

ASSESSING ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AS A STRATEGY FOR MITIGATING GRADUATE UNEMPLOYMENT: EVIDENCE FROM CEVTED, FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION (TECHNICAL), AKOKA

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Abstract

The study assessed entrepreneurship education as a strategy for mitigating perceived graduate unemployment among graduates of the Federal College of Education (Technical), Akoka, Lagos, with particular attention to the activities of the Centre for Vocational and Technical Education Development (CEVTED). A survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 1,173 NCE graduates of the College, including unemployed graduates and graduates undertaking direct-entry programmes in tertiary institutions within Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State. A sample of 100 respondents was selected through proportionate sampling. Data were collected with a researcher-developed questionnaire titled Entrepreneurship Education and Unemployment Questionnaire (EEUQ). The instrument comprised two sections and used a four-point Likert scale. Experts in the College validated the instrument, while a reliability coefficient of 0.73 was reported. Data for the research questions were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Respondents generally perceived entrepreneurship education and practical skills acquired through CEVTED as useful for entrepreneurial skill development and possible improvement in employment prospects. The reported correlation for the first hypothesis was $r = .960$, which is statistically significant at $p < .001$ when evaluated with $n = 100$ and $df = 98$. The second reported correlation, $r = .148$, is not statistically significant at $p = .142$. The findings therefore provide evidence of strong perceived association in the first analysis but do not support a statistically significant association in the second. The study concludes that CEVTED has potential value as a practical entrepreneurship-development initiative; however, its actual unemployment reduction has not been fully established in this study. It is therefore recommended that strong partnerships should be established among CEVTED, relevant industries, successful entrepreneurs and financial institutions to provide graduates with mentorship, industrial exposure, market information, business support and access to appropriate financing opportunities.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship education, graduate unemployment, entrepreneurial skills, CEVTED, employability*

Introduction

Entrepreneurship education refers to the process of equipping individuals with knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies needed to identify opportunities and create value through enterprise. It emphasizes creativity, innovation, risk awareness, problem solving and self-reliance. UNESCO (2008) described entrepreneurship education as experiences that help learners develop the ability and vision to recognize and transform opportunities. In tertiary education, such experiences can complement formal academic preparation by exposing students to practical skills and entrepreneurial ways of thinking. Entrepreneurship education can strengthen the business skills and competencies required for productive economic participation and self-employment (Akingbade & Aberuagba, 2019). Similarly, Guerrero and Urbano (2012) emphasized the role of entrepreneurial universities in promoting knowledge-based entrepreneurship, business creation and employment.

According to Gbadebo et al (2025) entrepreneurship education is one response to graduate unemployment because it can broaden the range of options available to graduates beyond dependence on salaried employment. However, entrepreneurship education should not automatically be equated with employment creation. Its contribution depends on the quality of training, practical

exposure, access to finance and markets, mentoring, institutional support and the ability of graduates to apply acquired skills after graduation. Nnaji and Ahmed (2017) emphasized that entrepreneurship education equips young people with the knowledge, skills and competencies needed for self-employment, thereby contributing to youth empowerment and employment generation

Graduate unemployment remains an important socioeconomic concern in Nigeria. The Nigeria Labour Force Survey reported an unemployment rate of 5.3% in the first quarter of 2024, compared with 5.0% in the third quarter of 2023; the unemployment rate among persons with post-secondary education was 9.0% in the first quarter of 2024 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024). These figures underline the need to strengthen pathways from tertiary education to productive work, while recognizing that unemployment statistics and individual employment experiences are not interchangeable. Yan et al (2018) emphasized the importance of developing soft skills among university students, suggesting that such competences can strengthen graduates' employability and readiness for the world of work. Olawale and Garwe (2010) found that financial, market, management, economic and infrastructural constraints can hinder the growth and sustainability of new enterprises, suggesting that entrepreneurship education should be complemented by appropriate support systems.

The Federal College of Education (Technical), Akoka was established to produce technically skilled and vocationally competent teachers. The College provides technical, vocational and entrepreneurial training through its programmes. One initiative associated with this orientation is the Centre for Vocational and Technical Education Development (CEVTED), which provides opportunities for practical and entrepreneurial skill development. The present study therefore examined how graduates perceive entrepreneurship education and skills acquired through CEVTED in relation to unemployment.

The study was guided by the need to distinguish between what respondents believe entrepreneurship education can achieve and what can be demonstrated through verified employment records. The study therefore treats the questionnaire findings as evidence of respondents' perceptions and reported experiences rather than as direct evidence that CEVTED caused a reduction in unemployment.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study was to assess entrepreneurship education as a strategy for mitigating perceived graduate unemployment among graduates of FCE (T), Akoka, particularly through the activities of CEVTED. Specifically, the study sought to:

- a) determine the perceived relationship between entrepreneurship education and skills acquired at CEVTED and unemployment reduction among graduates;
- b) examine the perceived contributions of CEVTED to entrepreneurial skill acquisition among graduates; and
- c) determine the perceived extent to which entrepreneurship education and skills acquired at CEVTED are associated with unemployment mitigation among graduates.

Research Questions

- a) What relationship do graduates perceive between entrepreneurship education and skills acquired at CEVTED and unemployment reduction?
- b) What are the perceived contributions of CEVTED to entrepreneurial skill acquisition among graduates?
- c) To what extent do graduates perceive entrepreneurship education and skills acquired at CEVTED as associated with unemployment mitigation?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship education and skills acquired at CEVTED and perceived unemployment reduction among graduates of F C E (T) , Akoka, Lagos.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship education and skills acquired at CEVTED and perceived unemployment mitigation among graduates of F C E (T) , Akoka, Lagos.

Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design. The population comprised 1,173 NCE graduates of FCE (T), Akoka, including graduates who were unemployed and graduates undertaking direct-entry programmes in tertiary institutions within Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State. A sample of 100 respondents was selected using proportionate sampling. The respondents were drawn from the target graduate population.

Data were collected using a researcher-developed structured questionnaire titled Entrepreneurship Education and Unemployment Questionnaire (EEUQ). The instrument contained two sections. Section A elicited demographic information, including gender, age and year of graduation. Section B contained items relating to entrepreneurship education, skills acquired through CEVTED and perceived unemployment reduction or mitigation. Responses were measured on a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree = 1. A mean benchmark of 2.50 was used for interpreting item responses. The instrument was validated by experts in the College and a reliability coefficient of 0.73 was reported.

Frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the research questions. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	23	23.0
	Female	77	77.0
	Total	100	100.0
Age	20–25 years	50	50.0
	26–30 years	42	42.0
	31–35 years	6	6.0
	36 years and above	2	2.0
Total		100	100.0

The respondents comprised 23 males (23.0%) and 77 females (77.0%). Half of the respondents (50.0%) were between 20 and 25 years, while 42.0% were between 26 and 30 years. Only 8.0% were aged 31 years or above. The distribution therefore indicates that the respondents were predominantly young graduates.

Research Question One

What relationship do graduates perceive between entrepreneurship education and skills acquired at CEVTED and unemployment reduction?

Items	Mean	SD
Entrepreneurship education and practical skills acquired at CEVTED are important for decreasing unemployment among graduates.	3.70	.52
Entrepreneurship education and skills acquired at CEVTED provide knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to create and manage businesses.	3.55	.53
Entrepreneurship education and skills acquired at CEVTED have the potential to reduce unemployment among graduates.	3.50	.53
Entrepreneurship can generate economic wealth, growth and innovation and may contribute to employment creation.	3.43	.55
Entrepreneurship education and skills acquired at CEVTED provide preparation for starting and growing businesses.	3.38	.53
Entrepreneurship education and skills acquired at CEVTED can help graduates perform effectively as entrepreneurs.	3.37	.57
Grand Mean	3.48	

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Research Question One

What relationship do graduates perceive between entrepreneurship education and skills acquired at CEVTED and unemployment reduction?

All six items had mean scores above the 2.50 benchmark, with a grand mean of 3.48. Respondents therefore expressed a generally favourable perception of the contribution of entrepreneurship education and CEVTED-related practical skills to unemployment reduction. The highest-rated item concerned the importance of entrepreneurship education and practical skills ($M = 3.70$), while the lowest-rated item concerned graduates' ability to perform effectively as entrepreneurs ($M = 3.37$). The pattern suggests strong confidence in the value of entrepreneurship training, although slightly lower confidence in whether training alone guarantees entrepreneurial performance.

Research Question Two

What are the perceived contributions of CEVTED to entrepreneurial skill acquisition among graduates?

Items	Mean	SD
CEVTED classes are practical-oriented.	3.59	.59
CEVTED develops resilience that helps graduates respond to difficulties, failure and rejection.	3.47	.57
CEVTED teaches practical skills such as dressmaking, tie-dye, phone repair and confectionery production.	3.47	.56
Skills such as financial management, marketing, business development, management and problem solving should be continuously strengthened for self-employment.	3.45	.57
CEVTED provides entrepreneurial coaching, mentoring, workshops and seminars for business development.	3.46	.55
CEVTED entrepreneurship education equips graduates with skills needed for self employment and business growth.	3.41	.54
Grand Mean	3.47	

The grand mean of 3.47 indicates a generally favourable perception of CEVTED's contribution to entrepreneurial skill acquisition. The highest mean was recorded for the practical orientation of CEVTED classes ($M = 3.59$), while the lowest was recorded for the statement that CEVTED entrepreneurship education equips graduates with skills for self-employment and business growth ($M = 3.41$). The relatively narrow spread of the means indicates broad agreement across the items.

Research Question Three

To what extent do graduates perceive entrepreneurship education and skills acquired at CEVTED as associated with unemployment mitigation?

Items	Mean	SD
Networking and mentorship associated with entrepreneurship education and skills acquired at CEVTED can reduce unemployment among graduates.	3.47	.66
Entrepreneurship education and skills acquired at CEVTED can support unemployed graduates and graduates struggling to create income.	3.44	.67
Entrepreneurship education and skills acquired at CEVTED can influence job creation and contribute to graduate employment.	3.48	.59
Effective application of entrepreneurship knowledge and skills can reduce unemployment.	3.43	.60
Participation in entrepreneurship activities and continued use of CEVTED -acquired skills after graduation can help mitigate unemployment.	3.36	.64
Grand Mean	3.43	

The grand mean of 3.43, which is above the 2.50 benchmark, indicates that respondents generally perceived entrepreneurship education and CEVTED-acquired skills as useful for unemployment mitigation. The highest-rated item was the perceived contribution to job creation and employment ($M = 3.48$), while the lowest was continued participation in entrepreneurship activities after graduation ($M = 3.36$). This relatively lower score may suggest that the transition from training to sustained post-graduation entrepreneurial activity remains a challenge.

Test of Hypothesis One

H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship education and skills acquired at CEVTED and perceived unemployment reduction among graduates.

Variables	N	df	r	p (two-tailed)	Decision
Entrepreneurship education/CEVTED skills and perceived unemployment reduction	100	98	.960	< .001	Reject H_{01}

The Pearson correlation of $r = .960$ with $n = 100$ and $df = 98$ indicates a very strong positive association. The corresponding two-tailed probability is far below .001; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected at the 0.05 level. This implies that the correlation is significant.

Test of Hypothesis Two

H_{02} : There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship education and skills acquired at CEVTED and perceived unemployment mitigation among graduates.

For $r = .148$ with $n = 100$ and $df = 98$, the approximate two-tailed p-value is .142. Since $p = .142$ is greater than .05 significant level, H_{02} was not rejected. This indicates that there is no significant

Variables	N	df	r	p (two-tailed)	Decision
Entrepreneurship education/CEVTED skills and perceived unemployment mitigation	100	98	.148	.142	Fail to reject H ₀₂

significant relationship between entrepreneurship education and skills acquired at CEVTED and perceived unemployment mitigation among respondents. The finding suggests that, although respondents generally expressed favourable perceptions in the descriptive results, the second correlation does not provide sufficient statistical evidence of an association between the variables at the 5% significance level.

Discussion of Findings

The findings show that respondents generally viewed entrepreneurship education and CEVTED as useful for practical skill development and as a possible pathway towards improved employment prospects. The descriptive results were consistently above the 2.50 benchmark across the three research questions. The strongest descriptive response concerned the importance of practical entrepreneurship education, while the relatively lower scores on post-graduation entrepreneurial performance and continued entrepreneurial activity suggest that training alone may not be sufficient to guarantee sustainable self-employment.

The first hypothesis produced a very strong positive correlation ($r = .960, p < .001$). The statistical significance indicates that the two measured variables were strongly associated. The second hypothesis produced a weak positive correlation ($r = .148, p = .142$), which was not statistically significant. This result contrasts with the generally favourable descriptive responses. One possible explanation is that respondents may recognize the value of entrepreneurship education without experiencing the external conditions needed to convert training into employment, such as access to finance, markets, mentoring, infrastructure and sustained business support. It is therefore possible for perceived usefulness to be high while the statistical association with the unemployment measure remains weak.

The findings broadly agree with previous literature emphasizing entrepreneurship education, practical skills and employability. Amoor (2008) argued that entrepreneurship education can provide graduates with additional skills for self-employment and job creation. Parwez (2017) similarly highlighted community-based entrepreneurship as a possible route to employment creation and local economic participation. Oresanya et al. (2014) emphasized the relevance of vocational education and employability. These studies support the importance of practical and enterprise-oriented education, but they do not eliminate the need for supportive economic conditions.

The present findings also have implications for the design of CEVTED programmes. The relatively high rating of practical orientation suggests that graduates value opportunities to learn by doing. CEVTED may therefore be strengthened through sustained practical projects, mentoring, industry partnerships, financial literacy, market access and post-training follow-up. Such measures would help bridge the gap between acquiring a skill and turning that skill into sustainable economic activity. Generally, the evidence supports a cautious conclusion: entrepreneurship education and CEVTED are perceived by respondents as valuable components of graduate preparation, but the available evidence does not justify a blanket claim that CEVTED has independently reduced graduate unemployment. Stronger evidence would require longitudinal follow-up, verified employment records, income data, enterprise creation and survival measures, or other objective indicators.

Conclusion

The study concludes that entrepreneurship education and the practical skills associated with CEVTED are perceived by graduates as valuable for entrepreneurial preparation and improved

employment prospects. The descriptive findings show generally favourable perceptions of practical skill acquisition, entrepreneurship training, mentoring and business development. The first correlation indicates a very strong statistical association while the second correlation is weak and not statistically significant. Consequently, the study provides support for the potential usefulness of entrepreneurship education but does not provide sufficient evidence to claim that CEVTED, by itself, has caused or measurably reduced graduate unemployment. Future evaluations should combine perception-based surveys with objective employment and enterprise outcomes.

Recommendations

- a) CEVTED should continue to strengthen practical, hands-on entrepreneurship training by increasing opportunities for students and graduates to complete real business projects, produce marketable products and receive feedback from practicing entrepreneurs.
- b) Strong partnerships should be established among CEVTED, relevant industries, successful entrepreneurs and financial institutions to provide graduates with mentorship, industrial exposure, market information, business support and access to appropriate financing opportunities.
- c) CEVTED should establish periodic post-training entrepreneurship workshops, mentoring sessions and follow-up activities so that graduates can receive continued guidance as they move from skill acquisition to business start-up or employment.
- d) The College should strengthen monitoring and evaluation of CEVTED programmes by keeping systematic records of graduates' employment status, businesses established business survival, income-generating activities and further training. Such evidence would provide a stronger basis for determining whether the programme produces measurable employment outcomes.

Limitations and Implication for Future Research

The study relied on self-reported questionnaire responses from 100 graduates. In addition, the cross-sectional survey design and perception-based measures limit causal interpretation. Future studies should use longitudinal designs and combine questionnaire data with verified employment records, enterprise creation, income and business-survival indicators.

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