cultural heritage through storytelling, music, dance, and film (Omoera & Umunnah, 2020). Nollywood and other art forms promote indigenous languages and traditions, fostering cultural pride among youth (Arinze-UmobiSomtoo & Chiweta-Oduah, 2020; Onwuka, 2023), while digital media revitalizes folklore and oral storytelling (Ojo, 2022). EE contributes to the globalization of Nigerian culture, with genres like Afrobeats and Igbo Highlife showcasing indigenous languages and narratives (Robert & Besong, 2016; Osinigwe, 2022). Festivals such as the Lagos International Film Festival foster cultural exchange and tourism (Adebayo, 2021). EE counters cultural erosion by integrating indigenous content into mainstream media, preserving identity and promoting community cohesion (Chirinos-Espin, 2021; Vorwerk & Nilsson, 2023). Thus, EE strengthens social bonds and sustains traditions (Jati, 2023; Banda et al., 2024). Also, it enhances national identity, making it vital for the growth and development of Nigerian communities (Borum Chattoo, 2021). From the foregoing, it infers that EE is a dynamic tool for fostering community empowerment and development as it improves knowledge dissemination, attitude transformation, and mobilization of community-based initiatives.

Challenges Affecting the Implementation of Entertainment Education Programmes

Implementing EE programmes in Nigeria faces several challenges despite their significant potentials for promoting community development. According to Yahaya and Olajide (2012), the challenges include limited funding, cultural sensitivity, inadequate availability of skilled professionals, inadequate provision of infrastructure, political and regulatory challenges, and audience engagement and retention challenges among others.

Limited funding: In communities where EE holds great potential to drive transformation, the consequences of underfunding can be significant. Inadequate funding remains a major challenge for

EE programmes in Nigeria, as substantial investments are needed for production and outreach (Borum Chattoo, 2021). Limited local financial support forces reliance on international donors, affecting sustainability and relevance (Adebayo & Durojaiye, 2019; Ojo, 2022). Therefore, understanding how limited funding affects EE programmes is essential for stakeholders, policymakers, and development practitioners seeking to leverage entertainment as a tool for sustainable community development.

Problem of cultural sensitivity: Cultural sensitivity is a crucial consideration in the design and implementation of entertainment education programmes. EE programmes aim to educate and influence behaviour by embedding developmental messages within culturally relevant entertainment formats. However, when such initiatives fail to respect or align with the cultural beliefs, values, traditions, and norms of target communities, they often encounter resistance, misunderstanding, or outright rejection. Nigeria's ethnic diversity poses challenges for EE programme design, as content may not resonate universally or might offend cultural sensibilities (Omobowale & Ijaiya, 2020). EE initiatives must be culturally inclusive, since what works in one region may not suit another (Ibrahim, 2019). Therefore, addressing the problem of cultural sensitivity is essential to ensure that EE programmes resonate with their audience, foster trust, and achieve the desired developmental outcomes in a respectful and inclusive manner.

Inadequate availability of skilled professionals: The successful implementation of EE programmes relies heavily on the availability of skilled professionals who possess both creative talent and a deep understanding of educational and developmental goals. These professionals include scriptwriters, producers, media experts, educators, behavioural change communicators, and cultural consultants who work collaboratively to produce content that is engaging, informative, and culturally appropriate. However, the shortage of such skilled professionals in both entertainment and education hinders EE programme success in Nigeria (Ezekiel & Deebom, 2022). Many entertainers lack educational training, while educators struggle with entertainment integration (Babalola, 2018). Limited collaboration between sectors further affects the development of effective EE initiatives (Ajibola & Alabi, 2021). Thus, the inadequate availability of skilled professionals affects the technical execution

of EE programmes and hinders their potential to drive meaningful social and behavioural changes within communities. Addressing this gap is vital for maximizing the role of EE as a transformative tool for community development.

Inadequate provision of infrastructure: Infrastructure forms the backbone of effective EE programme delivery. From electricity and internet connectivity to broadcasting facilities, recording studios, and community viewing centres, adequate infrastructure is essential for the creation, dissemination, and accessibility of edutainment content. However, inadequate infrastructure limits EE programme implementation in Nigeria, especially in rural areas that lack internet, television, and radio access (Umeh, 2025; Sobowale, 2025). When basic infrastructure is inadequate or unreliable (such as frequent power outages, poor road networks, limited access to digital devices, or the absence of communication channels), EE programmes face serious limitations in production, outreach, and community participation. Additionally, the absence of proper frameworks for monitoring and evaluation hampers the assessment and improvement of EE initiatives (Olumide, 2020; Ezekiel, 2021). Addressing the infrastructural deficits is therefore critical to enhancing the effectiveness, equity, and sustainability of EE programmes, particularly in rural areas.

Political and regulatory challenges: Political and regulatory environments play a significant role in shaping the landscape for EE programmes. These programmes often operate within systems governed by policies, regulations, and political interests. Unfortunately, political interference, restrictive media laws, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and censorship can pose serious challenges to the effective implementation of such initiatives. Nigeria's inconsistent, politically influenced media regulation often obstructs the flow of educational content (Olimma & Nzan-Ayang, 2023). These political and regulatory challenges hinder the free flow of educational messages and discourage innovation, weaken community engagement, and compromise the overall impact of entertainment education as a tool for social transformation. For instance, censorship and restrictive policies limit EE programmes' ability to address sensitive issues like corruption and human rights violations (Ajibola & Alabi, 2021; Ojo, 2022). Addressing these barriers requires strong advocacy, stakeholder collaboration, and the

creation of enabling policy environments that support freedom of expression and community development through media and entertainment.

Audience engagement and retention challenges: Audience engagement and retention are critical factors in the success of EE programmes. Capturing and maintaining the interest of the target audience can be challenging, especially in the present day's fast-paced media environment where people are bombarded with a multitude of content choices. If audiences are not sufficiently engaged or do not consistently follow the programme, the intended educational messages may fail to make the desired impact. Despite its wide reach, the Nigerian entertainment industry struggles to engage audiences educationally, especially in rural areas where EE may seem irrelevant (Kolapo, 2020). The focus on commercially viable content limits attention to educational themes (Babalola, 2018), requiring investment, cultural sensitivity, and professional capacity building. Therefore, overcoming audience engagement and retention challenges is essential for maximizing the reach and effectiveness of EE. This requires a strategic blend of creativity, cultural sensitivity, participatory content development, and continuous feedback from the target audience to ensure that programmes remain relevant, appealing, and impactful.

Strategies for Improving Entertainment Education

The following strategies can be used to improve EE: content creation participation, multimedia and technology integration, collaboration with artists and educators, evaluation mechanisms, integration of life skills and social issues, increasing funding and government support, enhancing teacher training and professional development, revising and updating curricula, fostering public-private partnerships, and improving infrastructure and learning resources (Bryant et al., 2023).

Content creation participation: Content creation participation plays a transformative role in enhancing the relevance, effectiveness, and cultural resonance of such programmes. The participation includes target audiences, community members, or stakeholders that are actively involved in the development of entertainment education materials. According to Independent Newspaper (2024),

content creation participation involves individuals and communities actively generating educational content through digital and traditional media. Rather than relying solely on external experts or producers, participatory content creation ensures that the voices, experiences, and values of the intended beneficiaries are reflected in the storyline, characters, language, and messages. This inclusive approach strengthens the authenticity and relatability of the content, making it more engaging and impactful. Social media platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram have empowered Nigerian creators, such as Mark Angel Comedy, to blend entertainment and education (Arowolo, 2024). User-generated educational content fosters ownership, cultural relevance, and engagement through question and answer (Q&A) sessions, comment interactions, and co-creation (Nwangwu, 2017; Banjo, 2024). Therefore, involving communities in content creation improves the quality and relevance of entertainment education and enhances its ability to inspire real behavioural and social change at the community level.

Multimedia and technology integration: The integration of multimedia and technology has significantly transformed the landscape of EE, enhancing its reach, appeal, and effectiveness in delivering developmental messages. This multi-sensory approach caters to diverse learning preferences and sustains audience interest and improves message retention. Multimedia and technology integration involve using tools like videos, podcasts, animations, and mobile apps to enhance EE effectiveness (Banjo, 2024). In Nigeria, technological advancements have made learning more engaging and accessible (Edusko, 2024). Platforms such as “uLesson” and “Edmodo” improve digital learning experiences, while studies show students respond better to multimedia educational content than traditional methods (Arowolo, 2024). Therefore, incorporating multimedia and technology into EE enriches the learning experience, broadens outreach, and strengthens the impact of developmental communication. As digital access continues to expand, leveraging these tools is essential for creating innovative, scalable, and culturally relevant education that empowers communities.

Evaluation mechanisms: Evaluation mechanisms are essential tools for improving the design, implementation, and impact of EE programmes. According to Arowolo (2024), establishing evaluation mechanisms is crucial for measuring EE programme impact and improvement. These mechanisms involve systematic assessment of a programme's content, delivery methods, audience reach, and outcomes to determine what works, what doesn't, and why. Through formative, process, and summative evaluations, stakeholders can gather evidence-based insights that guide decision-making, refine strategies, and ensure that educational messages effectively reach and influence the intended audiences. Audience feedback through social media, surveys, and focus groups helps content creators to refine messages. Organizations use standardized monitoring and evaluation frameworks to assess effectiveness (Anabaraonye et al., 2023). For instance, the impact of radio dramas like "Story Story" is measured through listener ratings and knowledge tests (Banjo, 2024). By incorporating robust evaluation systems, programme developers can identify gaps in message comprehension, cultural alignment, audience engagement, and behavioural outcomes. Therefore, evaluation measures the success of EE and drives its continuous improvement by enhancing learning outcomes, deepening audience connection, and maximizing its potential as a catalyst for positive social change.

Integration of life skills and social issues: EE is a strategic communication approach that embeds educational messages within engaging stories, music, drama, or other entertainment formats to inform, influence, and inspire behavioral and social change. The integration of life skills and social issues into EE has significantly enhanced its effectiveness. Life skills such as critical thinking, communication, empathy, decision-making, and self-awareness, equip individuals with the capacity to respond positively to everyday challenges. Life skills education, integrated into EE, develops problem-solving, emotional intelligence, and decision-making abilities (Independent Newspaper, 2024; Anabaraonye et al., 2023). Programmes like "Shuga Naija" promote informed decisions on sexual health (Banjo, 2024). EE also advocates social change by promoting health awareness through initiatives like "Talk Health Naija" (Edusko, 2024) and challenging gender norms via Nollywood

films like "Dry" (Banjo, 2024). Furthermore, EE fosters digital literacy, climate awareness, and active citizenship, preparing Nigerians for contemporary societal challenges (Arowolo, 2024). Therefore, integration makes the content more relatable and emotionally resonant and encourages reflection, dialogue, and adoption of positive behaviours among target audiences. This holistic approach strengthens the impact of EE as a medium for advocacy, empowerment, and sustainable development.

Increasing funding and government support: EE is a vital tool for social change that combines the appeal of entertainment with educational messages to influence knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. This means that increasing financial investment and policy backing from government institutions will significantly enhance the quality, reach, and impact of EE programmes. According to Adeniran and Obiakor (2022), allocating more resources, such as government funding, private investment, and international aid, enhances education infrastructure. Initiatives like Investment in Digital and Creative Enterprises (iDICE) and Creative Leap Acceleration Programme (CLAP) support creative industries (Nkwocha, 2023; News Agency of Nigeria, 2023), while the government's plan to raise the education budget aligns with the "Renewed Hope" agenda (National Universities Commission [NUC], 2025). Also, the CultuRise Initiative supports Nigeria's creative sectors through infrastructure like creative cities (Federal Ministry of Art, Culture, Tourism and the Creative Economy [FMACCE], 2024). Recognizing entertainment's economic potential, the government plans to position Nigeria as a global arts hub (Vanguard News, 2023), demonstrating strong commitment to funding, cultural preservation, job creation, and boosting EE. Furthermore, government's support can provide an enabling environment through policy frameworks, public broadcasting partnerships, and integration into national education and health campaigns. This combination legitimizes EE efforts and ensures that they are aligned with national development goals.

Enhancing teacher training and professional development: EE thrives on the creative and strategic delivery of educational content through engaging formats such as drama, music, film, and storytelling. As such, teachers and educators play a crucial role in interpreting, facilitating, and reinforcing the messages embedded in EE content, especially in formal and non-formal learning

settings. Enhancing teacher training and professional development is therefore essential to maximizing the impact of EE. Regular training equips educators with current industry knowledge (Ojo, 2024). As a result, the Federal Government's Technical Committee on Teachers' Training focuses on curriculum reform (Anyanwu, 2024). Also, the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and GetBundi GetBundi Education Technology partnership aims to enhance digital literacy among future teachers, preparing them for modern classrooms (Vanguard News, 2024). In Lagos State, edutainment is promoted to enhance learning through music, drama, and innovative strategies (Edema, 2021). In Anambra State, Actors Guild launched a filmmaking programme in secondary schools to nurture creative talents (Elekwa, 2023). In Kano State, Ubongo International, an NGO, conducted a digital edutainment workshop (Solace Base, 2022). Also, in Plateau State, Star Education and Leadership Initiative (SELI) trained 100 teachers on play-based learning, emphasizing interactive teaching and child-friendly communication (Audu, 2023). When teachers are well-trained in EE strategies, media literacy, and learner-centred approaches, they become more effective in using entertainment-based tools to communicate critical social, health, and developmental messages.

In a related development, National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), and development partners trained 600 lecturers on ICT and e-platform use to blend traditional and digital teaching methods (NCCE, 2023). Teacher training is strengthened through government initiatives, state-level programmes, NGO support, and technological advancements. The training is vital for integrating EE and enhancing learning effectiveness. Continuous professional development equips teachers and educators with the skills to adapt EE content to local contexts, encourage learner participation, and promote critical thinking. By empowering educators with the knowledge and skills to integrate EE into their teaching practice, EE becomes more interactive, meaningful, and transformative for learners and communities alike.

Revising and updating curricula: Revising and updating curricula is a fundamental step towards enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of EE. As societies evolve and new challenges emerge

such as digital transformation, climate change, health crises, and shifting cultural dynamics, there is a growing need for educational content that reflects current realities and engages learners meaningfully. By incorporating updated knowledge, contemporary social issues, and innovative teaching methods into the curriculum, EE becomes more dynamic, relatable, and impactful. For instance, aligning education with industry standards enhances learners' competitiveness (Makinde & Nnebe (2025). In addition, Okerinde (2024) noted that from January 2025, Nigeria's new curriculum hinges on skills acquisition through 15 trade subjects. The subjects include digital literacy, information technology, building and construction, plumbing, tiling, hairstyling, make-up, GSM repairs, satellite and CCTV installation, and garment making. It means that the new curriculum integrates the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) approach to foster creativity and technical skills that are vital for EE. A new curriculum integrates storytelling, media, and creative arts as tools for learning, while embedding life skills, values, and civic responsibilities that resonate with learners' everyday experiences. This alignment strengthens learner engagement and ensures that EE contributes to holistic education and social development. Ongoing curriculum reforms emphasize skills acquisition and STEAM integration, building a strong foundation for EE, youth empowerment, and national development.

Fostering public-private partnerships: Fostering public-private partnerships (PPPs) is a strategic approach to advancing the scope and effectiveness of EE. Therefore, EE thrives on creativity, technology, and mass outreach. By collaborating with private media companies, production houses, NGOs, and technology firms, governments and educational institutions can tap into innovative platforms, diverse talents, and broader distribution networks to enhance the quality and reach of EE content. Perry (2025) noted that collaborations between educational institutions and industry stakeholders provide learners with practical experiences, thereby enhancing job readiness. In Lagos State, the government promotes PPPs to revitalize the theatre industry and integrate cultural events into education (Sessou, 2024). Lawmakers advocate deepening PPPs to tackle educational challenges (Onyedinefu, 2025). In Abuja, PPPs significantly aid school resource management (Ahmad & Alam,

2025). These partnerships strengthen EE by addressing infrastructural gaps, enriching curricula, and offering practical exposure. They also lead to the co-creation of culturally relevant and socially impactful programmes, improved funding opportunities, and the integration of cutting-edge media tools. Moreover, such collaborations encourage shared responsibility for social development and ensure that EE messages are entertaining, and strategically designed to inform, educate, and inspire change. Strategic PPPs are essential for building a vibrant creative economy and equipping youth with skills for the entertainment industry. Through effective PPPs, EE can achieve greater sustainability, creativity, and influence in promoting positive behavioural and societal transformation.

Improving infrastructure and learning resources: Improving infrastructure and learning resources is vital to the successful implementation of EE in both formal and non-formal learning environments. EE relies heavily on audio-visual materials, digital media, and interactive tools to deliver educational content in engaging and impactful ways. Without adequate infrastructure such as electricity, internet access, multimedia equipment, and conducive learning spaces, EE cannot reach its full potential. Investing in modern facilities and digital infrastructure is vital for effective EE. Well-developed physical and technological resources enhance teaching and learning (Ohiare-Udebu & Chukwuemeka, 2024). Institutions need modern studios, editing suites, and performance spaces for practical training. Lagos State's introduction of edutainment improves teaching and learning by making education more engaging (The Guardian, 2023), while platforms like the Nigeria Learning Passport expand access to quality education as over 15,000 curriculum-aligned learning materials are provided (The Guardian, 2025). The availability of relevant learning resources, including scripts, videos, workbooks, and culturally appropriate materials, enhances the teaching and learning experience. Upgraded infrastructure and well-developed resources ensure that EE content is accessible, effectively delivered, and tailored to diverse learning needs. Similarly, Hassan and Fatile (2022) stated that PPPs are effective in upgrading infrastructure in Ogun State's model schools. The PPPs are also crucial for developing facilities that support Nigeria's creative industries. According to Vanguard News (2024), training educators to integrate technology is crucial as the effectiveness of

EE depends on quality instruction and modern infrastructure. Also, developing industry-aligned, practical curricula ensures that relevant skills are acquired. By improving facilities, integrating edutainment, fostering public-private partnerships, and investing in educator training, Nigeria can build a strong EE sector for cultural and economic growth. The implication is that investing in infrastructure and resources strengthens the foundation for a more inclusive, interactive, and transformative EE system.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the role of EE as a powerful tool for community empowerment and development in Nigeria. It highlighted the historical evolution of EE, its contributions to promoting economic development, literacy, social cohesion, health awareness, political participation, and cultural preservation within communities. Despite this potential, challenges such as limited funding, cultural sensitivities, inadequate infrastructure, and scarcity of skilled professionals among others continue to hamper the effective implementation of EE programmes. Addressing these challenges requires strategic interventions, including fostering inclusive content creation, integrating multimedia technologies, strengthening collaborations between artists, educators, and policymakers, and ensuring robust evaluation mechanisms. Furthermore, embedding life skills and social issues into EE content, increasing government funding and support, enhancing teacher training, revising curricula to meet industry needs, and investing in modern infrastructure are crucial steps towards advancing EE initiatives.

The paper therefore emphasized the need to integrate EE methodologies into formal and non-formal learning systems to foster critical thinking, creativity, and civic engagement among learners. There is need to formulate supportive policies that recognize EE as a vital instrument for national development, allocate adequate resources to EE initiatives, and encourage public-private partnerships that can sustainably drive innovation and growth in the sector.

Ultimately, EE holds immense potential to transform Nigerian communities by empowering individuals, fostering inclusive development, and building a culturally vibrant, socially aware, and economically resilient society. A coordinated effort between government, educational institutions, development partners, and the creative industry is essential to fully harness the transformative power of EE for national progress.

Suggestions for Way Forward

The following suggestions were made to improve EE for effective community empowerment and development in Nigeria:

1. Dedicated centres for EE training and production in communities should be created. The created centres should be equipped with studios, performance spaces, and digital laboratories to nurture creative talents from the grassroots.
2. EE should be introduced as a structured subject across all educational levels, including adult education programmes. The creative arts aspects of EE should be blended with literacy, civic education, health, and entrepreneurship training.
3. Strong partnerships should be forged between schools, community organizations, media houses, production companies, and artists to offer mentorship, internships, and real-world project experiences to learners.
4. Creation of entertainment content that reflects indigenous languages, traditions, and social realities should be promoted. It helps to make education relatable and enhance cultural identity.
5. Community radio, TV stations, and digital platforms focused on educational entertainment, health promotion, civic awareness, and local storytelling should be set up in rural areas to disseminate EE programmes.
6. Community members, especially youths, should be involved in designing and implementing EE programmes to ensure ownership, relevance, and sustained engagement.

7. Private investors, donor agencies, and development partners should be encouraged to invest in EE through grants, scholarships, media campaigns, and infrastructure development. Their investment in EE would be manifested in training of adult education facilitators, community mobilizers, media practitioners, and content creators in modern EE strategies such as digital storytelling, cultural dances, participatory education, and audience engagement techniques.

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