



The Palgrave Handbook of African Entrepreneurship

Edited by

Oluwaseun Kolade · David Rae

Demola Obembe

Kassa Woldesenbet Beta

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“From a development policy perspective, this book is unique among recent literature on the subject in some important respects. It discusses not only the challenges such as weak and unstable institutional environment that prevent many African economies from unleashing entrepreneurial drive, but more importantly, it draws on critical empirical and case studies across multiple countries, sub-regions, and economic agents (women-entrepreneurs and the role of diaspora finance for entrepreneurship) within the African continent. Such critical multifaced discussion on the entrepreneurial landscape has been lacking in the African context. Taken together, the connections made between entrepreneurship theory and methodological discussions, and the breadth of critical issues addressed with sound empirical evidence are at the heart of the major contributions of this book. This has resulted in a great study on one of the most important discussions for Africa’s sustainable development – entrepreneurship – to date.”

—Prof Eugene Bempong, *Chief Research Scientist, African Development Bank*

“Throughout the book’s 24 chapters, the authors offer insightful analyses of a large gamut of challenges on the continent, as African countries struggle to overcome the crippling effects of free and unfair global trade and the hegemony of foreign extractive industries at one level, and the multiple ramifications of internal violent conflicts and malgovernance at another level. The authors go beyond the empirical scrutiny of problems and obstacles by methodically challenging the prevailing narrative that often presents Africa under a cloud of doom and gloom...The book harmoniously combines wide-frame analyses of entrepreneurship across the continent and informative case studies that put the analyses in context. The case studies involve countries as diverse as Nigeria, Kenya, Libya, South Africa, Zambia, and Ethiopia, and the issue areas examined include SME (small and medium enterprises) and foreign ventures; emergence and success of nascent entrepreneurship at the national level; the role of financial remittances from Africans of the Diaspora in fostering an entrepreneurial ecosystem on the continent; entrepreneurship education; the rise of young and female entrepreneurs; and so on.”

—Professor Mohamed S. Camara, *Chair, Department of African Studies, Howard University*

“The Palgrave Handbook Of African Entrepreneurship is a welcome addition to the expanding literature on how Africa can turn its entrepreneurship focus to sustainable growth. With empirical insights and case studies from countries across the continent, this book illuminates peculiarities and practical insights that can inform policy and practice. A major issue is a one-size-fits-all approach to entrepreneurship issues across the continent, this book differs in this regard. Its thematic sections are comprehensive enough that its relevance across the continent

is not in doubt. Entrepreneurs, governments and international agencies should find it beneficial as we all seek to transform Africa economically.”

—Wale Fatade, *Commissioning Editor, The Conversation, Africa*

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Editors

Oluwaseun Kolade
Department of Management &
Entrepreneurship
De Montfort University
Leicester, UK

Demola Obembe
De Montfort University
Leicester, UK

David Rae
Department of Management &
Entrepreneurship
De Montfort University
Leicester, UK

Kassa Woldesenbet Beta
De Montfort University
Leicester, UK

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Foreword

I am delighted to write this Foreword to a timely collection by Seun Kolade, David Rae, Demola Obembe and Kassa Woldesenbet Beta. Africa is dear to me. It is a rich continent with gold, copper and diamonds, and at first, I did not understand how its people were so far from rich.

I first worked on the continent in 1984, when a Canadian firm sent me to Zaire, the “new” name of the formerly Belgian Congo. I recall once we had an expert flown from Brussels to Kinshasa because a machine was not working. He explained that the reason was that nobody had plugged it in. Perhaps what impressed me most there was how everything was delayed and the reason was always explained as being “counter-time.”

I later became an academic and contributed my ethnographic findings in Namibia¹, Mozambique² and Lesotho³ to the *Journal of Small-Management*. A comparative study of Ghana and Togo⁴ later appeared in the *Journal of African Business*. Africa was not much more developed than was the case in 1984. The flagship of entrepreneurship was micro-business. I wrote, “Both

¹ Léo-Paul Dana, “An Analysis of Strategic Intervention Policy in Namibia,” *Journal of Small Business Management*, 31, 1993, pp. 90–95.

² Léo-Paul Dana, “Small Business in Mozambique After the War,” *Journal of Small Business Management* 34 (4), October 1996, pp. 67–71.

³ Léo-Paul Dana, “Voluntarily Socialist Culture and Small Business in the Kingdom of Lesotho,” *Journal of Small Business Management* 35 (4), October 1997, pp. 83–87.

⁴ Léo-Paul Dana, “Promoting SMEs in Africa: Some Insights from An Experiment in Ghana and Togo,” *Journal of African Business* (The official publication of the International Academy of African Business and Development) 8 (2), October 2007, pp. 151–174.

Ghana and Togo have a multitude of micro-businesses, one-man operations, such as peddlers selling crocodile skulls and dead parrots...such self-employed individuals call themselves entrepreneurs. A. Joseph is proud to distribute his business card...He is engineer of voodoo forces at Stand N° 7B...Others have no address: a man from Mali selling camel-hides in the street; peddlers from Ghana and Nigeria roaming around Togo; a boy from Togo selling his services to tourists in Ghana. Indigenous people try to sell watches at an intersection; while they haggle over prices they are complaining that the Lebanese control the textile industry and gold trade, preventing new entrants. Housewives sell snacks through the windows of a bus...A self-ordained priest and witch doctor boards the bus to advertise and sell his medicine. The passengers respond, 'Amen.' A woman walks off the street, into a restaurant (with which she is not affiliated) and takes a client's order. From the plate she carries on her head, she makes a sandwich for the client and leaves before the establishment's waiter arrives. At the local market, cans of sardines are being offered for sale, although they are labelled 'DONATED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN' and 'NOT FOR SALE'" (Dana, 2007, p. 163). I recall an opportunist on the Ghana side of the border with Togo. He would arrange for a public bus to be delayed and arrive after the border closed, in order to boost the occupancy rate at his hotel.

Entrepreneurship in Africa today is no longer focused on arbitrage often facilitated by corruption. Africa today has a new class of high-flying entrepreneurs. Among them is Bilikiss Adebisi Abiola the award-winning entrepreneur who established a recycling business in Lagos, creating jobs for Nigerians in a cleaner Nigeria. Given the limited infrastructure in Nigeria, traffic is extremely heavy; recognising the value of circumventing traffic, Chinedu Azodoh and Adetayo Bamiduro cofounded a motorbike ride-hailing and delivery service Metro Africa Xpress. Their phone and web-based platform is similar to Uber, helping consumers are contributing to the infrastructure.

In Kenya, Diana Esther Wangari, MD, cofounded Checkups Medical Centre. This firm introduced medical teleconsultation, allowing patients to seek advice from doctors remotely. Also in Kenya, Jacob Maina Rugano established AfricarTrack International Ltd., allowing employers to monitor the driving and speeding of their employees and also helping the police find stolen vehicles.

In Sierra Leone, Nthabiseng Mosia, Eric Silverman and Alexandre Tourre established Easy Solar (known abroad as Azimuth), providing homes with electricity. These entrepreneurs help poorer consumers with a rent-to-own option, allowing for the possibility to pay off a solar panel at one's own pace.

We are witnessing a new Africa, with a new generation of entrepreneurs introducing not only product and service innovations, but also a new mindset. It is an appropriate time indeed for *The Palgrave Handbook of African Entrepreneurship*, and I salute the editors.

Leo-Paul Dana
Professor
Dalhousie University
Halifax, Canada

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Notes on Contributors

Dr. Promise Opute Abdullah is a freelance academic and management consultant with GPROM Academic and Management Solutions, Paderborn, Germany. He also supports organisations with technical advice in several management streams. His research interest includes inter-functional integration, relationship management, cross cultural management, consumer behaviour, entrepreneurship and SMEs, strategic management accounting, etc.

Oluwaseun David Adepoju is a Global Challenges Faculty at the African Leadership University, Kigali Rwanda. Before joining the University, he was the founder and the manager of TECHmIT Africa, a Technology and Innovation Ecosystem Advocacy Organisation in Nigeria. He is currently a Ph.D. researcher in Creative Technologies at the COLAB, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand.

Mojolaoluwa O. Alabi is a doctoral researcher at the Institute of Youth and Community Research, School of Education and Social Sciences, University of the West of Scotland, Paisley, United Kingdom. His research interests include vocational education and training, higher education, informal sector entrepreneurship, educational ethnography, and self-directed learning.

Dr. Yahaya Alhassan is a Principal Lecturer in Finance and Strategic Management at University of Sunderland in London. He has over 20 years' teaching and management experience in the higher education sector. He holds

a Ph.D. in Business Management from Anglia Ruskin University and is a Senior Fellow of HEA.

Ayotola Aremu is a Professor of Educational Technology at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. She has researched extensively in innovative strategies, tools and technology. She is engaged in facilitating online pedagogy and technology skills amongst lecturers at the University. She is the Director of the office of International Programs.

Abiodun Egbetokun has more than a decade of experience designing, conducting or managing surveys. He holds a Ph.D. in Economics and is currently Assistant Director, Research at the National Centre for Technology Management (NACETEM), Nigeria. His research focuses on the emergence, evolution and economic impact of entrepreneurship and innovation. He tweets @egbetokun and blogs at www.egbetokun.com/blogs.

Abdulmonem Ahmed Esaudi is a Ph.D. Researcher in School of Business and Creative Industries at the University of the West of Scotland. He obtained an MBA from Cardiff Metropolitan University. He got B.B.A from Tripoli University/Libya. He is a member at CAREED (Centre for African Research on Enterprise and Economic Development). His interests in Entrepreneurship & SMEs.

Dr. Konjit Hailu Gudeta is a Researcher at Maastricht University at the Faculty of Arts and Social Studies and an Assistant Professor at Addis Ababa University. Her research interests include work-life interface, boundary management, decent work and wellbeing and women entrepreneurship.

Atsede Tesfaye Hailemariam is an assistant professor at School of Commerce, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia. She holds a Ph.D. from Tilburg University, The Netherlands. Her research focuses on women entrepreneurship development and policy in Ethiopia, such as women's entrepreneurial motivations, access to finance and their interest and orientation towards business growth.

Javed G. Hussain is a Professor of Entrepreneurial Finance at Birmingham City University. He has extensively published in refereed journal articles and has been nominated for prestigious national and international awards. Currently, he is working with colleagues from UK, Ghana and Pakistan on research linking entrepreneurial finance entrepreneurship and microfinance.

Dr. Masud Ibrahim is currently a senior-lecturer in accounting and associate member of CFCI-research centre at Coventry University. Dr Ibrahim holds a Ph.D. in Oil and Gas Accounting from Robert Gordon University.

His research explores issues such as sustainability, smart cities, governance, accountability, climate-risk disclosures, and corporate reporting.

Dr. Ovo Imoedemhe is currently Associate Professor at Dar Al Hekma University Jeddah Saudi Arabia, where she is a part-time lecturer in Property Law and Intellectual Property Law. Ovo obtained her Ph.D. in Law from the University of Leicester in 2015 and has occupied different academic positions within and outside the UK.

Bridget N. Irene is an Assistant Professor in Enterprise and Entrepreneurship at the International Center for Transformational Entrepreneurship, Coventry University. Her scholarly interests focus on the culturally instantiated facets of the debate on gender entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial competencies, family businesses, entrepreneurship education, and the informal economy.

Prof. Saliba James is a Professor of Asian and International Studies. He was Head of the Department of History, University of Maiduguri, Nigeria, where he coordinated research on Boko Haram Insurgency, in collaboration with the Nigerian Army. His other publications cover international migration and foreign policy.

Dr. Oluwaseun Kolade is an Associate Professor in Strategic Management at De Montfort University, where he leads the African Entrepreneurship Cluster. His research covers the broad areas of transformative entrepreneuring, digital transformation, refugee entrepreneurship, and SMEs strategies in turbulent environments. He has chaired and presented his research at various international conferences.

Dr. Brigitte Kroon is assistant professor Human Resource Studies at Tilburg University. She publishes on HRM and decent work in various contexts. She is program director of the Bachelor HRS—People Management and a member of the European Labour Authority.

Tracy Luseno is currently a Ph.D. researcher and Associate Lecturer in Business and Management at De Montfort University. She is researching refugee entrepreneurship in Africa and the ecosystems in which refugee entrepreneurs operate. Prior to her Ph.D. research, Tracy worked in business analyst roles both in the UK and Kenya.

Dr. Oluwasoye P. Mafimisebi is an Associate Professor/Reader in Management, Entrepreneurship, Risk & Resilience at Leicester Castle Business School, De Montfort University. He holds Ph.D. in Strategy, Enterprise and

Innovation and he is a Certified Business & Management Educator (CMBE). He is on the Editorial Board of Journal of Management & Organisation.

William K. Murithi is a Lecturer in Entrepreneurship at the Leicester Castle Business School, De Montfort University, UK. His Ph.D. investigates strategic behaviours of family and non-family businesses in developing economies. His research interests include entrepreneurship, strategic management, family business, regional development, and socio-cultural and institutional context within developing economies.

Michael Mustafa is an Associate Professor in Entrepreneurial Management at the University of Nottingham, where he obtained a Ph.D. in Applied Psychology. His current research focuses on family firms, transnational entrepreneurship and corporate entrepreneurship. He is the editor of Entrepreneurship Research Journal, Journal of Employment Studies as well as Associate Editor of Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies.

Natasha Katuta Mwila has a Ph.D. in business management and is a senior lecturer at Leicester Castle Business School. Natasha is a case method enthusiast with research interests in entrepreneurship and women's work. She is a fellow of the Higher Education Academy and a Chartered Management and Business Educator.

Frank Nyame-Asiamah is Senior Lecturer in Business Management at Leicester Castle Business School, De Montfort University. He obtained a Ph.D. in Management Studies from Brunel University, London. His research interests include organisational learning, information systems, and entrepreneurship. Frank has published in top ranking journals such as Social Science and Medicine, and Technological Forecasting and Social Change.

Demola Obembe is Associate Professor of Strategic Management and Head of Department for Management and Entrepreneurship at De Montfort University, UK. His research interests are in the areas of; strategy process and practice, entrepreneurship and SMEs, knowledge and innovation management, and social capital.

Olapeju Ogunmokun is a Ph.D. researcher and a part-time lecturer in the department of Management and Entrepreneurship at De Montfort University. Her research interests focus on finance, risk and entrepreneurship and her doctoral research investigates the influence of risk perception on access to debt financing of small enterprises.

A. I. Ogunsade is an academic with a wealth of knowledge in business development and a considerable experience of working with corporate stakeholders. He leverages on industry and research experience to advance excellent teaching and innovative classroom practice. His research interests are around institutional entrepreneurship, small business innovation, entrepreneurship education and business start-ups.

Godwin Okafor is a Senior Lecturer in Economics at De Montfort University, UK. He has a Ph.D. from Bournemouth University, UK. Godwin's research interests are in the areas of International Economics and Economic Development. Godwin's research interests have generated outputs in top quality journals.

Samson O. Oladejo is a doctoral researcher at the Institute of Youth and Community Research at the University of the West of Scotland, UK. His Ph.D. research focuses on discourses of risk that obfuscate educational access in the context of Universal Basic Education for young people in urban-poor areas of Lagos, Nigeria.

Deji Olagboye is Associate Lecturer at De Montfort University. He is also undertaking doctoral research in Entrepreneurship in the Department of Management and Entrepreneurship. Deji currently teaches courses on entrepreneurship and enterprise, contemporary business issues, and global contemporary business issues.

Kehinde Adefiola Olanipekun holds a Ph.D degree in Technology Management from African Institute of Science and Policy Innovation (AISPI), Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile- Ife, Nigeria. She works with the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, University of Ibadan. She is a seasoned entrepreneur both in teaching and practice.

Rotimi Olaniyan has a D.B.A. from Nottingham Business School, where he is Senior Lecturer in Marketing and course leader for the Full time M.B.A. His research interests lie in Entrepreneurial Marketing, and Services Systems. He has had 30 years of industry experience in four countries, prior to joining academia.

Romanus Osabohien is a Lecturer at Department of Economics and Development Studies, and a Research Fellow at Centre for Economic Policy and Development Research (CEPDeR), Covenant University, Nigeria. His research focuses on food security and social protection where he has published numerous peer-reviewed papers in rated journals.

Evans Osabuohien is a Professor of Economics and Head, Department of Economics & Development Studies, Covenant University, Nigeria. He has executed research projects, published three books and over 135 papers. He has been recognised as youngest HOD (2016), Youngest Professor (2017) and One of the 6 Youngest Professors in Nigeria.

Dr. Adebowale Owoseni is a Senior Lecturer in Information Systems at De Montfort University. Prior to joining the academia, he worked as a software developer and solution architect in the financial services sector for 13 years. He researches and teaches on computing for small business, digital transformation and ICT for development.

Pascale Peters is a Full Professor in Strategic Human Resource Management (HRM) at Nyenrode Business Universiteit, Netherlands. Her research interests relate to Sustainable HRM, flexible working, new ways of working, work-life balance and boundary management.

Professor David Rae is a Professor of Enterprise and Director of the Centre for Enterprise & Innovation at Leicester Castle Business School, De Montfort University. He is an innovator and researcher in entrepreneurial learning, leadership, and management who has held senior academic roles at six universities. He won the European Entrepreneurship Education Award in 2020.

Dr. Ibrahim Rufai is a Senior Lecturer in Business and Management and Programme Lead, Senior Leadership Management Degree Apprenticeship at De Montfort University, UK. His research interests are in the areas of SMEs' Performance Outcomes from ICTs' Deployment, Anticorruption Initiatives in Business Management and Strategic Management in SMEs.

Dr. Samuel Salia is a Senior Lecturer in Accounting and Finance at De Montfort University. He holds a Ph.D. in Finance from Birmingham City University. Dr Salia's research interest is multidisciplinary with specific focus on diaspora finance, entrepreneurial finance and financial market development.

Louise Scholes is a Reader in Entrepreneurship at Loughborough University London and the Director of the Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. Her main research interests focus on family firms, and management buyouts and their consequences. She is on the editorial board of the International Small Business Journals and has also published on many top-ranking journals.

Veronica Scuotto is a Full Professor at the University of Turin (Italy). She previously worked at the University of the West of Scotland and the Pôle Universitaire Léonard de Vinci in Paris. She has published several articles in international peer-reviewed journals (3* and 4* ABS list). She is an international guest speaker and conference organiser.

Dr. Robert Smith is on special research leave from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, where he has previously worked on humanitarian strategic planning, the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus, and the World Humanitarian Summit. He has published on social capital in humanitarian crises, land reform and other topics.

Robert Smith is an Independent Scholar and Consultant based in Aberdeen, Scotland and was formerly a Professor of Enterprise and Innovation at the University of the West of Scotland and a Reader in Entrepreneurship at Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen. He has 200 publications in international peer-reviewed journals and book chapters.

Patience Tunji-Olayeni is Senior Lecturer at Department of Building Technology and the Chair, Regional Centre of Expertise Ogun (RCE Ogun), Covenant University, a Centre that serves as a learning space for sustainable development with focus on financial and digital literacy of SMEs and youths in the region.

Marloes van Engen is Associate Professor at the Center of Strategy, Organisation and Leadership at Nyenrode Business Universiteit, and also works at the Department of Human Resource Studies, Tilburg University, The Netherlands. Her research interest in understanding and advancing Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in Organisations, and in sustainability in Work and Home.

Jean T. Wells a licensed CPA and attorney, is an Associate Professor at Howard University School of Business where she teaches tax, business law and accounting courses. Ms. Wells earned a Bachelor's in Business Administration (B.B.A.) Accounting from Howard University and a Juris Doctorate from George Washington University.

Wheeler R. Winstead, Ph.D., M.B.A. is the Assistant Director for the Center for African Studies and faculty in the Department of African Studies, Howard University. Winstead is a Fulbright Specialist and Lusofone cultural scholar. He received his Ph.D. in African Studies from Howard. His area of interest is African Entrepreneurship.

Kassa Woldesenbet Beta, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor in Research and Deputy Director of the Centre for Enterprise and Innovation at the Leicester Castle Business School, De Montfort University. His research interests cut across various themes including dynamic capabilities, family business, inclusive entrepreneurship, institutions, SMEs, and transition economies.

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1

Introduction

**Oluwaseun Kolade, David Rae, Demola Obembe,
and Kassa Woldesenbet Beta**

For a long time, the dominant narrative about the African continent was one associated with wars, poverty and underdevelopment. In the years immediately following independence from colonialism, a wave of nationalist fervour swept through Sub-Saharan Africa. The new African governments embarked on big infrastructural projects and agrarian reforms aimed at linking remote rural areas with big urban centres and driving up agricultural production. Farm settlements were launched and smallholder rural farmers were organised into cooperatives. The agrarian reform, supported by newly established agricultural research institutes and extension agencies, sought to harness comparative advantage in the agricultural sector to shore up export and

O. Kolade (✉) · D. Rae

Department of Management & Entrepreneurship, De Montfort University,
Leicester, UK

e-mail: seun.kolade@dmu.ac.uk

D. Rae

e-mail: david.rae@dmu.ac.uk

D. Obembe · K. Woldesenbet Beta

De Montfort University, Leicester, UK

e-mail: dobembe@dmu.ac.uk

K. Woldesenbet Beta

e-mail: kwoldesenbet@dmu.ac.uk

generate revenue that could be invested in public services and other sectors of the economy.

The modest gains of the agrarian reform, however, were limited, partly because of the unstable international market and volatility in commodity prices. In addition, the subsequent discovery of crude oil and the increasing dominance of the extractive sector as the principal source of foreign exchange in many countries contributed to reduced investment and attention on the agricultural sector. This precipitated the emergence of rent-seeking, resource conflicts and political upheavals across the continent. The continent also became caught up in the cold war, thereby exacerbating already volatile political conditions and institutional environments.

In the intervening years, bilateral organisations and multilateral agencies such as the IMF and World Bank spearheaded a range of free-market economic reforms on the continent, supporting strategies such as structural adjustment programmes (SAP), privatisation schemes and, latterly, poverty reduction strategy papers. These interventions have had mixed impacts, and many stakeholders and scholars have argued that the top-down approach of international aid regime has exacerbated, rather than mitigated, underdevelopment and inequality on the continent (Geo-JaJa & Mangum, 2001; Riddell, 1992).

Since the turn of the millennium, many stakeholders, including African scholars and policymakers, have called for a paradigm shift in the model of international engagement with African countries. Specifically, there have been growing calls for a departure from a dependency-inducing, paternalistic aid model to a new era of partnership underpinned by the agency of African peoples. This new approach, it is argued, will be defined by ambitious, innovative entrepreneurs driving a new era of shared prosperity and inclusive development on the continent. However, while the vision of a new Africa led by ambitious entrepreneurs is compelling, questions and challenges remain on how these grand ideas can be operationalised in countries characterised by institutional volatility and political instability, cultural contexts with limited opportunities for women, and where entrepreneurs struggle to access funding.

Given the foregoing, this book brings together empirical insights and case studies from various countries across the sub-regions to illuminate contextual peculiarities and common theoretical and practical insights that can inform policy and practice. These are explored within the framework of the following thematic sections: institutional environments and entrepreneurial ecosystems; entrepreneurship education; technology entrepreneurship and

innovation ecosystems; entrepreneurship in conflict zones; gender and diversity issues in African entrepreneurship; and methodological considerations for African entrepreneurship research.

The first part recognises that weak and unstable institutional environments pose a major obstacle to entrepreneurship in African countries. The business environment in African countries is typically characterised by institutional voids, volatile market environment, derelict infrastructure and political instability, among others. Turbulent environments are generally characterised by high levels of inter-period change that creates uncertainty and unpredictability, sharp discontinuities in supply and demand, and low barriers to entry and exit (Calantone et al., 2003). Political instability is defined as “the propensity of change in the executive, either by constitutional or unconstitutional means” (Alesina & Perotti, 1996, p. 3). In a sense, entrepreneurs thrive in some forms of instability (Lechler et al., 2012). For example, profit opportunities are often associated with market disequilibrium, and the ability of entrepreneurs to identify and act on these opportunities to “equilibrate” the market (Holcombe, 2003). However, other forms of instability tend to have net negative impacts, precipitating more difficulties than they generate opportunities (Shumetie & Watabaji, 2019).

Furthermore, recent studies have also found that differences in the types and qualities of physical infrastructures, such as transport, energy, broadband, etc., account for differences in regional and national levels of entrepreneurial activity and productivity. While start-up activities were found to be positively associated with good infrastructure in general, some types of infrastructures, such as broadband, were found to have more significant impact (Audretsch et al., 2015). Many African countries face significant challenges with infrastructure, and these have had significant impacts especially on nascent entrepreneurs grappling with the liabilities of newness and smallness. Nevertheless, there are also country-specific peculiarities, unique sectoral challenges and regional differences in infrastructural development, and how these influence business activities on the continent (Agbemabiese et al., 2012; Aworemi, 2013; Igwe et al., 2013). Thus, the chapters in Part I seeks to explore these institutional challenges, while exploring new models that can be used to help budding entrepreneurs overcome the challenges associated with doing business in turbulent environments. The six chapters in this part deal with the links between the institutional environment and entrepreneurship in Africa. Chapter 1 by Mustafa and Scholes, using the dynamic capabilities perspective, examines the key capabilities that are critical to the survival of Zambian SME international ventures post North Africa market entry. Their chapter highlights the importance of sensing and

seizing capabilities to the post-entry performance and survival of Zambian SME international ventures. In Chapter 2, Ogunsade, Obembe and Woldeesenbet Beta examines the impact of formal and informal institutional contexts on the emergence and success of nascent entrepreneurship in the context of Nigeria. The chapter provides judicious insights into the links between the entrepreneurial governance and public policy and a recursive relationship between the various dimensions of institutions (normative, regulative, and cultural-cognitive) and entrepreneurship-enabling ecosystem for fostering venture creation. This is followed by Chapter 3 where Murithi and Woldesenbet Beta analyse the mutual influence of institutional environment and family business in Africa. Drawing on institutional theory, institutional voids, social capital and family business literatures, the authors develop a conceptual model and advance several theoretically and contextually driven propositions to guide future research on the bi-directional relationship (positive or negative) between the entrepreneurial activities of family business and the institutional environment.

In Chapter 4, Olagboye and colleagues explore enterprise categorisations and the implications for survival and growth. They propose the establishment of a new Nano Enterprise classification to promote legitimisation and institutionalisation of hitherto informal enterprises, and consequently enable their survival and growth within the Sub-Saharan region. This resonates with Olaniyan's contribution in Chapter 5, which adopts a case approach to examine perceived debilitating impacts of institutional environments on community enterprises in a national context and proposes a diagnostic model for fostering favour interactions between the institutions and target entrepreneurial communities. Then, in Chapter 6, Salia and colleagues further examine the role of financial remittance from Africans in diaspora in facilitating entrepreneurial ecosystem development. They argue that diaspora will increase remittances in response to good entrepreneurship framework conditions created by home countries, to boost enterprise development, and equally for the need to engage international finance and governance organisations in facilitating enabling institutional environments and identifying funding sources.

Part II follows on from this with its focus on entrepreneurship education. This is an area that has attracted increasing attention from scholars and practitioners within the last decade. It offers new paths for enquiries and opportunities to develop new research agendas in a continent where increasing population growth presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities for shaping the future of job opportunities and inclusive growth through entrepreneurial training. Entrepreneurship has a crucial role in

generating future employment, prosperity and providing tradeable goods and vital services in a rapidly modernising and digitising context (Dana et al., 2018). Youth unemployment and underemployment with undesirable social, economic and political consequences is the alternative which must be addressed and prevented through multiple approaches (British Council, 2018). There is increasing demand, even hunger for entrepreneurship from young people, and growing engagement and innovation from actors in technology, education, business and community activism.

The part explores the roles of entrepreneurship education and learning at a Pan-African level. While there have been studies at national and sub-national scope, and at different levels of education, these have tended to be of limited applicability to the scale of the challenges which are faced. New approaches are required and are being developed, such as action-oriented “bootcamps” for venture creation, enabling open access to education and learning for entrepreneurship (Rae, 2019), and innovation in terms of the curriculum, learning processes and effective support within the existing business ecosystems for start-ups. Thus, in Chapter 7, Mwila explores the gaps and opportunities for embedding entrepreneurship education in secondary school curricula in South Africa. This is against the backdrop of disproportionate focus on university undergraduates and the need to provide entrepreneurial training opportunities for those “left behind”. Oladejo and Mafimisebi extend this conversation in Chapter 8, where they use a “risk society” framework to propose some new ideas to provide entrepreneurship education at basic education level in Nigeria. This approach, they argued, will promote inclusive entrepreneurship. It will help “bridge the gaps and challenges of risk society and connect them to sustainable enterprise solutions”. In Chapter 9, Alabi and colleagues take a new look at university-level entrepreneurship education. Using a community of practice approach, they discuss the importance of entrepreneurship training as a driver of increased competencies in, and uptake of digital technologies, and higher rates of successful new venture creation. Finally, in Chapter 10, Kolade and co-authors propose a new model of co-produced entrepreneurship education, based on the triple helix framework of university, industry and government collaboration. Using the empirical context of the Nigerian higher education sector and the single case study of a leading Nigerian university, the authors argued that the co-creation model can more effectively pool and integrate the best that all stakeholders can offer towards the design and delivery of entrepreneurship education programmes, not only in Nigeria but across the continent.