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EXAMINING THE PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION BY THE NASARAWA STATE VOCATIONAL AND RELEVANT TECHNOLOGY BOARD (NSVRTB), NIGERIA, 2015-2024

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Abstract

Vocational education institutions in developing economies face persistent challenges in communicating the value of their programmes and connecting graduates to viable employment opportunities. This study examined the strategies deployed by the Nasarawa State Vocational and Relevant Technology Board (NSVRTB) to promote vocational education in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, between 2015 and 2024. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Human Capital Theory was used as its framework of analysis. Data was collected from 312 ex-trainees of the Board's four training centres in Lafia, Doma, Wamba and Nassarawa local government areas, supplemented by Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with 24 purposively selected stakeholders including centre managers senior ministry officials and ex-trainees. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages), while qualitative data were subjected to thematic and content analysis. Simple Linear Regression was used to test the study hypothesis. The findings revealed that the Board's promotional architecture is composed of four interrelated channels: traditional media (radio and television), community-level sensitisation through traditional leaders, post-training incentive schemes (formerly starter-pack kits) and industry/employer collaboration. However, 65.71% of respondents reported that the Board does not effectively use media and social media to promote its programmes. Community outreach was rated positively by only 43.59% of respondents and the regression analysis demonstrated that industry partnerships did not significantly predict the promotion of vocational education ($\beta = .045$, $p = .431$). The study concludes that the Board's promotional strategies are fragmented, underdeveloped and largely ineffective as a coherent system. The study recommends a multi-channel communication overhaul integrating social and digital media, redesign of the starter-pack programme with accountability mechanisms, formalisation of industry partnerships and institutionalisation of job placement and transition support frameworks.

Keywords: Vocational Education, Promotional Strategies, Nasarawa State, Human Capital Theory, Employment Generation, Community Outreach.

Introduction

Globally, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is recognised as a critical mechanism for equipping individuals with skills necessary for economic participation, self-employment and workforce development. In Sub-Saharan Africa, however, persistent challenges around institutional visibility, inadequate promotional frameworks and weak employer linkages continue to undermine the transformative potential of vocational education programmes. Nigeria, with its structural unemployment challenges and rapidly growing youth population, presents a compelling context within which to examine how vocational education institutions communicate the value of their programmes and facilitate graduate transitions into the labour market.

The Nasarawa State Vocational and Relevant Technology Board (NSVRTB) was formally established by Edict No. 18 of 1998 with the central mandate to reduce unemployment, encourage self-employment and equip Nasarawa State citizens with market-relevant practical skills (Nasarawa State Government, 1998). Despite over two and a half decades of operation, systematic empirical investigation into the strategies the Board deploys to promote vocational education and extend its reach to prospective trainees and employers has been limited. Understanding these promotional strategies is significant because the effectiveness of vocational education ultimately depends not only on the quality of training delivered, but also on how well that training is communicated to intended beneficiaries, how actively the institution engages with industry partners, and how robustly it facilitates post-training transitions.

Existing literature on TVET in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa tends to focus heavily on curriculum quality, graduate employability and funding challenges (Akpan et al., 2023; Chizoba et al., 2020; Omoju et al., 2023), while relatively little attention has been devoted to understanding how vocational institutions promote their programmes, sustain public awareness and build strategic partnerships that translate training into employment outcomes. This study addresses this gap by empirically investigating the strategies deployed by the NSVRTB to promote vocational education in Nasarawa State between 2015 and 2024 and by assessing whether these strategies have produced measurable promotional outcomes. The paper is structured as follows: Section two presents the conceptual and theoretical framework, followed by an empirical review of related literature in Section three. Section four outlines the methodology. Section five presents the data analysis and findings. Section six discusses the findings in relation to theory and existing literature, and Section seven provides conclusions and recommendations.

Literature Review

Vocational Education and its Promotional Ecosystem

Broadly defined, vocational education encompasses educational programmes and training that prepare individuals for specific occupations or trades by developing practical, technical and competency-based skills (Okolocha, 2012; NPE, 2004). While the technical delivery of vocational training has attracted substantial scholarly attention, its promotional ecosystem understood as the institutional strategies, communication channels and partnership mechanisms through which vocational institutions recruit, inform and engage prospective beneficiaries, employers and the wider public remains comparatively understudied. Promotion in the context of vocational education entails far more than advertising. It encompasses a range of strategic activities through which institutions: (i) communicate

programme availability and value to prospective trainees; (ii) build awareness among employers, policymakers and communities; (iii) establish formal linkages with industries for curriculum co-design, workplace attachment and employment placement; and (iv) provide post-training transition support such as starter packs and job placement services that bridge the gap between skill acquisition and productive employment. These dimensions collectively constitute what this study terms the promotional architecture of vocational education institutions.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Human Capital Theory originally advanced by Schultz (1961) and systematically developed by Becker (1964). The theory posits that investment in education, training and skills acquisition increase individuals' productive capacities, thereby improving labour market outcomes such as employment, income and economic contribution. From a Human Capital perspective, the promotion of vocational education is not merely a marketing exercise but a precondition for widening access to human capital formation. If prospective trainees are unaware of available training opportunities, or if vocational education lacks social visibility and institutional legitimacy, then fewer individuals will invest in skill acquisition and the broader economic returns to vocational training will remain unrealised. Applied to the institutional context of the NSVRTB, Human Capital Theory implies that the strategies deployed to promote vocational education are mechanisms that shape the preconditions for human capital development.

Effective promotional strategies ensure that individuals are informed of training opportunities, that employers recognise and value the skills produced, and that institutional frameworks are in place to connect trained graduates with economic opportunities. Conversely, weak promotional strategies create information asymmetries that reduce participation and undermine the returns on training investments, thereby frustrating the developmental objectives that vocational education is designed to achieve (Gillies, 2015; Marginson, 2019). Thus, while acknowledging the significant contributions of Human Capital Theory, this study also recognises its limitations. Critics such as Marginson (2019) have noted that the theory tends to overlook structural, social and institutional factors that mediate the relationship between skill acquisition and economic outcomes. This study extends the theory by demonstrating that the formation of productive human capital is contingent not only on the quality of training but also on the institutional conditions including communication strategies, industry partnerships and post-training support under which that training is promoted and sustained.

Empirical Review of Related Literature

Media and Communication Strategies in Vocational Education

Research has consistently highlighted the critical role of effective communication in driving awareness and participation in vocational education programmes. Adams et al. (2024) established, in a study in Ghana, that despite vocational education providing critical skills for employment, negative social perceptions and limited public awareness continue to discourage youth participation. The study identified a persistent gap between institutional communication efforts and public understanding of the value of vocational programmes. This finding is consistent with the present study's context, where a majority of respondents reported that the Board's media strategies fail to effectively reach target audiences.

Wami (2024), in an analytical review of TVET as a strategy for unemployment reduction in Nigeria, identified public awareness campaigns and government training schemes as important tools for expanding vocational education uptake. However, the study noted that these strategies are frequently not evaluated for effectiveness at the institutional level. Similarly, Bello et al. (2025) identified public awareness campaigns and the integration of vocational curricula as key promotional strategies, while emphasising the need for empirical evaluation at the level of specific vocational institutions, a gap that this study directly addresses.

Abiola (2023) observed that a major structural barrier in vocational education is information asymmetry, where potential trainees lack accurate knowledge about the availability of programmes and labour market opportunities. This problem is exacerbated when vocational institutions continue to rely exclusively on traditional media channels that are poorly aligned with the information-seeking behaviours of younger populations who increasingly depend on digital platforms. The present study provides empirical evidence of precisely this form of information asymmetry within the NSVRTB's operational context.

Community Outreach and Traditional Leadership Structures

Community-based communication strategies have been identified as particularly effective in rural and semi-urban African contexts where formal media penetration is limited, and traditional leadership structures carry significant social authority. Akpan et al. (2024) found that collaboration with traditional rulers, district heads and community opinion leaders enhance the legitimacy, credibility and programme uptake of public vocational training initiatives. Their study underscores that grassroots mobilisation through trusted community intermediaries can compensate for the limitations of formal broadcast media in reaching underserved populations.

Ekong and Ekong (2016), in a study of the National Directorate of Employment in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, found that regional distance between training centres and prospective trainees was a significant barrier to participation. The study concluded that establishing training facilities in local government areas and utilising community-level sensitisation strategies were important mechanisms for broadening vocational education access. This finding is directly applicable to the NSVRTB's context, where community outreach activities supplemented by engagements with district heads represent a primary mechanism for programme promotion in rural areas.

Post-Training Incentive Schemes and Starter Packs

Post-training material support has been widely identified in the literature as a critical mechanism for facilitating the transition from skill acquisition to self-employment. Kiboi (2017) identified the lack of start-up kits as one of the most significant barriers facing vocational graduates in Kenya's North Rift region. The study found that graduates possessed relevant technical skills but were unable to establish enterprises due to the absence of tools and initial capital. Tondi (2023), in a South African context, similarly found that the absence of post-training support structures including starter kits, mentorship and financial literacy undermined entrepreneurship outcomes among vocational graduates.

Mohammed (2020) and Ababio et al. (2024) further corroborate this position, with both studies finding that vocational training programmes produce better employment outcomes when they are complemented by targeted post-training empowerment interventions. These findings collectively suggest that starter-pack schemes, when properly designed and monitored, can serve as important bridges between training completion and enterprise creation. Critically, however, both Kiboi (2017) and Tondi (2023) emphasise that the effectiveness of starter-pack schemes depends on robust accountability mechanisms, adequate beneficiary screening and integration within a broader enterprise support framework.

Industry Partnerships and Employer Collaboration

Industry partnerships and employer collaboration are widely regarded as cornerstone elements of effective vocational education systems. Ngure (2015), in an evaluation of TVET processes in Kenya, found that low private-sector participation in curriculum design, workplace attachment and employment placement significantly undermined the ability of vocational institutions to produce market-relevant graduates. Similarly, Shrestha (2016) identified the weak link between industry and training providers as one of the most fundamental challenges in vocational education, arguing that rigid, non-industry-responsive curricula diminish graduates' employment prospects.

Mabunda and Frick (2020), in a South African case study, found that the absence of formal industry relationships directly impacted the employability perceptions and employment prospects of vocational college graduates. The study revealed that employers' limited familiarity with the curriculum and graduates' lack of workplace exposure significantly reduced employment uptake. These findings parallel the present study's context, where the absence of formal job placement mechanisms leaves NSVRTB graduates reliant on personal networks to secure employment.

Akpan et al. (2023) and Chukwu et al. (2024) further documented that vocational institutions in Nigeria frequently lack the structured industry collaboration mechanisms including internship programmes, curriculum co-design, certification recognition and employer feedback loops that are essential for ensuring the responsiveness and relevance of vocational training programmes. These empirical patterns align closely with the present study's findings regarding the weak and largely ad-hoc nature of the NSVRTB's industry linkages.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, combining quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches to examine the promotional strategies of the NSVRTB. This mixed-methods approach was chosen because it enables a more comprehensive, triangulated and contextually grounded understanding of research problems in vocational education, where quantitative data can reveal patterns and relationships while qualitative data illuminate the lived experiences, institutional practices and contextual factors that shape them (Creswell, 2018).

Study Area and Population

The study was conducted in Nasarawa State, North-Central Nigeria, focusing on the NSVRTB's four operational training centres located in Lafia, Doma, Wamba and Nassarawa

local government areas. These centres represent a mix of urban and rural settings and collectively cover the geographic breadth of the Board's operations. The total population of ex-trainees who graduated from the Board's vocational skills acquisition programme between 2014 and 2024 comprised 2,780 individuals, distributed across three graduation cohorts (2014, 2021 and 2023).

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample size of 350 was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula at the 95% confidence level. Proportional allocation using Bowley's formula ensured equitable representation of respondents across the four training centres: Lafia (n=110), Nassarawa (n=87), Doma (n=81) and Wamba (n=72). Systematic random sampling was employed to select individual questionnaire respondents from the Board's comprehensive register of ex-trainees. A total of 312 valid questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 89.1%. For the qualitative component, 24 key informants were purposively selected based on their knowledge, experience and direct involvement in vocational education promotion. These included the NSVRTB Executive Secretary, Director of Training, four centre Managers, Directors in the Ministries of Education and Science and Technology, four chairmen of ex-trainees' associations, and 12 ex-trainees (four each: employed, self-employed and unemployed).

Data Collection and Analysis

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire and semi-structured Key Informant Interview (KII) guide. The questionnaire was validated through expert review and achieved a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.86, indicating good internal consistency (Obeka, 2011). Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) via SPSS Version 23.0. Qualitative data from KIIs were analysed using qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. The hypothesis was tested using Simple Linear Regression. The decision rule was: reject null hypothesis if $p < .05$, otherwise do not reject.

Results and Analysis

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Among the 312 valid respondents, males constituted 68.91% and females 31.09%, reflecting a gender distribution consistent with broader vocational education participation patterns in northern Nigeria. The majority of respondents (39.42%) were aged 26–33 years, followed by 27.24% aged 18–25 years, confirming that the Board's programmes predominantly serve the economically active youth population. Regarding educational background, 45.51% held secondary education qualifications, 23.72% primary education, 16.99% had no formal education and 13.78% had tertiary qualifications, underscoring the inclusive nature of the Board's programmes. With respect to employment status, 69.23% of respondents were self-employed, 16.67% were gainfully employed in paid jobs and 14.10% remained unemployed a distribution establishing the centrality of self-employment as the primary employment pathway for the Board's graduates and forming the backdrop against which the adequacy of promotional and post-training support strategies must be evaluated.

Media and Social Media Communication

Respondents were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the Board's use of media and social media to promote awareness about vocational training programmes. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondents' Perception of the Board's Use of Media and Social Media

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	20	6.41
Agree	33	10.58
Undecided	54	17.31
Disagree	93	29.81
Strongly Disagree	112	35.90
Total	312	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 1 reveals that a decisive majority of respondents 205 (65.71%) combining Strongly Disagree (112; 35.90%) and Disagree (93; 29.81%) perceived the Board's media and social media communication as ineffective. Only 53 respondents (16.99%) affirmed the effectiveness of these channels, while 54 respondents (17.31%) were undecided. KII data confirmed and contextualised this pattern. A senior official of the Board indicated that the organisation primarily relies on the Nasarawa State Broadcasting Service (radio and television) as its principal communication medium, targeting both rural and urban audiences. However, an ex-trainee from Wamba offered a contrasting perspective:

> *I did not hear about the programme from radio and television. Actually, a friend of mine who knew someone who had previously attended the training told me about the availability of registration forms and encouraged me to apply.* (KII, Wamba, March 2026)

This divergence between institutional self-perception and beneficiary experience suggests a critical communication gap. The Board may be conflating the act of broadcasting information with effective communication without verifying whether the intended audience actually receives or acts upon the information. The finding is consistent with Abiola's (2023) observation regarding information asymmetry in vocational education contexts and Adams et al.'s (2024) finding that limited public awareness continues to depress participation in vocational programmes.

Community Awareness and Outreach Programmes

Table 2 presents respondents' assessment of the Board's community sensitisation and outreach activities.

Table 2: Respondents' Perception of Community Awareness and Outreach Programmes

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	46	14.74

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agree	90	28.85
Undecided	54	17.31
Disagree	57	18.27
Strongly Disagree	65	20.83
Total	312	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The data indicate a divided response: 136 respondents (43.59%) affirmed community outreach activities, while 122 (39.10%) denied their existence or effectiveness, and 54 (17.31%) were undecided. This distribution suggests that while community outreach is present as a strategy, its geographic and social reach is uneven.

The manager of the Wamba training centre elaborated on this strategy:

> *Apart from radio and television announcements, the Board also carries out community outreach programmes. Over the years, we have worked with district heads and other community leaders who help us inform people in their communities about the availability of vocational training opportunities and the need for our people to enroll. We do this regularly.* (KII, Wamba, March 2026)

This finding confirms that community-based outreach through traditional leadership networks is a meaningful component of the Board's promotional activities and is consistent with findings by Akpan et al. (2024) on the effectiveness of community intermediaries in rural African contexts. However, the mixed ratings suggest this strategy is not being implemented with sufficient consistency, coverage or follow-up to produce uniformly positive awareness outcomes across all four training centres.

Post-Training Incentives: Starter Packs and Start-Up Kits

Table 3 presents respondents' perceptions of the provision of post-training incentives.

Table 3: Respondents' Perception of Incentives Provided to Trainees

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	70	22.44
Agree	71	22.76
Undecided	15	4.81
Disagree	62	19.87
Strongly Disagree	94	30.13
Total	312	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The data reveal a majority (50.00%) of respondents disagreeing with the provision of starter packs, while 45.20% affirmed their provision. This near-even split, combined with qualitative evidence, reflects the discontinuous history of the programme. A KII response with a senior official of the Board provides critical context:

> *In the past, the government used to provide start-up kits and equipment to graduates of this programme upon completion of their vocational training to enable them establish their own businesses. However, we later observed that many beneficiaries were selling the items shortly after leaving the training premises. Some even sold them just outside the gates. Due to this recurring issue, the programme had to be discontinued.* (KII, Lafia, 2026)

The programme's discontinuation in response to beneficiary misuse, rather than through adaptive programme redesign, reflects a broader institutional pattern of policy abandonment rather than learning and improvement. An ex-trainee from Doma highlighted the practical consequences:

> *After the training, I realised that I had the skills but no money to buy the essential tools and raw materials to start properly. I expected that the Board would provide some form of support such as tools or a start-up kit, but unfortunately this was not provided.* (KII, Doma, February 2026)

This finding resonates strongly with Kiboi (2017) and Tondi (2023), who identified the absence of start-up support as among the most consequential barriers to self-employment among vocational graduates.

Industry and Employer Collaboration

Table 4 presents respondents' perceptions of the Board's collaboration with industries and employers.

Table 4: Respondents' Perception of Collaboration with Industries and Employers

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	67	21.47
Agree	72	23.08
Undecided	30	9.62
Disagree	61	19.55
Strongly Disagree	82	26.28
Total	312	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The data indicate that 139 respondents (44.55%) perceived some level of industry collaboration while 143 (45.83%) did not. This near-equal split, combined with the 9.62% undecided, reflects the absence of visible, structured and institutionalised industry linkages.

A corroborating perspective was offered by an ex-trainee from Nassarawa:

> *To the best of my knowledge, the training centre does not have a formal job placement arrangement that I know of. I found my current job as an assistant welder at a*

> *construction company through a combination of the skills I got and personal networking.* (KII, Nassarawa, February 2026)

Furthermore, Table 5 shows respondents' assessment of whether the Board's industry partnership deployment had significantly promoted vocational education.

Table 5: Respondents' Perception of Industry Partnership Deployment Impact

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree (not significant)	86	27.56
Agree (not significant)	75	24.04
Undecided	34	10.90
Disagree (significant)	42	13.46
Strongly Disagree (significant)	75	24.04
Total	312	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The data indicate that a majority of respondents (51.60%) perceived that industry partnerships had not significantly promoted vocational education, while 37.50% believed otherwise. This finding is further corroborated by Table 6, which presents the results of the hypothesis test.

Test of Hypothesis

H_0: The deployment of industry partnerships by the Vocational and Relevant Technology Board has no significant effect on the promotion of vocational education in Nasarawa State.

Table 6: Simple Linear Regression Analysis — Effect of Industry Partnership on Promotion of Vocational Education

Predictor	R	R^2	F	β	t	p
Industry Partnership	.045	.002	0.62	.045	0.79	.431

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The regression analysis revealed that industry partnership did not significantly predict the promotion of vocational education ($R = .045$, $R^2 = .002$, $F(1, 310) = 0.62$, $p = .431$). Industry partnership accounted for only 0.2% of the variance in the promotion of vocational education. The standardised regression coefficient showed a very weak positive and non-significant relationship ($\beta = .045$, $t = 0.79$, $p = .431$). Since $p = .431 > .05$, the null hypothesis is not rejected. The deployment of industry partnerships by the NSVRTB has not significantly promoted vocational education in Nasarawa State, based on respondents' perceptions.

Discussion of Major Findings

The Communication Gap: Outdated Channels and Information Asymmetry

The finding that 65.71% of respondents regarded the Board's media communication as ineffective points to a fundamental alignment failure between the Board's communication channels and the information-seeking behaviours of its target audience. The Board's self-

reported reliance on state-owned radio and television while institutionally acknowledged is not reflected in how most ex-trainees report learning about training opportunities. Rather, informal peer-based interpersonal networks emerge as the prominent information channel for a significant proportion of trainees as corroborated by multiple KII responses.

This finding echoes Okwonkwo's (2023) observation that vocational education in many public institutions suffers from persistent image and awareness deficits when promotional strategies fail to adapt to changing communication cultures. More critically, it validates Adams et al.'s (2024) conclusion that negative social perceptions and limited public awareness are sustained partly by the failure of institutions to communicate effectively through accessible and trusted channels. In a context where smartphone penetration and social media usage among Nigerian youth have grown substantially, the Board's exclusive reliance on broadcast media represents a strategic anachronism that limits its outreach potential, particularly among the 18–33 age cohort that constitutes the core of its trainee population.

From a Human Capital Theory perspective, this communication failure has direct implications for the efficiency of human capital formation. Information asymmetry where potential beneficiaries lack knowledge of available training opportunities restricts access to skill acquisition and limits the expansion of the state's productive human capital base (Gillies, 2015). The Board's promotional strategies, in their current form, may therefore inadvertently function as a barrier to human capital accumulation by failing to reach individuals who would benefit most from vocational training.

Community Outreach: Present but Unevenly Applied

Community outreach through district heads and traditional leaders represents the most grounded and contextually appropriate of the Board's promotional strategies, as evidenced by the relatively more balanced response distribution compared to media communication. The engagement of traditional leadership structures leverages existing social authority, trust and community communication networks an approach that has been demonstrated to be effective in mobilising participation in rural African contexts (Akpan et al., 2024; Ekong and Ekong, 2016).

However, the uneven ratings and substantial proportion of undecided respondents suggest that community outreach is not being implemented with sufficient geographic consistency, programmatic regularity or structural follow-up. The effectiveness of community-based promotion is contingent on sustained engagement rather than episodic outreach efforts. This finding implies that while the strategic direction of community outreach is sound, its implementation quality and geographic coverage require significant strengthening.

The Starter-Pack Paradox: Abandonment Rather than Adaptive Learning

The finding regarding the discontinuation of the starter-pack programme raises important questions about institutional responses to programme failure. The Executive Secretary's account reveals that the scheme was discontinued because beneficiaries sold the distributed equipment a rational response on the part of trainees, possibly driven by immediate survival needs, insufficient complementary support or a misalignment between assets provided and actual entrepreneurship intentions. Rather than triggering adaptive programme redesign

with improved accountability mechanisms, beneficiary screening and mentorship integration, the failure led to programme abandonment.

This institutional response pattern is particularly consequential because post-training material support has been consistently identified in the literature as a critical mechanism for translating vocational skills into self-employment outcomes (Kiboi, 2017; Mohammed, 2020; Tondi, 2023; Ababio et al., 2024). The discontinuation of the scheme may therefore have contributed directly to the post-training transition challenges faced by subsequent graduates, including the finding that 71.79% of respondents considered available starter-pack support inadequate and 81.41% identified lack of access to capital as a significant barrier to self-employment.

From a Human Capital Theory standpoint, the starter-pack scheme represents a form of complementary capital physical or financial assets that enable individuals to deploy their acquired human capital productively. Without access to such complementary resources, the returns on human capital investments remain unrealised at the individual level and in the aggregate economic sense. The challenge, therefore, is not whether to provide starter-pack support but how to design, monitor and embed such support within broader enterprise development frameworks that prevent misuse while sustaining impact.

Industry Partnerships: Weak, Ad-Hoc and Statistically Inconsequential

The most significant finding of this study and arguably the most consequential for the NSVRTB's promotional effectiveness is the statistical non-significance of industry partnerships in predicting the promotion of vocational education. The regression result (β = .045, p = .431) demonstrates that in their current form, industry partnerships are so weak and inadequately operationalised that they have no measurable promotional impact. With industry engagement accounting for only 0.2% of the variance in vocational education promotion, the finding confirms that the Board's industry linkages even if they nominally exist are insufficiently institutionalised to function as meaningful promotional or employment facilitation mechanisms.

This finding aligns closely with the empirical evidence from Ngure (2015), Shrestha (2016), Mabunda and Frick (2020) and Akpan et al. (2023), all of whom documented the underdevelopment of industry-VET partnerships in public vocational institutions across Sub-Saharan Africa. The literature is consistent in identifying that effective industry partnerships require structured arrangements curriculum co-design, workplace attachments, employer feedback loops, joint certifications and formal placement pathways rather than ad-hoc or informal engagements. The present study confirms that the NSVRTB has not yet developed these structural elements to any significant degree, leaving graduates without institutional labour market bridges and reliant on personal social capital to access employment opportunities.

From a Human Capital Theory perspective, the failure of industry partnerships to function as promotional or employment facilitation mechanisms represents a significant institutional shortcoming. Human capital returns are realised not only through skill acquisition but through the institutional mechanisms that connect skilled individuals to productive economic opportunities (Gillies, 2015; Marginson, 2019). Thus, when these connecting mechanisms are

absent or ineffective, the chain between training investment and economic return is broken. This finding has profound implications for both the NSVRTB's mandate and Nasarawa State's broader human capital development agenda.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has demonstrated that the Nasarawa State Vocational and Relevant Technology Board's strategies for promoting vocational education in Nasarawa State between 2015 and 2024 are characterised by fragmentation, inadequate operationalisation and limited integration into a coherent promotional ecosystem. The Board's four primary promotional mechanisms traditional media communication, community outreach, post-training incentive schemes and industry collaboration each exhibit significant structural weaknesses that collectively constrain the Board's ability to reach prospective trainees, sustain public interest in vocational education and facilitate graduate transitions into employment.

The evidence indicates that: (i) media communication fails to reach its intended audiences, particularly younger demographics; (ii) community outreach, while strategically appropriate, lacks the consistency and geographic reach needed for broad impact; (iii) starter-pack support was discontinued without adaptive redesign, creating a critical post-training support vacuum; and (iv) industry partnerships are so weakly developed that they exercise no statistically significant effect on the promotion of vocational education. The study concludes that for the NSVRTB to fulfil its mandate of promoting vocational education and contributing to employment generation in Nasarawa State, its promotional architecture must be fundamentally reconceptualised and strengthened. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

i. The NSVRTB should develop and implement a multi-channel communication strategy that integrates digital and social media platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube) alongside existing broadcast media. This strategy should include targeted campaigns for youth aged 18–35 years, alumni testimonials and partnerships with community and youth influencers to leverage peer-based information networks the channel already demonstrated to be the most effective in reaching prospective trainees.
ii. Community outreach activities should be systematised into a structured annual calendar with clear geographic targets, measurable reach indicators and follow-up mechanisms. Collaboration with district heads, traditional rulers and women's group leaders should be formalised through memoranda of understanding that define roles, responsibilities and reporting obligations.
iii. The starter-pack scheme should be redesigned and reinstated with robust accountability mechanisms including beneficiary screening criteria, in-kind distribution rather than cash equivalents, conditional release protocols tied to business plan completion, and mandatory participation in post-training mentorship and business advisory programmes. Regular monitoring visits in the 6–12 months following graduation should be institutionalised.
iv. The NSVRTB should prioritise the development of formalised, structured industry partnership agreements with local businesses, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and sector-specific industry associations. These partnerships should encompass curriculum review co-design, workplace attachment programmes, equipment

donations, graduate employment commitments and regular employer advisory input. Dedicated staff capacity for industry liaison functions should be established.

v. A formal job placement and career transition support unit should be established within the Board's organisational structure. This unit should maintain a live employer database, facilitate graduate-employer matching, organise quarterly job fairs and maintain post-graduation tracking of employment outcomes to inform programme improvement.

vi. Policymakers and development partners should adopt an integrated support framework that combines post-training financial assistance (microcredit, savings-linked loans) with entrepreneurship education, business advisory services and market access facilitation addressing the systemic gaps between skill acquisition and sustainable livelihood generation.

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