

HARMONISATION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION INTO TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TRAINING IN NIGERIA: INGREDIENTS TO GLOBAL SKILLS COMPETITIVENESS

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Abstract

Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) remains a central instrument for skills acquisition, youth employability, and economic development in Nigeria. Yet, persistent unemployment among TVET graduates suggests a misalignment between skill acquisition and labour market realities. This paper examines the harmonisation of entrepreneurship education into TVET as a strategic approach to fostering self-reliance and global skills competitiveness. Drawing on studies published from 2015 to 2025 informs the argument presented in this paper. Which indicate that while technical competence is critical, it is insufficient on its own to equip graduates for the complexities of the modern economy and transformation. The paper argues that strengthening entrepreneurship education within TVET is necessary for enhancing global skill competitiveness as it strengthens problem-solving, innovation, and business creation capacities, enabling graduates to become job creators rather than job seekers. Therefore, this paper recommends increased government support through funding and institutional capacity development.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship education, *Technical and Vocational Education Training*, harmonisation, skills competitiveness.

Introduction

Education is widely recognised as the backbone of national development, equipping citizens with knowledge and skills for economic, social, and technological progress. Across the globe, governments are tasked with ensuring both employment opportunities and access to education for their citizens. In Nigeria, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) plays a critical role in producing skilled manpower for industrial, technological, and entrepreneurial purposes. Oziegbe *et al.* (2015) argues that entrepreneurship education, whether formal, non-formal, or informal, is designed to provide learners with essential competencies that enable them to contribute effectively to their communities and the national economy. In essence, entrepreneurship education fosters self-reliance, creativity, and economic empowerment, which are vital for addressing unemployment and underemployment.

The National Policy on Education (2015) defines TVET as an educational pathway combining formal learning with the acquisition of practical and technical knowledge. Traditionally, TVET graduates from polytechnics, universities, and technical colleges were absorbed readily into the labour market, given the scarcity of skilled manpower (Venkatraman *et al.*, 2018). However, Okolie *et al.* (2019) note that contemporary labour markets in Nigeria are saturated, with both public and private sectors contracting their employment capacity. As a result, graduates are confronted with unemployment and limited avenues for self-sustenance.

This situation highlights the inadequacy of technical competence alone in contemporary Nigeria. Although TVET equips learners with valuable skills, the lack of an entrepreneurial focus leaves many graduates unable to create economic opportunities or adapt to changing market conditions. Integrating entrepreneurship education into TVET programmes would provide a viable solution, enabling graduates to harness their technical skills for business creation, innovation, and self-reliance. The study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design using documentary and conceptual analysis to explore the rationale, benefits, and policy implications of harmonising entrepreneurship education into TVET in Nigeria.



Technical and Vocational Education and Training as a Skill Development Framework

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) provides learners with practical skills, applied knowledge, and scientific understanding required to function effectively in occupational and industrial settings. According to the National Policy on Education (2015), technical education combines general education, technical studies, and theoretical scientific knowledge, while vocational education focuses on preparation for specific trades or occupations.

Khilji and Roberts (2022) notes that the key characteristics of TVET include hands-on skill acquisition and sound scientific knowledge, which enable graduates to engage in production, maintenance, and technological problem-solving. Graduates of TVET programmes are thus positioned to contribute meaningfully to national development, provided that their competencies align with labour market demands.

However, the distinction between vocational and technical education is nuanced. Vocational education is primarily occupation-specific, training learners for particular trades, whereas technical education provides broader technical expertise applicable across multiple sectors (Kleinert & Jacob, 2019). Despite this difference, both aim to cultivate self-reliance, employability, and technological competence. Without an encompassing TVET programme, there might be production of graduates or technically competent individuals who lack the ability to identify economic opportunities or to manage business risks.

Entrepreneurship Education as the Foundation for Global Skills competitiveness in TVET

Entrepreneurship education is increasingly recognised as a critical driver of personal empowerment, innovation, and economic development. Igwe *et al.* (2022) defines entrepreneurship as the ability to create value through identifying opportunities, mobilising resources, and managing risks. This definition emphasises proactivity, creativity, and strategic decision-making, which distinguish entrepreneurs from employees. Kennard (2021) complements this perspective by asserting that entrepreneurship involves recognising investment opportunities, initiating ventures, and sustaining business operations profitably.

Ul Haque and Kaur (2025) further highlights that entrepreneurship encompasses the harnessing of factors of production for economic and personal development, underscoring its multidimensional nature. Mazla *et al.* (2020) extend this by noting that entrepreneurship requires creativity, innovation, and personal fulfilment, enabling individuals to thrive even in saturated labour markets. The central point is that entrepreneurship education equips learners with the cognitive, technical, and attitudinal competencies necessary for transforming ideas into economically viable ventures.

Entrepreneurship represents a higher-order human capability that transcends routine. Dance and Omale (2024) emphasised that entrepreneurship entails the capacity and determination to achieve personal goals through effective resource utilisation. In the Nigerian context, such capacity is not envisioned and targeted which leads to the high rates of graduate unemployment. By integrating entrepreneurship education within TVET, learners are positioned not only to utilise their technical skills but also to create value, drive innovation, and generate employment for themselves and others.

Entrepreneurship education also fosters critical thinking, resilience, and decision-making skills, which are essential for navigating complex economic environments. For TVET graduates, these competencies ensure that acquired technical skills are not merely functional but also economically and socially transformative. In essence, entrepreneurship education can transform TVET graduates into proactive agents of development rather than passive job seekers. The entrepreneurial principles in TVET would ensure that technical knowledge is applied meaningfully in economic and societal contexts, fostering both individual empowerment and national growth.

Rationale for Entrepreneurship Education in TVET

Entrepreneurship education in TVET is necessary due to structural challenges in the Nigerian labour market and gaps in educational policy. While the government has attempted to address youth unemployment through vocational skill development, results have been mixed. Ogunrinade (2024) argues that entrepreneurship education equips learners to recognise and harness opportunities for personal and societal benefit. By combining technical proficiency with entrepreneurial capability, TVET graduates can transform acquired skills into viable businesses.

Harmonisation ensures that entrepreneurship is not treated as an optional or peripheral subject but is embedded into curriculum design, pedagogy, and assessment. Graduates acquire both practical competence and business acumen, enabling them to innovate, create jobs, and adapt to market dynamics (Finch *et al.*, 2016). In an era of rapid technological change and market volatility, graduates must possess both technical skills and entrepreneurial competencies to succeed locally and internationally. Therefore, the integration of entrepreneurship education into TVET is not only a response to domestic unemployment but also a strategic investment in global skills competitiveness. This integration addresses the persistent challenge of underemployment and positions TVET as a pathway to sustainable self-reliance.

Structural Constraints

Despite the potential benefits, several structural constraints impede the effective repositioning of TVET in Nigeria through entrepreneurship education (Bakar *et al.*, 2024). These include:

1. Low social status of TVET and technical education, which reduces enrolment and public engagement.
2. Limited funding and inadequate facilities, undermining the acquisition of both technical and entrepreneurial skills.
3. Weak institutional capacity and supervision, including underpowered regulatory agencies like the National Board for Technical Education.
4. Insufficient sensitisation of stakeholders, leading to poor alignment between curriculum design and labour market needs.

Strategic Approaches for Strengthening TVET through Entrepreneurship Education for Skills Competitiveness in Nigeria

Global skills competitiveness increasingly demands adaptability, creativity, and enterprise capability. Nigeria's education system, initially modelled on the British system and later restructured into the 6-3-3-4 system, was intended to equip learners with practical skills and lifelong employability (Rahman *et al.*, 2021). Despite these reforms, the programme faced challenges including low societal recognition of TVET, inadequate funding, weak supervision, and insufficient policy enforcement, limiting its effectiveness.

Harmonised entrepreneurship-oriented TVET programmes can address these gaps by enabling graduates to create self-employment opportunities, respond to market demands, and engage in innovative economic activities. Technical skills such as welding, carpentry, tailoring, and electrical installation are valuable only when complemented by entrepreneurial ability, which allows graduates to monetise and scale these competencies (Francis, 2023). By producing graduates who are both technically competent and entrepreneurial, Nigeria can enhance its position in the global skills economy, reduce unemployment, and stimulate economic growth.



Conclusion

The repositioning of TVET through entrepreneurship education programmes is critical for equipping Nigerian graduates with both technical and entrepreneurial competencies. In an increasingly competitive global economy, technical skills alone are insufficient. Integrating entrepreneurship ensures graduates are self-reliant, innovative, and capable of creating jobs, thereby enhancing national economic resilience. Sustainable implementation requires deliberate policy action, institutional capacity, and consistent supervision to achieve meaningful outcomes in skills development and global competitiveness.

Recommendations

Based on the evidence presented in this study, it is recommended that:

- (i) The government should make sure that there is adequately trained manpower that would coordinate the integration of the two programmes.
- (ii) The National Board for Technical Education should ensure effective co-ordination, monitoring and supervision of all aspects of TVET at all stages of education in the country.
- (iii) There should be good incentives for both the trainers and trainees.
- (iv) Soft loans should be provided for those that have successfully completed TVET to enable them establish on their own.
- (v) The required facilities such as equipment and materials should be made available so that the needed skills can be effectively acquired by recipients of TVET.

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