STRATEGIES FOR STRENGTHENING TVET INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP IN CLOTHING AND TEXTILES FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The Nigerian textile industry had over the years created over 3 million jobs for the citizens, but presently, the industry is collapsing with less than 20% capacity production. However, there seems to be an advantage to the industry following the availability of arable lands for increasing cotton cultivation in Benue State. On the other hand, colleges of education graduates thousands of textile students yearly but the industry still faces the challenge of skills-industry gap. This study therefore investigates strategies for strengthening partnerships between colleges of education and textile industries in Benue State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was adopted. The population was 471 with a sample size of 112 respondents, made up of students, lecturers and TVET administrators. Data were collected using questionnaire, while data analyses were done using mean ($\bar{x}$) and standard deviation (SD). The findings of the study include that there are some available partnership strategies within the colleges studied; poor funding, staff incompetence, unfavourable stakeholder's attitude, among others were highlighted as major challenges while dedicated budgetary and funding scheme, staff training, provision of liaison offices, etc. were identified strategies by the respondents. It concluded that TVET-industry partnership will not operate on a sustainable basis without the conscious efforts and collective investment from governments, colleges, and industry.

Keywords: Clothing and textile, TVET, Industry partnership, Economic growth, Benue State.

Introduction

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has been identified in many countries across the global as a viable solution to skills development challenges confronting youths. This consensus cuts across major stakeholders in education sector comprising both international organisations and national governments alike. TVET simply refers to education and training that equips learners with knowledge and skills needed to gain meaningful employment in industry (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, 2022). In Nigeria, Federal Ministry of Education (2021) reaffirmed Government's commitment to deploying TVET as veritable platform to re-position Nigerian economy towards productive sectors such as manufacturing, agro-processing, entertainment and creative industries as opposed to its historical reliance on crude oil exports. One of such creative industry with great potentials is clothing and textiles industry. Despite its huge potentials which perhaps explains Nigeria's current allocation of N51 billion as annual budget to TVET, there still exist several myriads of problems militating against its ability to contribute its quota towards achieving a productive nation. According to UNESCO (2022), lack of effective partnership between TVET providers and relevant industry stakeholders has been identified as major TVET challenges in Nigeria.

Clothing and textiles industry in Nigeria has all it takes to become one of the most vibrant industries, should all seams be properly sewed. First, Nigeria has a very large population estimated at over 200 million people creating enough market demand for textile products. This is backed by our ever-increasing fashion and garment markets. Second, Nigeria has all it takes in terms of raw materials needed for clothing and textiles production. With these two advantages, one would expect Nigeria to have developed a rather strong textile industry. Unfortunately, Nigeria spends an estimated $2 billion every year on imported textiles. (Uzoho, 2023). This simply means that there exist skills development gaps in Nigeria which if properly sewed can promote a positive change in the industry. This gap according to Uzoho (2023) could be traced to lack of skilled manpower. Lecturers and students in colleges of education who have ventured into teaching and learning of clothing and textiles echoed this view. Similarly, colleges of education have been blamed for producing low quality graduates who lack the needed and competencies required of industry. Experts all point to poorly equipped classrooms and lack of machinery as major cause of low-quality production in clothing and textiles (Obi & Ojo, 2025). However, colleges of education are saddled with the responsibility of training teachers who in turn provide clothing and textiles knowledge and skills to Nigerian students. If there is any place where the change should start, it has to begin from colleges of education.

In order to properly sew the skills gap, partnership between TVET institutions and industry cannot be overemphasized. Industry partnership according to Liang and Comyn (2025) can be defined as any form of deliberate relationship between TVET institution and industry partners towards the design, implementation and evaluation of training provided by the TVET institution. Partnership has been identified as one of the ways TVET institutions can be relevant and responsive to the needs of industry (Eddy & Amey, 2023). Partnership according to Njengele, Engel-Hills and Winberg (2024) allows TVET institutions to be dynamic to changes in technology and practices that occurs within different occupation and fields of vocational education and as such allows TVET institutions to maintain it relevance despite the changing dynamics. This assertion is not far-fetched. In this era of digitalisation and automatisation where fashion trends and style are easily replicated through digital renderings, how will clothes and textiles colleges in Nigeria maintain it relevance if they are unable to equip their students with up-to-date skills? Partnership ensures just that.

Several research works have shown positive correlation between existence of partnership and quality of skill acquired in TVET institutions (Idowu & Abdulquadir, 2025; Adilo et al., 2023). Zhu, Zuo and Chen (2023) said vocational education in Nigeria is saddled with several myriads of problems bordering on poor implementation of government policies on vocational education, lack of infrastructure, and poor TVET Industry collaboration. This statement was the same sentiment echoed by both students and lecturers in colleges of education who participated in this study. Findings from Adilo et al. (2023) study showed that most of the equipments and facilities needed for effective clothing and textiles education like university libraries, students' fashion show arena and clothing designs studio are all available but they lack equipment's needed for practical like clothing construction laboratory, clothing marker laboratory and pattern drafting laboratory among others. The implication of this is left for industry players to imagine.

Therefore, this study seeks to find out strategies, challenges and ways forward in strengthening TVET industry partnership in clothing and textiles in colleges of education in Benue State. Findings arising from this study is believed to contribute to the existing body of literature and knowledge that seeks to make TVET more relevant, more responsive and more economically useful.

To achieve the general objective of the study, three research questions were addressed;

1. What are the available strategies in colleges of education for effective TVET industry partnerships in clothing and textiles in Benue State?
2. What are the challenges affecting effective TVET-Industry partnership in clothing and textiles in colleges of education in Benue State?
3. What are adoptable strategies to strengthen effective TVET-Industry partnership in clothing and textiles for economic growth in colleges of education in Benue State?

Literature Review

An Overview of TVET and Industry Partnership

The idea of partnership between TVET institutions and industry partners is neither novel nor straightforward. It represents an umbrella term for various types of co-operation put in place with the specific goal of aligning what goes on within education and training establishments with what exists within the real world of work (Liang & Comyn, 2025). Such partnerships may take the form of curriculum co-development/equipment donation or support, work-based learning/apprenticeship programs, collaborative research, graduate posting, and so on. Working closely with employers or employers' organisations to develop occupational standards, curricula, and training methods, for example, can assist education and training agencies align themselves with industry and labour market requirements (UNESCO, 2022). It also lays the groundwork for producing employable, productive, and entrepreneurship-ready graduates. Absent this critical linkage, even the best-resourced technical college risks graduating 'qualified but useless' products.

Some examples of TVET-industry partnerships abound in the extant literature. Modelled after systems in countries like Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, the dual system of training and education entails both in-school instruction and organises and regulated on-the-job training which is financed and administered directly by industry bodies (Bauer & Gessler, 2018). It has gained international attention in recent years as one of the most effective ways of churning out highly skilled graduates with excellent employment prospects following graduation. The guiding principle espoused by this model, however, points to shared responsibility between education and industry in training students. Adding to this view, Njengele, Engel-Hills and Winberg (2024) recently pointed out that partnerships must never be taken for granted because needs evolve with time and that colleges of education wishing to establish successful partnerships must first evaluate their level of preparedness for such collaborations; this should be followed by developing and aligning their vision, mission, and values before finally meeting the needs of industry partners. This insight offers valuable lessons which NCCE can learn from, especially given that partnership readiness (institutional capacity, administrative heads' commitment, stakeholder buy-in, etc.) has traditionally been very poor in Nigerian colleges of education (Robert, Simiyu & Wanyeki, 2026).

Several models have been proposed and tested in countries within the sub-region as well. Analysing efforts to strengthen TVET-industry linkages in Kenya, Ayieko, Okemwa, and Muthoka (2023) discovered that effective partnerships that stood the test of time were those premised on signing of clear memoranda of understanding between stakeholders, holding regular meetings to align on joint plans, and setting up accountability measures that bind both institutions and industry partners. Kebede, Asgedom, and Asfaw (2024) conducted a similar review but focused on TVET-industry partnership initiatives spread across Ethiopia. Their findings revealed similar facts; in particular, partnership initiatives that culminated in the creation of formalised collaboration via funding agreements, legislation, and governance bodies are more likely to translate to sustainable linkage programmes. Informal linkages simply will not cut it. Apply these lessons to colleges of education in Benue State and the gap between what is and what ought to be does not look so narrow after all. Enterprises stand to benefit from partnering with TVET institutions as well. By doing so, they gain access to a ready pool of medium and high-skilled workers who can help transfer knowledge, adopt innovative technologies much faster, and drive technical innovations thus stimulating innovation within their organisations (Liang & Comyn, 2025). This is an indication that partnership should not just be educational sided, but a business enterprise as well especially as it concerns clothing and textiles education.

Conceptualizing Clothing and Textiles

Clothing refers to any item worn or carried on the body to enhance personal appearance. Textiles refers to materials used to make clothing and household items. Clothing making can be inform of woven, knitted, or printed. Clothing and textiles therefore involve the process of using fabric, thread, tools, and creativity to make strong and comfortable garments. Clothing and textiles explore how textiles are chosen based on properties for specific garments, sustainability, and cultural roles. The importance of clothing and textile study stems from the fact that it equips students with competent in garment making, textile design and fashion design. It equally acquaints them with entrepreneurial skills needed to commercialize their expertise to create economic value (Azonuche, 2021; Idowu & Abdulquadir, 2025). Coupled with this need to create employable youths is the need to train youths who can become entrepreneurs of relevance. Together, these two expectations make clothing and textile education one of the most valuable courses in TVET in terms of economic contribution. According to Azonuche (2021), one purpose of entrepreneurship education in clothing and textile studies is to meet manpower requirements while also contributing to sustainable development. Suffice it to say that there is more at stake for students studying Clothing and textiles and their understanding of entrepreneurship than just their individual successes. The community and economy stand to lose or benefit just as much.

Studies across Nigerian tertiary institutions have shown that some of the basic entrepreneurial competencies required by graduating clothing students are lacking. A study by Adilo et al. (2023) revealed that although facilities like university library services and textile design studios were available to students across the studied institutions, crucial practical skill developing laboratories like clothing construction laboratories and pattern drafting laboratories were grossly unavailable. While this highlights a problem with resource allocation, it also underpins how industry partnership has been sidelined as a means to supplement the resources that TVET institutions are unable to provide. Institutions left to their own devices will partner students in hands-on education without the needed hands-on equipment. Students and the economy lose out as graduates are inadequately trained. Another important concern is how slow the Nigerian textile and fashion industry has been in adopting digital technology and smart manufacturing processes, and how this will impact clothing and textile education. Zhu, Zuo and Chen (2023) examined this gap and identified that digital disruption has changed the willingness of the industry to accept skills learnt in institutions and that Nigerian institutions from TVET colleges to colleges of education have not been nimble enough to keep up with industry needs. In a similar vein, Idowu and Abdulquadir (2025) discovered that very few fashion and clothing programmes have been reviewed to include basic computer skills such as CAD, digital pattern making, and entrepreneurship-oriented skills such as eCommerce. This is not only leaving graduates unemployable; it is creating a knowledge and equipment gap that only and active industry partnership can close.

Contribution of TVET to Economic Growth

One education economics assertion that has enjoyed perennial support is education's contribution to economic growth. Specifically, predicated on the assumption from human capital theory that investments in skills/knowledge translate to humans' capacity to produce. TVET has been touted to be the veritable pathway to support industrialisation, structural unemployment, and entrepreneurship. This idea has been bandied about in Nigeria in recent years, especially with Nigeria's high youth unemployment rate, rising population, and the government's expected shift to a multi-centered economy (Federal Ministry of Education [FME], 2021; Ukpe, 2024). This vision is quite candid when it comes to TVET being Nigeria's catalyst towards shifting the economy, as the policy states in the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2014) that; "Technical Vocational Education shall be promoted and strengthened for its importance in manpower development towards the overall transformation of the Nigerian economy".

As a result, UNESCO (2022) affirmed this claim by stating that quality TVET grants learners "skills that drive workforce development, as well as innovation, entrepreneurship and lifelong learning, serving as important pillars for sustainable development" (p.9). When related to teaching Clothing and Textiles education in Benue State this statement can be powerful. There is enormous economic growth that can be actualized within the sector. Benue state's closeness to raw materials (i.e., cotton), rise in urban population center, and demand for made-in-Nigeria clothing. Also, the budding textile-artisanal traditions that are sewing into the state's culture; these can yield significant growth. Though this is if teacher-training graduates have the capabilities that will translate into practical skills, employment acceptability, and the initiative to start their businesses will determine the outcome.

In addition, Obi and Ojo (2025) supported this claim by stating that TVET’s ability to aid in economic growth is not automatic, but rather a process. In essence, it depends on the quality of training received and the competence of skills gained, which determines the linkage to the industry for economic growth. This invariably shifts the economic outcomes responsibilities to the precise quality of engagement between individual institution with relevant industries. Weak partnership between educational institutions prevalent in many Nigeria results to graduates of TVET entering the labour market without the needed competencies and skills. This therefore contributes to disconnection between classroom knowledge and practical skills which often limit employability and personal economic mobility. This therefore underscores the need to establish strong and effective TVET-industry partnership that is void of mere educational imperative but an economic venture.

Challenges of TVET-Industry Collaboration

As much as ample scholarship extols the importance and benefits of TVET-industry collaboration, literature is also replete with studies that identify challenges facing such partnerships especially within contexts found in developing countries. Among the most enduring challenges faced by TVET institutions is that of funding. Liang and Comyn (2025) lament that even with global acknowledgement of the importance of TVET there continues to be “mismatch between institutional training and industry needs and that collaboration efforts are mostly sporadic, project-based, or vertical initiatives.” A description that could very well apply to TVET-industry partnership efforts within most Colleges of Education in Nigeria. This fragmentation is symptomatic of a deeper structural deficit caused by lack of reliable funding that incentivises or allows for institutional collaboration on a long enough timescale to allow for sustainable TVET-industry partnership development.

At the level of individual institutions, challenges also abound. Njengele, Engel-Hills and Winberg (2024) note that “the selection of college and industry representatives is vital to TVET college-industry collaboration efforts and that these representatives must be skilled and equipped with guiding policy on their roles, responsibilities, and expected outcomes.” Nigerian Colleges of Education have no such system in place. There are no official representatives or liaison offices within our institutions tasked with managing partnership efforts. Instead partnership is left to the personal discretion of individuals. This reality is both a symptom and cause of TVET-industry linkages lack of development. Robert et al. (2026) document a similar reality in Uganda, where institutions lacked structures for managing partnerships. The results were that many partnerships "fell apart after the key individuals left their positions" serving as a warning for those in Benue State.

Finally, challenges need not always be systematic or institutional. As Kebede et al. (2024) note many employers in industries across developing contexts are sceptical of TVET graduate capabilities. This skepticism makes them unwilling to invest the necessary time or resources to developing meaningful partnerships. Zhu, Zuo and Chen (2023) found this to be true on the academic side of partnership as well, with some Nigerian vocational school teachers resistant to partnership with industry. Poor infrastructures such as poor road network, irregular power supply, poor internet connection, etc. makes physical collaboration between colleges and industry partners difficult (Akpan, 2023). This scenario is exacerbated by the cultural disconnect between the world of academic and the world of work, particularly in states like Benue where both industry and institutions are far apart.

Strategies for Strengthening TVET-Industry Collaboration

Following the identified challenges to effective TVET-industry partnership in colleges of education, subsequent x-ray of literature indicated evidence-based strategies for effective partnership. Njengele, Engel-Hills and Winberg (2024) stated that partnerships make TVET colleges adaptive to emerging technologies and emerging trends within occupations and fields. Based on the various impact associate with successful TVET-industry partnership highlighted above, investments in strategy to stimulate constant and sustainable partnership between colleges of education and clothing and textiles industry become indispensable.

One strategy is provision for professional development that supports TVET lecturers to periodically attend to their fields amid their daily teaching schedule can be addressed through attachment programmes in different industries. This could help address the competency gap between classroom teachings and industrial practice. Obi and Ojo (2025) pointed out that lecturers who teaches skills-based programme and are regularly exposed to what occurs in the real industry are often better equipped to train their students both theoretically and practically. UNESCO (2022) also added that industry engagement promotes on-job training methods such as apprenticeship or internship. This is premised on the knowledge that instructors who has been attached to an industry and understands the dynamics of working outside the educational environment become better TVET instructors who can connect the gap between learning and practical working.

Formalisation of partnership through collaboration channels like advisory board involving industry players, alumni and other stakeholders is the next strategy. Formal partnership that is legal bound by instruments such as establishment industry advisory board, signing memoranda of understanding and creating partnership agreement have been repeatedly reported as a key starting point to shift TVET-industry partnership from informal engagement to an institutional approach (Ayieko et al., 2023; Kebede et al., 2024). Further expanding on that point, Kebede et al. (2024) discussed how the government of Ethiopia organises annual workshop where industries are invited to deliberate and provide input on occupational standards and curricula. This helps improve market-focused employability skills and knowledge. When this practice is made to become institutional TVET curriculum development will consistently maintain a degree of currency and responsiveness to industry needs. Colleges of education can borrow this idea and start up with formalising an advisory panel that could open channels for industry partners from clothing and textiles to be part of the schools curriculum development process. Complementing the idea of formalisation is ensuring the colleges has a functioning industry liaison unit that serves as the organisational structure through which partnership activities are managed, coordinated and sustained (Eddy & Amey, 2023). Zhu, Zuo and Chen (2023) reinforced this fact by highlighting how entrepreneurship development centres serves as a medium to help students collaborate with industry mentors to build on their business ideas, learn their trade, learn how to run their business which align independently and build their employability skills.

Online platforms and technology-enabled tool for collaboration will also help address challenge of distance and inadequate infrastructure which are common in partnership. UNESCO (2022) harped on the significance of digitalizing collaboration and making relevant resources accessible to the participants of TVET-industry partnership. This, according to them will ease collaboration and promote skill-based learning because information can be shared remotely ensuring materials are being shared. Teachers can hold virtual class which allows students who may have connectivity to join from wherever they are and instructors from different part of the world can learn from each other. Virtual tour of industries and digital skill-based mentorship programmes such as CAD or online business (e-commerce) will help overcome distance and poor infrastructure which is general for most industries in Nigeria.

Policy and legislative support acts as an enabling environment that can help improve TVET-industry partnership. Highlighting what the government of Ethiopia done to support TVET-industry partnership, Kebede et al. (2024) stated that the government passed a decree supporting TVET and industry partnership with the main intent of creating a stronger bond between TVET bodies and leading economy sectors. Same policy could help improve the skill acquisition process as graduates are leaving schools with adequate knowledge and skills required for the workforce. Tax allowances for industry partners, mandatory industry partnership and clearly defined industry partnership expectations are other policies that could help make industry partnership a systematised and incentivised (Liang & Comyn, 2025; UNESCO, 2022). The above listed strategies constitute good mechanism capable of strengthening partnership between TVET and textile industry in colleges of education. However, the success depends on their implementation by the collective effort of academic institutions, government, and industry.

Methodology

The area of the study was Benue State, located at the North-Central part of Nigeria. The choice of the area was because of the presence of raw material for textiles, perceived inadequate institutional funding and weak institution-industry partnership.

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The descriptive survey design is appropriate for measuring perceptions, attitudes and levels of agreement of certain population or groups. It also gives the opportunity to gather and analyze properly and efficiently. The area of the study was Benue State, located at the North-Central part of Nigeria. The choice of the area was because of the presence of raw material for textiles, perceived inadequate institutional funding and weak institution-industry partnership.

The population for the study was 471 comprising students, lecturers and TVET administrators from three selected Colleges of Education in Benue State. The sample size was 112 determined using Taro Yamane formula. However, simple random sampling technique was used to select 92 final year clothing and textile students, 14 lecturers and 6 TVET administrators. 42 respondents were selected from College of Education Kastina-Ala, 39 selected from College of Education, Oju and 31 selected from College of Education, Odugbo.

Instrument for data collection was researcher structured questionnaire. It consists of items that generated data on existing partnership strategies, challenges to effective partnership and strategies to strengthen effective TVET industry partnership in colleges of education. It was adopted a -point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Cronbach Alpha method was used to establish the reliability of the instrument with an index of 0.81. Collected data was analyzed using mean ($\bar{x}$) and standard deviation (SD) to answer the research questions. A mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted as agreement, other (below 2.50) was taken as disagreement.

Results

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of Available strategies in colleges of education for effective TVET industry partnerships in clothing and textiles

S/N	Item Statements	($\bar{x}$)	SD	Dec.
1.	The college has formal agreements (MoUs) with clothing and textiles industries to support TVET programmes.	2.60	0.91	**Accepted**
2.	Industry practitioners involved in clothing and textiles curriculum development process	2.55	0.88	**Accepted**
3.	The college provides industry-based internship/practicum opportunities for clothing and textiles students.	2.81	0.90	**Accepted**
4.	Tools, equipment and materials are provided to support practical training by clothing and textiles industries	2.45	0.89	Rejected
5.	The college in collaboration with clothing and textiles industries organizes exhibitions and skills competitions for students	2.60	0.90	**Accepted**
6.	There are structured feedback mechanisms through which clothing and textiles industries communicate their skill needs and expectations to colleges of education in Benue State.	2.41	0.87	Rejected
	Total mean	**2.58**	**0.89**	**Accepted**

The results in Table 1 showed a moderate mean score, with individual item means ranging from 2.41 to 2.81. However, items 3 and 6 ranked highest and lowest respectively ($\bar{x}$ = 2.81 and 2.41). A grand mean of 2.58 (SD = 0.89) was recorded which indicates that respondents acknowledge the existence of some partnership strategies within the colleges studied.

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of Challenges affecting effective TVET-Industry partnership in clothing and textiles in colleges of education

S/N	Item Statements	($\bar{x}$)	SD	Dec.
1.	Poor funding greatly hinders effective and productive partnership between college of education and clothing and textiles industry.	3.26	0.83	**Accepted**
2.	Lack of mutual trust for productive partnership limits effective collaboration between college of education &clothing & textiles industry	3.20	0.80	**Accepted**
3.	Lack of clear legal and policy agenda on TVET industry partnership makes hinders efficient formalisation of relationships between the college and clothing and textiles.	3.19	0.79	**Accepted**
4.	Keeping pace with the increasing technological innovations in clothing and textiles make it difficult for colleges of education to sustain industry requirements for partnership.	3.16	0.78	**Accepted**
5.	Lackadaisical attitudes of industry stakeholders to partner with colleges of education weaken TVET industry collaboration in clothing and textiles in Benue State.	3.24	0.81	**Accepted**

6.	Staff incompetency in clothing and textiles industry experience limits meaningful engagement between college of education and industry partners.	3.01	0.76	**Accepted**
	Total mean	**3.22**	**0.82**	**Accepted**

Data in Table 2 showed high mean scores across the listed items with individual mean scores ranging from 3.01 to 3.26, which are above the 2.50 threshold benchmark. However, poor funding and lackadaisical attitudes of industry stakeholders ($\bar{x}$ = 3.26 SD = 0.83; $\bar{x}$ = 3.24 DS = 0.81) ranked highest, while staff incompetence in clothing and textiles industry experience had the lowest mean score ($\bar{x}$ = 3. 10 DS = 0.76). the table further showed a grand mean of $\bar{x}$ = 3.22 (SD = 0.82), which indicates that the perceptions of the respondents on the identified challenges confronting TVET-industry partnership in clothing and textiles are not isolated but shared institutional realities.

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of Strategies to strengthen effective TVET-Industry partnership in clothing and textiles for economic growth in colleges of education

S/N	Item Statements	($\bar{x}$)	SD	Dec.
1.	Regular training of staff on trending technological changes in clothing and textiles would enhance productive partnership between college of education and industry partners.	3.21	0.77	**Accepted**
2.	Making available workshops, exhibitions, etc. that connect colleges of education and clothing and textiles industries would strengthen effective TVET partnership and economic growth.	3.15	0.88	**Accepted**
3.	Favourable government policy support for industries that partner with colleges of education in clothing and textiles will enhance effective TVET industry partnership.	3.03	0.80	**Accepted**
4.	Provision of professional development and industry attachment opportunities for clothing and textiles lecturers in colleges of education will help strengthen TVET industry partnerships.	3.20	0.79	**Accepted**
5.	Provision of a structured employment tracking system for graduate placement in collaboration with clothing and textiles industries will promote the impact of TVET partnerships in colleges of education.	3.01	0.82	**Accepted**
6.	Adequate funding from stakeholders will ensure long lasting TVET industry partnerships in clothing and textiles in colleges of education	3.26	0.80	**Accepted**
	Total mean	**3.18**	**0.80**	**Accepted**

Table 3 data revealed that all listed items were accepted as strategies for strengthening TVET-industry partnership, with each mean scores ranging from 3.01 to 3.26, which indicates the progressive agreement among respondents. Nevertheless, adequate funding and regular staff training on innovative technological and changes received highest agreement ($\bar{x}$ =3.26, SD = 0.80 and $\bar{x}$ = 3.21, SD = 0.77) respectively. The obtained grand mean score of $\bar{x}$ = 3.18 (SD = 0.80) indicates that respondents agreed that the listed strategies have the potential to strengthen TVET-industry partnership and contribute to economic growth in their institutions.

Discussion

Available strategies in colleges of education for effective TVET industry partnerships in clothing and textiles:

The study findings showed the availability of strategies for TVET industry partnership in clothing and textiles in colleges of education in Benue State. The most commonly identifiable existing collaboration strategy was internship/practicum arrangements, suggesting that work-based learning is still the dominant mode of industry linkages taking place across the colleges. This mirrors the findings of Ayieko, Okemwa and Muthoka (2023), who found internship arrangements to be the first and most identifiable form of TVET-industry cooperation typically pursued in developing country contexts among educational providers. Similarly, the low mean scores obtained for industry provision of equipment/materials and structured feedback mechanisms indicate that the more structured and resource-heavy forms of partnership were either nonexistent or too irregular to be noted by respondents. Zhu, Zuo and Chen (2023) observed that industry support for colleges of education in the form of practical infrastructure remains one of the weakest aspects of TVET-industry collaboration in Nigeria supports this. In like manner, Njoku, Naele and Chukwu (2015) found that despite being recognized as relevant to producing skilled and trained manpower needed for national development, the strategies to ensuring effectiveness of the TVET/industry partnership program are also identified but poorly operationalized. This is an indication that existing partnership strategies in Benue State colleges are present in name but insufficient in practice.

Challenges affecting effective TVET-Industry partnership in clothing and textiles in colleges of education:

The findings on challenges indicated that respondents strongly and unanimously identify the listed factors as major barriers to effective TVET-industry partnership. The lack of adequate legal and policy framework alongside lack of funding topped the list as the most significant challenges. This finding resonates closely with Nwoye et al.’s (2023) position, which states that currently, “available records indicate that there is little or no linkage between TVET institutions and industries as what is needed in industries is not what is being taught in TVET institutions in Nigeria" (p. 7). It suffices to note that this disconnects which respondents blame on policy and funding inadequacies in the present study, naturally results from the former. Similarly, the finding regarding lack of funding reverberates with Liang and Comyn (2025) notion that "the lack of dedicated, sustained funding mechanisms are the most significant structural challenge towards institutionalizing TVET-industry collaboration, particularly in developing country contexts". High mean scores were also recorded for the lax attitudes of industry collaborators and lack of staff competence in industry-relevant experience. This concurs with Kebede, Asgedom, and Asfaw's (2024) finding that across sub-Saharan Africa, industry pessimism and attitudinal barriers towards TVET-industry collaboration remain significant. Similarly, Njoku et al. (2015) reported that one of TVET's major challenges is that industry representatives are usually not involved in the development of its curriculum. Moreover, they found that TVET is currently plagued by weak links with industries, a curriculum that is not aligned with current practices in delivery strategies, and little or no room for manoeuvrability to train people at the local level because industries are hardly consulted. Taken together, these findings paint a consistent picture across multiple research contexts which indicates that barriers to effective TVET-industry partnership are structural, financial, attitudinal and competency-related in nature.

Strategies for strengthening TVET Industry Partnership in Clothing and Textiles for Economic Growth in Colleges of Education:

Findings on the strategies for improving effective TVET-industry partnership showed that the proposed strategies were endorsed by respondents. Provision of adequate funds by stakeholders and regular training of TVET staff on technology trends were identified as the major strategies while setting up of graduate placement and employment tracking system was identified as the least strategy. This is in agreement with Obi and Ojo (2025), who maintained that investing in lecturer professional development programmes and sustainable funding should be prioritized as they have the highest likelihood to improve TVET-industry collaboration outcomes in sub-Saharan Africa. Nwoye et al. (2023) also suggested that TVET institutions must create linkages with industries which represents the end-users of TVET products. Furthermore, partnership between TVET institutions and industries during curriculum development was among the highly necessary intervention strategies that would improve relevance of graduates' skills and employability. This also agreed with findings on favourable government policy support as well as provision of professional development for lecturers obtained from the present study. Njengele, Engel-Hills and Winberg (2024) also reaffirmed that strong partnerships are determined by deliberate preparedness of institutions and involvement of college and industry representatives working under mutually agreed-upon terms. Njoku et al. (2015) equally maintained that TVET-industry partnership is significantly important for skill acquisition and national development. Furthermore, the strategies that would guarantee effectiveness of the programme should be consciously determined and actualised. Imperatively, the high mean scores for the listed strategies for strengthening TVET-industry partnership in colleges of education confirms the widely shared perceptions among respondents in Benue State colleges of education.

Conclusion

This study investigated strategies for strengthening TVET-industry partnership in clothing and textiles for economic growth in colleges of education in Benue State. The results indicated that some forms of partnership such as internship and practicum placement exist in the colleges. However, the present partnership opportunities are irregular, informal, and inadequate to build or support an effective system that promotes industry-relevant training in clothing and textiles. Overall, results indicated that collaboration between TVET and industry in clothing and textiles education in Benue state colleges of education is more of an idea than an existing practice. Imperatively, partnership collaboration will not translate into reality nor operate on a sustainable basis without the conscious efforts and investment from governments, colleges, and industry. Colleges of education should therefore endeavour to engage in productive collaboration using the identified strategies with industry regularly rather than on an informal basis.

Implications of the Findings

The study major findings indicated absence of active and effective liaison office and implementable MoU agreement. By implication, colleges of education in Benue State should establish dedicated offices that caters for industry related liaison activities and ensures implementation of formal MoU agreements. Through the liaison office, an organized advisory panel should be instituted that can bring experts from clothing and textiles industry to review curriculum and practical training delivery regularly.

Consequently, staff incompetency was also a major limitation to TVET-industry partnership. This therefore, necessitate the importance of organizing regular programmes such as workshops/seminar on professional development and industry attachment to equip the staff. Such programme should prioritize practical skills and emerging technologies in clothing and textiles.

As revealed in the findings that inadequate funding resulting from lack of workable legal policy framework constitute a major challenge to effective TVET-industry partnership in colleges. By implication, the governments at all levels should provide a clear TVET-industry partnership policies that favour tax incentives for industry partners. A dedicated budgetary and funding scheme that enhance sustainable institutional-industry partnership collaboration to promote clothing and textiles education and practice.

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