



INTEGRATING EXPERIENTIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION INTO TVET CURRICULA: A PATHWAY TO SUSTAINABLE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND INNOVATION

By

Dr Omole, Alfred Sunday

Federal College of Education (Technical), Gusau, Zamfara State

Email: alfredsundayomole@gmail.com

Tel:08064914498

Abstract

Across many regions of the world, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, youth unemployment remains one of the most pressing socio-economic challenges. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has become increasingly important as a pathway for workforce readiness. However, despite its promise, TVET often focuses on technical training while neglecting vital entrepreneurial competencies. This limitation poses a threat to the employability and economic viability of its graduates, who face saturated labour markets and limited formal job opportunities. This paper argues for the urgent need to reform TVET by integrating experiential entrepreneurship education, a practice-based approach that allows students to turn ideas into viable enterprises. Drawing upon recent studies and real-world practices in regions such as Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, this paper identifies the conceptual foundation, challenges, benefits, and strategies for embedding entrepreneurial learning into technical training. The research highlights the gap in current curricula and proposes evidence-based solutions that can contribute to sustainable youth employment and innovation-driven growth. By analysing successful models from vocational institutions and integrating frameworks like Action Design Learning (ADL), the paper provides practical guidance for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers who aim to modernise TVET systems. It fills a critical research gap by focusing not only on the why of entrepreneurial education in TVET but also on the how, particularly in diverse and resource-limited educational environments.

Keywords: TVET, experiential learning, youth employment and curriculum innovation

1. INTRODUCTION

Across the world, youth unemployment remains a stubborn and complex issue. Many young people, after completing years of formal education, find themselves without quality job opportunities and face a highly competitive labour market. This challenge is particularly severe in Africa, South and Southeast Asia, and other low-to-middle-income regions, where the youth population is rapidly expanding. In these regions, the risk of long-term unemployment, informal work, and economic dependency continues to grow (Ukoima and Eminue, 2020).

As a response to this crisis, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has gained attention for its potential to promote skills-based employment and enable youth participation in the labour market. TVET programs aim to equip learners with practical, job-ready skills in areas such as engineering, ICT, construction, agriculture, hospitality, and mechanics. Ideally, these skills should translate into increased employability and reduced poverty.



However, the current structure of many TVET systems remains deeply traditional. The teaching methods often rely on rote learning and the transmission of fixed technical content, with limited attention to the dynamic needs of the labour market or the 21st-century skills required in today's innovation-driven, digital economy (Subrahmanyam, 2013, Udukeke and Usoro, 2023). As a result, TVET graduates, while technically skilled, are often unprepared to adapt, innovate, or create their own economic opportunities, particularly in environments with limited formal employment.

While TVET continues to play a crucial role in improving access to job skills for young people, it does not sufficiently prepare graduates to become entrepreneurs or innovators. The absence of entrepreneurial education, particularly one that is experiential and practice-based, means that many learners graduate with strong technical abilities but lack the confidence, mindset, and business acumen to identify and act on opportunities. This problem is intensified by rapid changes in technology, the shift towards the gig economy, and the global call for sustainable, inclusive economic development.

Many TVET students, especially those in under-resourced institutions or rural areas, do not receive exposure to entrepreneurship principles, access to real-world business experiences, or mentorship from industry practitioners. Moreover, entrepreneurship education that does exist in TVET is often theoretical, isolated from students' main technical fields, and insufficiently integrated into the overall curriculum (Harun, Rahim, & Mohamed, 2023; Sleeman, 2018; Wahab & Adekomaya, 2025).

In recent years, several scholars (e.g., Usoro, Akpan, & Udukeke, 2015; Nzembayie, Buckley, & Talay, 2024; Herlina & Wahira, 2024; Dumbuya, 2024) have advocated for the importance of entrepreneurship in TVET. However, many existing studies have either:

- Focused on general entrepreneurship education without detailing how experiential models operate within vocational contexts;
- Addressed policy recommendations with limited emphasis on day-to-day implementation strategies in the classroom; or
- Emphasised entrepreneurship within mainstream or business studies programs, but paid less attention to technical fields such as plumbing, carpentry, agriculture, and electronics.

Most notably, there is a lack of comprehensive analysis and practical guidelines on how to embed experiential entrepreneurship education within existing TVET systems, especially in low- and middle-income countries where institutional capacity and resources may be limited (Nchu, Tengeh, & Cronjé, 2023; Bazgar & Wani, 2022).

This paper aims to fill this gap by exploring the integration of experiential entrepreneurship education into TVET curricula as a strategic approach to promoting youth employment and innovation. The paper does not merely highlight the importance of entrepreneurship; instead, it focuses on the practical application of experiential pedagogy in real-world TVET settings.

Through a synthesis of current research, successful regional models, emerging practices, and policy insights, the paper seeks to:

1. Clarify the concept of experiential entrepreneurship education and how it differs from traditional entrepreneurship instruction;
2. Highlight the benefits and transformative potential of experiential methods for youth, educators, and communities;



3. Identify common barriers institutions face in embedding experiential content into technical programs;
4. Propose actionable strategies for institutions, teachers, and policymakers to begin the integration process in a meaningful and sustainable way.

In doing so, the paper aims to offer a practical, evidence-informed framework that educators, administrators, and development stakeholders can adapt to local contexts, enabling TVET graduates to become not only competent technicians but also empowered innovators and entrepreneurs. By reframing TVET to include entrepreneurial thinking, innovation, and active problem-solving, we can better prepare young people not only to find work—but to create it.

2. Understanding Experiential Entrepreneurship Education

Experiential entrepreneurship education is rooted in learning-by-doing models. This includes project-based learning, enterprise simulations, internships, peer-led ventures, and real-life entrepreneurial projects. According to Sleeman (2018), students engaged in experiential learning build skills that enhance adaptability, resourcefulness, risk-taking, and problem-solving—traits that are essential in today's entrepreneurial economy.

Nzembayie et al. (2024) emphasise Action Design Learning (ADL) as a method that combines action learning (through real tasks) and design thinking (through creativity and iteration). This framework allows students to build, test, and improve business ideas while engaging in direct learning with instructors and peers.

In Afghanistan, for instance, the TVET-AVI program implemented strategies to enhance entrepreneurial self-efficacy and confidence among its students. These outcomes were achieved through experiential models rather than theoretical classroom lectures (Bazgar & Wani, 2022). Thus, experiential entrepreneurship education enables the transition from school-based training to meaningful economic participation.

Experiential entrepreneurship is not just about starting businesses; it's also about learning innovation, resilience, leadership, and social enterprise. These skills are crucial not just in the labour market but for contributing to the overall well-being and growth of communities (Wahab & Adekomaya, 2025).

3. Why TVET Needs Entrepreneurship Reforms

TVET is designed to equip students with hands-on technical skills, yet many graduates struggle to find employment because of saturated job markets or mismatched skills. This raises a vital question: *Is providing technical training enough?* The answer, increasingly, is no.

For learners to truly compete and thrive in today's shifting economies, they need to be empowered with economic creativity and entrepreneurial action. Widodo et al. (2024) showed that entrepreneurship programs integrated into vocational schools in Indonesia resulted in greater job-readiness among graduates. Similarly, Tien, Binh, and Chuc (2019) demonstrated a push towards embedding innovative, entrepreneurship-based learning in Vietnamese TVET programs to equip students in preparation for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Entrepreneurial education transforms students from passive recipients of knowledge into active problem-solvers and business thinkers. Abdullah, Rahim, and Mohd Syahrir (2024) argue that by integrating experiential learning theory, entrepreneurial education models, and



the resource-based view of teaching, TVET institutions can create job creators rather than job seekers.

4. Benefits of Experiential Entrepreneurship in TVET

Many scholars and practitioners have pointed out the extensive benefits of this approach. These include:

a. Sustainable Youth Employment

When entrepreneurship education is practical and closely linked to students' areas of training, they can start businesses relevant to their fields. This is a significant pathway to *self-employment and employment for others* (Shikalepo, 2019). School businesses, cooperatives, or startups formed within TVET spaces provide direct points of transition into working life.

b. Bridging the Skills Gap

Experiential entrepreneurship helps students develop not only technical but soft and cognitive skills—negotiation, leadership, teamwork, and innovation. These are essential to succeed in today's economic ecosystem (Herlina & Wahira, 2024).

c. Building Local and National Innovation Capacities

When young people engage in enterprise, they contribute to *local economic development*. Many community-based TVET programs have resulted in small startups addressing agriculture, water, waste management, and digital services, fueling community transformation (Harun, Rahim, & Mohamed, 2023).

d. Inclusive Economic Participation

With the right support, experiential entrepreneurship can promote access among marginalised groups, including young women, rural learners, or persons with disabilities (Leong, 2024; Teoh, Yen, & Loh, 2024). This ensures that TVET fulfils its promise of being “education for all.”

5. Real-World Implementation: Global Examples

- **Indonesia:** Widodo et al. (2024) introduced vocational school models where students run product-based businesses within the school environment. These ventures generate revenue and learning simultaneously.
- **Afghanistan:** The TVET-AVI model addresses labour market needs while developing entrepreneurial competencies and self-efficacy through a student-centred, practice-oriented approach (Bazgar & Wani, 2022).
- **Vietnam:** Entrepreneurial training is part of digitalisation efforts in TVET, equipping students for platform-based work such as online services and e-commerce (Tien et al., 2019).
- **Africa:** Institutions like those in Namibia and South Africa are integrating entrepreneurship to address persistent youth unemployment and promote economic empowerment (Shikalepo, 2019; Nchu, Tengeh & Cronjé, 2023).



These examples show that integration is relevant, feasible, and impactful across different levels of development and context.

6. Key Challenges in Integrating Experiential Entrepreneurship

Despite its benefits, the implementation does not come without challenges:

- **Curriculum Inflexibility:** Many institutions run rigid curriculum structures, which makes it difficult to integrate alternative pedagogies like experiential learning (Harun et al., 2023).
- **Lack of Instructor Competence:** Teachers and trainers often lack the training or entrepreneurial background to deliver this new form of learning (Wahab & Adekomaya, 2025).
- **Weak Industry Partnerships:** There is often limited collaboration between TVET and industry, which is critical for hands-on exposure and mentorship (Hou, 2024).
- **Insufficient Assessment Models:** Standardised exams fail to capture the entrepreneurial abilities developed through project work and innovation labs (Yadav, 2023).
- **Gender Gaps and Social Barriers:** Without targeted strategies, female students and disadvantaged learners remain outside the loop of entrepreneurial benefits in TVET (Teoh et al., 2024).

7. Strategies for Effective Integration

1. **Policy Reforms:** Ministries must update national TVET policies to mandate and support entrepreneurship education.
2. **Teacher Capacity Building:** Educators must be trained in experiential pedagogies, startup mentorship, and enterprise facilitation (Nzembayie et al., 2024).
3. **Industry and Community Engagement:** Collaborate with businesses, entrepreneurs, and local leaders to offer mentorship, funding, and space for innovation.
4. **Flexible and Modular Curriculum:** Allow students to take enterprise subjects and integrate them with their core technical fields.
5. **Student Enterprise Incubation:** Create incubators, maker spaces, and innovation hubs within TVET campuses (Sedaghat & Maxwell, 2024).
6. **Inclusive Approaches:** Develop frameworks and models that support female students, persons with disabilities, and rural communities in participating fully (Leong, 2024).

8. CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that integrating experiential entrepreneurship education into TVET curricula is an urgent and strategic response to the global youth unemployment crisis. It is not enough for young people to simply acquire skills—they must also know how to apply them innovatively and economically to create value for themselves and their communities. By shifting education from passive consumption to active enterprise development, countries



can empower youth to become engines of economic growth and agents of social transformation. For educators, policymakers, donors, and communities, the time to act is now.

REFERENCES

- Abdullah, S. H., Rahim, M. S., & Mohd Syahrir, S. N. (2024). The integration of resource-based view, experiential learning theory and entrepreneurship education models. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Applied Science*, 5(10). <https://doi.org/10.51584/ijrias.2024.90105>
- Usoro, A. D., Akpan, G. A. & Udukeke, O. F. (2015). Integrating local content of entrepreneurship education into vocational education curriculum of universities in Nigeria: Antidote to unemployment among graduates of vocational education. *Journal of Education*, 8(1), 116-126.
- Alhajeri, G. (2021). Achieving youth empowerment in UAE through incorporating entrepreneurial skills in Technical Vocational Education and Training. *International Business Research*, 14(4). <https://doi.org/10.5539/ibr.v14n4p101>
- Bazgar, S., & Wani, N. U. H. (2022). Enhancing entrepreneurial education and self-efficacy through Technical Vocational Education and Training – Authority of Afghanistan (TVET-AVI): Evaluation and way forward. *Kardan Journal of Economics and Management Sciences*, 5(4). <https://doi.org/10.31841/kjems.2022.121>
- Dumbuya, E. (2024). Entrepreneurship education and skills-based curriculum: A strategy for economic empowerment in African education. *International Journal of Science and Research Archive*, 13(4). <https://doi.org/10.30574/ijrsra.2024.13.2.2484>
- Harun, G., Rahim, N. A., & Mohamed, Z. (2023). A systematic review of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) entrepreneurship education in Malaysia: Insights and directions. *Journal of Technical and Vocational Education*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.1109/ieem58616.2023.10406319>
- Herlina, H., & Wahira, W. (2024). Creating a sustainable entrepreneurship ecosystem through innovation in education. *International Journal of Engineering, Science and Information Technology*, 4(4). <https://doi.org/10.52088/ijesty.v4i4.647>
- Hou, W. (2024). Practical exploration of integrating innovation and entrepreneurship education with employment guidance in vocational colleges. *The Education Review USA*, 13(2). <https://doi.org/10.30574/ijrsra.2024.13.2.2484>
- Leong, W. Y. (2024). TVET for all: Fostering social equity through inclusive skills education. *Journal of Inclusive Policies and Development*, 8(11). <https://doi.org/10.1109/icted62334.2024.10844604>
- Nchu, R. M., Tengeh, R. K., & Cronjé, J. (2023). A call for more entrepreneurship education in non-business programs at South African TVET colleges. *Eureka: Social and Humanities*, 5(3). <https://doi.org/10.5897/ijvte2022.0315>
- Nzembayie, K. F., Buckley, A. P., & Talay, I. (2024). Experiential pedagogies for cultivating entrepreneurial mindsets: Action design learning as tailored



- framework. *Entrepreneurship Education and Pedagogy*, 8(4). <https://doi.org/10.24908/pceea.2023.17112>
- Sedaghat, M., & Maxwell, A. (2024). Best startup experience, an immersive multi-disciplinary experiential education. *Proceedings of the Canadian Engineering Education Association (CEEA) Conference*. <https://doi.org/10.7718/IAMURE.IJE.V1111.101>
- Shikalepo, E. E. (2019). Sustainability of entrepreneurship and innovation among TVET graduates in Namibia. *International Journal for Innovation Education and Research*, 7(5). <https://doi.org/10.21303/2504-5571.2023.003062>
- Sleeman, D. (2018). Experiential learning, entrepreneurship and enterprise: Designing learning for the future of work. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v14i1.32317>
- Subrahmanyam, G. (2013). *Tackling youth unemployment through TVET*. Youth Policy Press. <https://www.youthpolicy.org/articles/tvet-youth-unemployment>
- Teoh, W. M. Y., Yen, Y. Y., & Loh, J. (2024). Fostering future-ready female TVETpreneur talent framework. *Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development*, 8(11). <https://doi.org/10.24294/jipd.v8i11.8177>
- Tien, H. T. H., Binh, N. T. T., & Chuc, N. H. (2019). Embedding entrepreneurship education in Vietnamese TVET towards the 4th Industrial Revolution. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 9(3). <https://doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.9.03.2019.P8759>
- Udukeke, F.O. & Usoro, E. B. (2023). *Entrepreneurship and Innovation*. Uyo: Dorand press.
- Ukoima, E. F. and Eminue, U. O. (2020). Repositioning Vocational Education for Economic Development in Nigeria. *In* Usoro, E. B. and Akpan, N. A. (Ed). *Book of Reading in Vocational Education Administration and Supervision* (288 – 313). Uyo: Soulmate & Publication Company Ltd.
- Wahab, F. K., & Adekomaya, V. (2025). Transforming entrepreneurship education for 21st-century workplace and innovative leadership skills. *Vocational and Technical Skills Education Journal*, 12(4). <https://doi.org/10.21015/vtse.v12i4.1958>
- Widodo, W., Baswedan, A. R., Suyata, P., & others. (2024). Entrepreneurship education in vocational schools: An Indonesian model. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 13(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/25151274241292276>
- Yadav, S. (2023). Fostering entrepreneurial mindsets and nurturing tomorrow's innovators. *In Innovative Approaches in Entrepreneurship Education*. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-5426-1.ch001>