BEYOND POVERTY ALLEVIATION: UNLOCKING WEALTH CREATION THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TVET)

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Abstract

This study examined the strategic integration of entrepreneurship education within Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for unlocking sustainable wealth creation, rather than merely a tool for poverty alleviation. A descriptive survey design was employed, guided by three research objectives and corresponding research questions. The population comprised 52 TVET educators from tertiary institutions in Edo State, all of whom participated in the study. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, validated by three experts in Vocational and Technical Education. Reliability coefficient which yielded 0.87 was established through Cronbach's Alpha. Responses were gathered online via Google Forms and analyzed using mean and standard deviation to address the research questions. Findings revealed that integrating entrepreneurship education into TVET enhances students' capacity for smart investment, equips them with innovative and problem-solving skills, and strengthens their ability to manage resources effectively. However, limited access to startup capital, mismanagement, and inadequate support structures restricts graduates from launching and scaling viable enterprises. The study recommended that structured mentorship initiatives and alumni-driven support networks be institutionalized to provide continuous professional guidance. Additionally, government agencies and financial institutions should expand access to startup capital and enterprise support schemes tailored specifically to TVET graduates with innovative business concepts.

Keywords: Education, TVET, Entrepreneurship, Poverty Alleviation, Wealth creation

Introduction

Education is globally recognized as a strategic instrument for national development, serving without doubt both as a catalyst for social transformation and a mechanism for economic advancement. Across diverse philosophical, sociological, and theoretical frameworks, education has been interpreted as a means of knowledge construction, value formation, socialization, cultural transmission, a vehicle for personal growth, gender equality, social stratification, and empowerment (Ciobanu & Răduț, 2024; Rani, 2024; Saaida, 2023).

Engaging the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains of learning, it facilitates the transmission of knowledge, skills, and values across generations, thereby equipping individuals for meaningful participation in society (Aslaksen, 2023; Mannion, 2018; Amin et al., 2023).

Within this broad framework, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) emerges as a skill-oriented educational model that emphasizes practical competencies and the psychomotor domain of learning. Internationally, TVET has been defined by UNESCO and the International Labour Organization as a lifelong process that integrates general education, technological knowledge, and occupational skills, enabling individuals to contribute productively to economic and social life (Parker & Roumel, in Shahbazi & Ahmady, 2022; Galguera, 2018). In Nigeria, TVET was institutionalized through the 1977 National Policy on Education, with subsequent revisions reaffirming its role in promoting employability, economic development, and self-reliance (Ogur, 2023).

Despite these policy commitments, evidence suggests that TVET has not fully achieved its objectives. Persistent unemployment and underemployment among graduates highlight a gap between training outcomes and labour market realities (Wami, 2024; Korter, 2023). Nigeria's latest official unemployment rate, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), dropped to 4.3% in Q2 2024 under a revised methodology, compared to 27–45% reported in 2020 (Izuaka, 2024; National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2018–2021). This revised measurement designates anyone working at least one hour per week as employed, therefore understating unemployment and labour market vulnerability in Nigeria. These dynamics are compounded by globalization, technological change, and demographic pressures, which intensify socio-economic vulnerabilities (Gogoi, 2023; International Labour Organization (ILO), 2023). In Nigeria, over 91 million people live below the international poverty threshold of $2.15 per day, underscoring the close interrelation between unemployment and poverty; the unhealthy phenomenon of a nation (Korter, 2023; Aderounmu et al., 2021; Hasell, 2022; Jolliffe et al., 2022; Jwasshaka & Fadila, 2020).

In response, successive poverty alleviation programmes such as National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) of 2001 by former President Obasanjo's administration, YOUWIN of 2011 by former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan administration, N-Power of 2016 by former President Muhammadu Buhari administration, and EdoJobs of 2018 by former Governor Godwin Obaseki administration in Edo state amongst others have sought to empower citizens through training, capacity building, and entrepreneurship support (Ugben & Egobueze, 2024; Nwine, 2023; Aghedo et al., 2021; Ozoh et al., 2020; Odalonu & Obani, 2018; Obiwuru, 2019). While these initiatives have provided relief, their impact has often been constrained by limited resources, inadequate institutional support, and insufficient integration with broader educational frameworks (Ugben & Egobueze, 2024; Owhor, 2024). Many beneficiaries resort to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as survival strategies, yet these ventures frequently struggle with sustainability due to gaps in business management, innovation, and scaling capacity (Sigah, 2024). This reality points to the need for a more comprehensive approach that embeds entrepreneurship education within TVET systems.

Entrepreneurship has increasingly been recognized as a driver of socio-economic transformation, enabling individuals to create, manage and expand business ventures, generate employment, and foster innovation (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2021; Diandra & Azmy, 2020; Neumann, 2021). When supported by enabling environments, entrepreneurship contributes not only to personal advancement but also to resilient and diversified economies. Integrating entrepreneurial competencies into TVET, therefore, represents a strategic evolution: shifting the framework from subsistence-oriented poverty alleviation toward wealth creation and long-term economic empowerment (Nuwatuhaire & Ainomugisha, 2020; Akpanobong & Ononokpono, 2018; Enderle, 2021; Bacq et al., 2023). Wealth creation, defined here as the accumulation of financial, social, intellectual, and natural capital, provides a more sustainable pathway for addressing poverty and unemployment in emerging economies (Rong, 2024; Gilles, 2018).

Previous studies have highlighted the potential of entrepreneurship-focused TVET to enhance employability and foster innovation (Martini, 2024; Ahmad & Jamaludin, 2023; Ohagwu et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2022; Onipede et al., 2020; Agwi & Ibe, 2018). However, limited research has systematically examined how such integration can be operationalized within Nigeria’s educational landscape for wealth creation. This gap is particularly significant given the country’s demographic pressures, high youth unemployment, poverty, and evolving industry demands.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has long been recognized as an effective instrument for socio-economic development, particularly in low-income countries, where it has been primarily viewed as a poverty alleviation mechanism designed to equip individuals with job-ready skills and serve as a national strategy to reduce unemployment and social exclusion (Jackson et al., 2025; Iro-Idoro & Jimoh, 2021; Nwokike et al., 2019). However, this subsistence-oriented approach has proven inadequate in addressing the complexities of contemporary labour markets. Despite the proliferation of TVET programmes, unemployment and poverty rates remain persistently high while the narrow focus on poverty alleviation has limited TVET’s potential to foster innovation, entrepreneurship, and wealth creation (Olakanmi, 2020). Consequently, many graduates remain confined to short-term economic activities with low resilience to globalization, technological change, and evolving industry demands, thereby perpetuating cycles of poverty and economic vulnerability.

Guided by Human Capital Theory, developed by Becker (1964), and the Theory of Entrepreneurial Ecosystems, popularized by Daniel Isenberg in 2011, this study draws on two complementary perspectives. Human Capital Theory emphasizes the role of education, skills, and training in enhancing individual productivity and employability (Becker, 1993). In contrast, the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Theory posits that high-growth entrepreneurship is not driven by isolated individuals but by interconnected networks of localized, independent actors whose collaboration facilitates business growth and innovation (Ben et al., 2023; Fernandes & Ferreira, 2022; Spigel in Purbasari et al., 2019). Together, these frameworks provided this study a platform to reposition TVET as a driver of wealth creation rather than merely a mechanism for poverty alleviation. It argues that integrating entrepreneurship education into TVET can unlock new pathways for wealth creation by equipping graduates with both technical expertise and entrepreneurial competencies. By operationalizing wealth creation as the accumulation of financial, social, and intellectual capital, the study contributes to existing studies by offering an empirically informed model for aligning education with sustainable economic transformation in sub-Saharan Africa. Specifically, the study identified:

1. the key roles of entrepreneurship in TVET for wealth creation
2. the challenges that hinder the effectiveness of entrepreneurship in TVET for wealth creation.
3. strategies that enhance entrepreneurship in TVET for wealth creation.

Research Question

The study was guided by the following research questions

1. What are the key roles of entrepreneurship in TVET for wealth creation?
2. What are challenges that hinder the effectiveness of entrepreneurship in TVET for wealth creation?
3. What are the strategies that enhance entrepreneurship in TVET for wealth creation?

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was adopted to ensure comprehensive investigation. This approach enabled systematic collection of quantitative data from a representative sample for generalization. The study population comprised 52 TVET educators from tertiary institutions in Edo State, all of whom were included due to the manageable size. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher, validated by three experts from the Faculty of Vocational and Technical Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.87. The instrument was a web-based survey hosted on and retrieved via Google Forms. Collected data were cleaned, organized, and analyzed using SPSS v23 software, employing descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation). Decisions were drawn using a weighted mean: items with ratings of 2.5 and above were interpreted as "agree," while those below 2.5 were "disagree." The study adhered to ethical principles outlined in the Belmont Report (1979), including respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, assured of voluntary participation and withdrawal rights, and guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity, and all data were securely stored (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979).

Result

The findings of the study are presented as follows:

Research question 1: What are the key roles of entrepreneurship in TVET for wealth creation?

The result presented in Table 1 revealed key roles of entrepreneurship in TVET for wealth creation. The mean values ranged from 3.22 to 3.67, and were above the weighted mean of 2.50. This indicated that all listed roles are the agreed roles of entrepreneurship in TVET for wealth creation. The standard deviation of the items, which ranges from 0.48 to 0.93, also indicates that the educators are close in their opinions.

Table 1: Key Roles of Entrepreneurship in TVET for Wealth Creation

S/N	Item statement	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
1	Integrating entrepreneurship into the curriculum enhances students' ability for smart investing aimed at wealth creation.	3.22	0.59	Agree
2	Integrating entrepreneurship in TVET curriculum equips students with problem-solving and innovative skills for investment management towards wealth creation.	3.33	0.48	Agree
3	Integrating entrepreneurship (business planning, market research, and financial literacy) in the curriculum improves students' decision-making skills.	3.67	0.48	Agree

4	Entrepreneurship in TVET curriculum prepares students to manage, sustain and scale businesses.	3.56	0.50	Agree
5	A curriculum that reflects entrepreneurship process leads to establishing businesses that reflect the graduate's core values.	3.22	0.83	Agree
6	Exposure to all aspects of entrepreneurship education helps students identify and exploit economic opportunities.	3.44	0.61	Agree
7	Entrepreneurship in TVET builds students' confidence to pitch business idea to investors for accessing funds, grants, and resources.	3.42	0.50	Agree
8	Entrepreneurship in TVET enhances teamwork and networking skills among students.	3.22	0.72	Agree
9	Entrepreneurship contents, such as risk management, enhance students' ability to foresee and predict events as well as implement innovative strategies.	3.61	0.55	Agree
10	A curriculum with practical entrepreneurship components improves students' ability to lead and compete healthily toward wealth creation.	3.50	0.66	Agree
11	Integrating entrepreneurship mentorship in the curriculum broadens students' awareness of assets, liabilities and investment diversification.	3.28	0.88	Agree
12	Entrepreneurship in TVET promotes students' skills for productivity and implementation of interdisciplinary strategies (Passive income, debt recycling, consistent saving, etc.) for wealth creation.	3.36	0.93	Agree

Research Question 2: What are challenges that hinder the effectiveness of entrepreneurship in TVET for wealth creation?

Table 2: Challenges that hinders the effectiveness of entrepreneurship in TVET for wealth creation

S/n	Item statement	$\underline{X}$	SD	Remarks
1	Lack of resources directly limits TVET graduates from launching and scaling viable businesses.	3.14	0.72	Agree
2	TVET institutions lack sufficient infrastructure for effective entrepreneurship training.	3.08	0.84	Agree
3	Most TVET lack entrepreneurship instructors competent to deliver high-quality training.	2.97	1.03	Agree
4	TVET programs consistently place less emphasis on entrepreneurship than on technical skills.	2.89	0.95	Agree
5	Bureaucratic processes make it difficult for TVET graduates to access business registration and funding.	3.19	0.95	Agree

6	The entrepreneurship curriculum in TVET is outdated and misaligned with current economic demands.	2.92	1.03	Agree
7	TVET graduates do not receive mentorship or follow-up support after completing entrepreneurship programs.	2.97	0.94	Agree
8	Weak industry-TVET collaboration prevents students from gaining practical entrepreneurial exposure.	3.03	0.85	Agree
9	Cultural beliefs and societal expectations discourage TVET students from pursuing entrepreneurship.	2.89	1.06	Agree
10	Inconsistent government support significantly weakens entrepreneurship development in the TVET sector.	3.19	0.86	Agree
11	Digital and technology resources for entrepreneurship training in TVET are grossly inadequate.	3.28	0.74	Agree
12	Mismanagement of funds budgeted for supporting TVET institutions.	3.00	0.93	Agree

Data presented in Table 2 show the challenges that hinder the effectiveness of entrepreneurship in TVET for wealth creation. The item statements mean ranges from 2.89 to 3.28, which are above the weighted mean of 2.50. This indicated that the respondents agreed that the listed items are challenges that hinder the effectiveness of entrepreneurship in TVET for wealth creation. The standard deviation value ranges from 0.72 to 1.06. This implies that there is less variability in the responses of the TVET educators

Research Question 3: What are the strategies that enhance entrepreneurship in TVET for wealth creation?

Table 3: Strategies that Enhance Entrepreneurship in TVET for Wealth Creation

S/n	Item statement	$\underline{X}$	SD	Remarks
1	TVET institution should fully integrate entrepreneurship education as a core course into its curriculum.	3.47	0.51	Agree
2	Targeted funding for TVET graduates to start their own businesses must be provided by government.	3.44	0.50	Agree
3	Strong and functional partnerships between TVET institutions and private sector stakeholders are essential for quality training.	3.39	0.49	Agree
4	Business incubation centers must be established in all TVET institutions to support startups.	3.28	0.74	Agree
5	The entrepreneurship curriculum must be reviewed regularly to reflect current market needs.	3.06	0.41	Agree
6	Practical projects and real-world simulations must be prioritized in entrepreneurship training.	3.17	0.78	Agree

7	TVET programs must include digital entrepreneurship and e-commerce skills.	3.42	0.77	Agree
8	Institutions must organize entrepreneurship fairs and startup competitions regularly.	3.31	0.71	Agree
9	Successful entrepreneurs must be actively involved in classroom teaching and mentoring.	3.14	0.68	Agree
10	Formal mentorship programs must be implemented to guide students through venture creation.	3.39	0.77	Agree
11	TVET institutions must establish entrepreneurship clubs to promote a culture of business innovation.	3.22	0.72	Agree
12	Group business projects must be embedded in the curriculum to build team-based enterprise skills.	3.42	0.69	Agree

Data presented in Table 3 revealed that the strategies that enhance entrepreneurship in TVET for wealth creation have means ranging from 3.06 to 3.47, which are above the weighted mean of 2.50. This indicated that respondents agreed that the listed strategies can enhance integration of entrepreneurship in TVET for wealth creation when strategically implemented. The standard deviation values range from 0.41 to 0.78. This implies that there is less variability in the responses of the TVET educators.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the key roles of entrepreneurship education in TVET revealed that entrepreneurship education within TVET reframes it into a comprehensive framework for sustainable wealth creation and societal advancement. Central to this transformation is the cognitive shift, whereby decision-making and risk management elevate learners from the role of technicians to that of strategists, capable of anticipating market volatility and navigating uncertainty. This intellectual foundation is reinforced by operational sustainability, as the emphasis on scaling and management bridges the divide between necessity-driven entrepreneurship and scalable growth-oriented ventures, ensuring that wealth creation is conceived as a continuous and replicable process rather than a singular achievement. Financial engineering further extends this paradigm by introducing mechanisms such as passive income generation, debt recycling, and investment diversification, thereby enabling students to convert wages into assets and diversified income streams. Innovation and problem-solving complement these strategies by fostering adaptability and creativity, equipping learners to apply entrepreneurial thinking to technical challenges and enhance the value of their services in evolving market conditions. Additionally, the social dimension of entrepreneurship is equally significant, as confidence in pitching and networking skills integrates students into broader economic ecosystems, expanding their access to external capital and collaborative opportunities. Value-driven entrepreneurship adds a psychological and ethical layer, demonstrating that enterprises aligned with personal values and vocational strengths are more resilient and sustainable over time. Finally, strategic leadership and healthy competition, reinforced through practical components, ensure that graduates not only master technical delivery but also cultivate leadership capacities that drive continuous improvement and prevent market stagnation. Collectively, these findings underscore that a properly designed TVET-entrepreneurship curriculum transcends the mere transmission of technical skills; it produces resilient, innovative, and ethically grounded leaders who are capable of sustaining wealth creation and contributing meaningfully to vibrant economic growth. These study's results align with Adeniyi et al. (2022), who emphasized that entrepreneurship education in TVET significantly boosts students' readiness for business creation by strengthening their self-efficacy and economic resource skills. Similarly, Keelson (2025) and Agwi and Ibe (2018) found that entrepreneurship training within TVET enhances students' ability to identify opportunities and apply practical business strategies, which are essential for sustainable wealth creation.

The study's result of challenges hindering the effectiveness of entrepreneurship in TVET for wealth creation highlight a structural paradox for the effectiveness of entrepreneurship in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for wealth creation. While entrepreneurship education in TVET can be a driver of wealth creation, a persistent implementation gap undermines its transformative potential. This study identified several barriers that collectively shift TVET-entrepreneurship education strategy from a launch-pad for innovation into a bottleneck for economic empowerment. These barriers can be understood through three systemic failures. Such as resource asymmetry, where the chronic lack of startup capital and scaling resources prevents graduates from transitioning from "trained" to "self-employed." Institutional inertia, as underfunded programs and deteriorating infrastructure create simulated learning environments that fail to reflect the rigor of modern markets. Finally, expertise deficit, as shortage of instructors with both pedagogical skill and real-world business acumen leaves students with theoretical knowledge but no practical playbook for execution. The data therefore reveals a troubling paradox: entrepreneurial aspirations are being cultivated without the mechanisms for realization. Weak synergy between industry and academia produces a reality gap in which classroom learning fails to intersect with market demands. Without industry-aligned experiential learning, graduates emerge with qualifications that lack market prevalence, limiting their ability to translate training into sustainable enterprises. These findings resonate with the “Infrastructural Deficit Model” proposed by Kennedy et al. (2022), which identified funding and trainer quality as primary gatekeepers of entrepreneurial success in Nigerian TVET. They also reinforce Vaikosen (2026) andAnaele et al.’s (2014) concerns regarding the “Experiential Void,” where the limited or absence of industry partnerships reduces entrepreneurship to an academic exercise rather than a transformative economic tool.

The findings on strategies that enhance entrepreneurship in TVET for wealth creation identified several strategies. These include integrating entrepreneurship education as a core curricular element for cultivating early entrepreneurial mindsets, fostering critical thinking, creativity, and risk tolerance among students. It also revealed that targeted government funding can act as a financial catalyst enabling graduates to convert vocational skills into marketable ventures a solution to one of the most persistent barriers to youth enterprise development. Equally, implementing structured mentorship programs will help close the divide between theoretical instruction and practical implementation, offering students guided exposure to real-world challenges. Likewise, involving successful entrepreneurs in classroom instruction enhances flexibility and allow for authentic learning experiences rooted in lived business realities. The findings of the study align with Anaele et al. (2014) affirming that entrepreneurial readiness is significantly improved when mentorship and enterprise education are structurally woven into vocational and technical education and training. Similarly, Adebayo and Kolawole (2020) further emphasized that without experiential learning and access to startup capital, vocational competencies remain underutilized. These insights signal a modification from traditional skill-based training to a holistic, outcome-driven approach, where entrepreneurial competence is not an added benefit but a central outcome of TVET. However, these findings contrast with Adekunle (2024), which argues that entrepreneurship education alone is insufficient, government funding is often undermined by mismanagement, mentorship programs are weak or absent, and institutional barriers limit the involvement of entrepreneurs in instruction. Together, these perspectives suggest that while curricular integration, funding, mentorship, and practitioner involvement are promising, their effectiveness depends heavily on strong institutional frameworks and governance. Without systemic reforms in accountability and support structures, TVET may struggle to achieve its potential as a driver of entrepreneurship and wealth creation.

For realization, implementation must be trade-based, and individual difference of learners as well as their specific socio-economic realities must be considered. Other stakeholders including educators, policymakers, private sector actors, and community leaders must co-create sustainable mechanisms that support TVET-entrepreneurship education framework. Only then can these strategies evolve from promising interventions into transformative tools for wealth creation and economic resilience.

Conclusion

The study concludes that strategic integrated TVET-entrepreneurship education framework represents a vital mechanism for sustainable wealth creation. Such integration enhances students' capacity for smart investment, equips them with innovative and problem-solving skills for effective resource management, and strengthens their ability to lead and engage in healthy competition. These roles collectively position TVET graduates not merely as skilled technicians but as strategic actors in the broader economic ecosystem. However, the realization of these outcomes is constrained by systemic challenges, including limited financial resources, inadequate infrastructure, and weak collaboration between training institutions and industry stakeholders. These barriers require strategic interventions such as curricular reforms that embed structured mentorship programs that connect learners with experienced practitioners, experiential learning opportunities that bridge the gap between classroom and industry, and supportive policy frameworks that provide enabling environments. Addressing these constraints holds significant promise for enhancing entrepreneurial outcomes, thereby ensuring that TVET functions not only as a platform for skill acquisition but also as a catalyst for sustainable wealth creation and long-term economic development.

Recommendation

Based on the results revealed, the study recommends that:

1. The National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), in collaboration with TVET curriculum developers and policymakers, should fully integrate entrepreneurship education into the TVET curriculum as a core practical component to ensure students develop the requisite competencies for launching and sustaining viable enterprises
2. TVET governing bodies and education ministries, working with teacher training institutes, should implement continuous professional development programs for TVET educators to enhance pedagogical capacity and practical competence in entrepreneurship education.
3. TVET institutions, in collaboration with industry stakeholders, chambers of commerce, and entrepreneurial organizations, should establish strategic partnerships to promote

hands-on learning opportunities, real-world entrepreneurial exposure, and collaborative projects.

5. Government agencies and financial institutions should expand access to startup capital and enterprise support schemes tailored specifically for TVET graduates with innovative business concepts.
6. TVET institutions, in collaboration with alumni associations and professional bodies, should institutionalize structured mentorship initiatives and alumni-driven support networks to foster continuous professional guidance, peer engagement, and resource sharing among emerging entrepreneurs.
7. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), together with TVET regulatory agencies and ministries of education/labour, should introduce monitoring and evaluation systems to assess the impact of entrepreneurship training in TVET, with metrics aligned to labour market demands, graduate outcomes, and evolving economic conditions.
8. The Federal Government, in partnership with TVET institutions and ICT ministries, should drive the adoption of digital technology in TVET programs to increase flexibility, inclusivity, and strengthen collaboration among government, institutions, and the public sector.
9. TVET governing councils, in conjunction with anti-corruption agencies and financial oversight bodies, should develop and enforce collaborative structures that ensure accountability, thereby mitigating mismanagement of funds meant to improve TVET institutions and support students' wealth creation processes.

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