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Special FEATURES

KASU MARCHING TO EXCELLENCE: MOTIVATION AND UTILISING EMERGENT TECHNOLOGIES

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KASU HOSTS 3RD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION

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Kaduna State University (KASU) has held the third International Conference of its Entrepreneurship Research and Development Centre (ERDC), bringing together scholars, policymakers, entrepreneurs, government representatives and other stakeholders to explore strategies for advancing entrepreneurship and innovation in an increasingly disruptive global environment.

The two-day conference, held from August 19 to 20, was themed “Entrepreneurship and Innovation: Transforming Mindset in an Age of Disruption.” It focused on the need for individuals, businesses and institutions to adapt to rapid technological developments, artificial intelligence, economic uncertainty and changing global markets.

Declaring the conference open on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Abdullahi Ibrahim Musa, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Innovation and Strategic Development, Professor Helen Andow, described the theme as timely, noting that the pace of technological and economic change required a fundamental rethink of conventional approaches to entrepreneurship.

She urged participants to challenge existing assumptions, collaborate across sectors and ensure that ideas generated at the conference were translated into practical solutions capable of addressing real-world challenges.

Earlier, the Chairman of the Local Organising Committee, Dr. Isuwa Dauda, said the conference was designed to provide a platform for the exchange of ideas and the development of practical responses to contemporary entrepreneurship challenges.

He encouraged participants to embrace innovation, continuous learning and adaptability as essential attributes for navigating an increasingly competitive and unpredictable business environment.

The Chairman of the occasion and Managing Director of the Kaduna State Enterprise Development Agency (KADEDA), Iliya Anthony Timbuark, called for a shift from a culture of job seeking to one centred on job creation and value generation.

Timbuark highlighted KADEDA's interventions in capacity building, financial inclusion, business development, market linkages and support for young entrepreneurs, stressing the need for stronger collaboration among government, universities, industry and the private sector.

He particularly advocated greater emphasis on student entrepreneurship, urging universities to produce not only graduates seeking employment but also problem-solvers, innovators, founders and employers.

Representing the Kaduna State Commissioner for Education, Dr. Suwaiba Shehu, Executive Secretary, Kaduna State Secondary Schools Education Board (KADSSEB), highlighted the state government's investments in vocational education, skills development, technology and innovation.
She disclosed that skills acquisition centres established in Soba, Rigachikun and Samaru Kataf were designed to equip young people with practical and market-relevant skills.
According to her, entrepreneurship, creativity, digital literacy and problem-solving should be introduced early in the education system, stressing that students in classrooms today would become the entrepreneurs and innovators of tomorrow.

NIGERIA NEEDS MORE VALUE CREATION, NOT MERELY MORE ENTREPRENEURS

Presenting the lead paper, Professor Nasiru Abdullahi argued that Nigeria's fundamental challenge was not a shortage of entrepreneurs but a deficit in value creation and productivity.
He observed that although a significant proportion of Nigerians were self-employed, many businesses remained informal, small-scale and primarily focused on survival rather than innovation, productivity and sustainable growth.
Professor Abdullahi noted that technology had lowered the cost and barriers to starting businesses and accessing global markets. However, he cautioned that the same technology had intensified competition by removing barriers that previously offered some protection to local businesses.

He therefore urged Nigerian entrepreneurs to improve productivity, quality, innovation and competitiveness if they were to survive and grow in the emerging global economy.
He also warned that artificial intelligence and automation would continue to transform the workplace, calling on universities to rethink entrepreneurship education and equip students with practical, adaptable and future-oriented skills.

CAPITAL ALONE CANNOT GUARANTEE SUCCESS

Representing Dr. Jonathan Ajah, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of LAJ Academy, UK, Ezra Watarani urged Nigerian youths to embrace entrepreneurship, innovation and technology as tools for creating opportunities and improving their livelihoods.
He stressed that access to capital alone could not guarantee entrepreneurial success, emphasising the importance of discipline, professionalism, skills and character.

Ajah encouraged young people to explore low-capital opportunities while continuously developing their skills and businesses. He also challenged universities to move beyond producing graduates primarily for employment and focus on developing innovators, problem-solvers and job creators.

INNOVATION BEGINS WITH MINDSET

The second keynote speaker, Dr. Abdullahi Idris, Director-General of the Arewa Cohesion for Peace Initiative, said innovation begins with mindset.
He called for a change in how individuals perceive risk, failure and opportunities, advocating an entrepreneurship education system that encourages experimentation, continuous learning, resilience and adaptability.

Dr. Idris also urged government to create an enabling environment for entrepreneurs while calling on the private sector to invest more in innovation and strengthen partnerships with educational institutions.

AGRICULTURE, AI OFFER OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

The third keynote speaker, Mr. Chandu Dhulipudi, Managing Director of Feredo Agro & Bio Farms Ltd. (Naturell Dairy), described entrepreneurship as the ability to identify problems, develop solutions and create value.

He identified agriculture, technology and artificial intelligence as areas offering significant opportunities for young Nigerians, urging students to view challenges such as food insecurity, unemployment and infrastructure deficits as opportunities for innovation and enterprise.
Dhulipudi advised aspiring entrepreneurs to start small, test their ideas, learn from failure and build credibility before seeking major investment.
He further identified integrity, trust, continuous learning and adaptability as critical attributes for building sustainable businesses.

FROM DISRUPTION TO TRANSFORMATION

Closing the conference, the Secretary of the Local Organising Committee, Mr. Reya Francis, said the event had demonstrated that entrepreneurship was no longer limited to starting a business but had become a way of life in an era characterised by rapid change and disruption.
He noted that while disruption was unavoidable, transformation remained a choice, urging participants to view emerging challenges as opportunities for innovation, enterprise and job creation.
Francis commended KASU management, students, speakers, organisers and members of the planning committee for their contributions to the success of the conference.

He urged participants to move beyond discussions and translate the ideas generated at the conference into practical solutions, innovative ventures and sustainable enterprises capable of contributing to economic development.

BEYOND MENTORSHIP: KASU CHALLENGES COHORT II MENTEES TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OF THEIR GROWTH

By: Mujahid Umar Balarabe

For many young professionals, mentorship is often imagined as a shortcut a connection to someone experienced enough to provide answers, open doors and perhaps make the difficult journey to career success a little easier.

But for Cohort II mentees of the Kaduna State University (KASU) Centre for Mentorship and Career Development (CMCD), the message at their onboarding session was considerably different: mentorship is not a shortcut. It is a developmental partnership, and its value depends largely on what the mentee does with the opportunity.

That was the central message of the CMCD onboarding session held on 20 August 2026, as the Centre prepared a new cohort of mentees for a structured one-year journey of personal and professional development. The session was designed to help participants understand the programme, clarify expectations, identify available opportunities and, most importantly, cultivate the discipline and initiative required to take ownership of their growth.

MORE THAN ADVICE

The CMCD defines mentorship as a structured and purposeful relationship built around the growth of the mentee. It is intended to provide guidance, support and knowledge-sharing, allowing experienced professionals to share insights that can help younger people navigate their careers.

But the programme draws an important distinction: the ultimate objective is independence, not dependency.

The mentor is not expected to do the work for the mentee. Rather, the mentor provides experience, perspective and guidance while the mentee remains responsible for translating that guidance into action. The relationship is also built on confidentiality, trust and mutual respect.

This philosophy challenges one of the common misconceptions about mentorship — that simply being associated with an accomplished professional is enough to guarantee success.

According to the programme framework, mentorship is not spoon-feeding, a replacement for personal effort, casual advice without follow-through or an automatic shortcut to success. Growth, the presentation emphasises, is earned through sustained effort.

AN INVESTMENT IN YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

The opportunity available to the mentees is significant.

Through the programme, participants gain access to experienced professionals, career guidance and personal development support. They also have opportunities to expand their networks and increase their visibility within the university and the wider professional community.

Importantly, the programme is structured as a fully supported investment in the mentees' future, without personal cost to participants.

The expected benefits extend beyond immediate career advice. The programme identifies better career direction, improved confidence and resilience, a stronger professional identity and exposure to new opportunities as some of the outcomes mentees can gain from effective participation.

A YEAR OF DELIBERATE DEVELOPMENT

Cohort II is not entering an informal networking club. The CMCD has designed the mentorship programme as a one-year structured journey with measurable milestones.

The process begins with pairing mentors and mentees according to shared interests, followed by structured engagement, progress tracking and quarterly formal assessments.

The programme is divided into four quarters.

The first focuses on foundation, matching and goal setting. The second moves into skills development and career guidance. The third introduces practical exposure and project-based learning, while the final quarter focuses on leadership, reflection, final review and certification.

This progression reflects an underlying philosophy: professional development should move from intention to competence and eventually to leadership.

THE MENTEE MUST DO THE WORK

Perhaps the strongest message of the onboarding session was the emphasis on ownership.

Mentees are expected to establish clear personal and professional goals, monitor their progress, ask purposeful questions and apply the feedback they receive. Their development will not be measured simply by what they say they intend to accomplish, but by the evidence of action and progress demonstrated during quarterly evaluations.

This places considerable responsibility on participants.

A productive mentoring session, for example, should not be approached as a passive conversation. Mentees are encouraged to arrive with notes, questions and a clear agenda, honour

appointments, respect their mentors' time, communicate early when unavailable and complete agreed actions.

The programme goes further by treating follow-through as part of professional reputation: what a mentee promises to do should be reflected in what the mentee actually does.

PROFESSIONALISM IS PART OF THE LESSON

The mentorship relationship itself is also presented as an opportunity to learn professional behaviour.

Courtesy, clear communication, appreciation, confidentiality, humility and a growth mindset are identified as essential attributes. Mentees are reminded that interactions with their mentors should be treated as professional engagements rather than casual conversations.

The programme also encourages mentees to ask questions capable of unlocking deeper professional insight: how their mentors developed their careers, which obstacles shaped their journeys, what skills they should strengthen, how to build effective networks and how to navigate workplace challenges.

In that sense, the quality of the questions becomes part of the quality of the mentorship experience.

THE COST OF DISENGAGEMENT

The onboarding session did not present mentorship as an entitlement.

The programme warns that poor engagement can result in missed learning opportunities, reduced professional visibility and weakened confidence. Persistent non-engagement may ultimately lead to removal from the programme, while disengagement can also reduce future opportunities.

The warning is consistent with the programme's broader philosophy: the opportunity is valuable precisely because it requires commitment.

TURNING MENTORSHIP INTO A CAREER ASSET

For the mentees, therefore, the challenge is not simply to attend meetings with mentors. They are encouraged to prepare before each session, take notes, maintain learning journals, ask thoughtful questions, provide progress updates and deliberately build relationships that can extend beyond the duration of the programme.

The final message of the onboarding session captures the philosophy succinctly: participants have signed up, but now they must show up.

The CMCD's call is for mentees to become more intentional, visible, competent and prepared for the next stage of their careers.

Ultimately, the Cohort II mentorship programme presents mentorship not as a gift that guarantees success, but as an opportunity that must be converted into growth through discipline, curiosity and action.

The mentor may provide the map. But the journey still belongs to the mentee.

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