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# Institutional Collaboration as a Panacea for Students' Self-Employment in Tertiary Institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *The study investigated institutional collaboration as a panacea for students' self-employment in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Three research questions were answered in the study. The study adopted convergent mixed method approach while the population of the study as all private employers of labour in small and medium scale businesses in Bayelsa State as well as Directors, lecturers and students in the various Entrepreneurship Centres across all the State owned tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. The sample size for the study was 192 respondents consisting of three Directors, 30 CEOs of STEAM industries, 15 lecturers and 144 students within and around the selected institutions. Primary sources of data which were questionnaire (quantitative) and Key Informant Interview (qualitative) were used for data collection. Data collected quantitatively was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage while the qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The result of the study indicated that funding and research collaborations were the major forms of institutional collaboration expected for students' self-employment. There existed a high extent of collaboration in the areas of capacity building and programmes implementation. The strategies identified as vital to improving these collaborations included the clear definition of the responsibilities of all collaborating partners for improved students' self-employment. The study recommended regular business meetings between these educational institutions and industry experts to deliberate on emerging issues that will enhance students' self-employment in these institutions.*

**Keywords:** institutional collaboration, self-employment, tertiary institutions, students, Bayelsa State

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## INTRODUCTION

The issue of unemployment is one of the major economic challenge confronting most developing countries including Nigeria. Nigeria's unemployment rate as at 2022 was 37.7% and has been

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK projected to reach 40.6% in 2023 due to the continuous inflow of job seekers into the labour market (Egole, 2022) particularly from the various tertiary institutions in the country. The rate of youth unemployment in 2022 stands at 53.40 including graduates from these tertiary institutions and effort to gain employment or start a business appear stiff. These alarming figures has continued to generate concern for the government, international partners and the private sector particularly in a developing economy like Nigeria.

Over the years, the government has enforced several strategies to deal with the issue of youth unemployment including career counselling programmes in schools (Ajufo, 2013), automatic employment for best graduating students, empowerment programmes, enforcement of technical and vocational education (Yeap et al., 2021) and the recent introduction of entrepreneurship programmes across all higher educational institutions in the 2008/2009 session and Bayelsa State is not an exception. Part of the effort by the Bayelsa State government was the employment of all indigenes who possess a PhD as lecturers across the various tertiary institutions in the State (Addeh, 2019) among other economic empowerment initiatives. These interventions were geared towards reducing the rate of unemployment in the State but very little success has been recorded as the rate of unemployment continues to soar. The need to establish institutional partnerships via-a-vis collaboration in assisting graduates to become self-employed rather than seek for paid employment is therefore imperative.

There are several benefits that comes with being employed such as improved income, wealth creation and economic growth (Hussein et al., 2023) whether the employment type if paid or self. Self-employment focuses on starting and running a business as an individual by pulling together all the resources required to make the business successful. Basically, employment can either be self or paid/salaried. Paid or salaried employment is one in which the employee works for someone in return for wages or salary while self-employment deals with working for oneself by putting all the required resources together, taking the business risk alone as well as owning all the profit or losses. Afolabi et al., (2017) defined self-employment as a situation in which an individual, as opposed to working for an employer, creates, starts, and controls the business decision personally. However, collaboration is important on and off business as it does not only provide access to essential resources but also improves on the quality and quantity of output especially when it is done on an institutional basis. Beigel-Coryell et al., (2019) alluded to the fact that most institutions achieve financial sustainability by entering into institutional collaboration and this has contributed to the success of so many small, medium and large scale businesses. According to Lathabai et al., (2021), professionalization is better achieved when people collaborate and the need for institutional collaboration to enable young graduates start and own their own business cannot be overemphasized. Everyone requires collaboration at one point in time or the other. However, institutional collaboration is essential for businesses to achieve their short and long term goals and objectives.

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There are several types of institutional collaborations that formal organizations go into for the purpose of achieving common objectives. According to Redding (2011:2) it was stated that “given the rapidly changing landscape of higher education, its ever increasing costs, and the uncertain global economic climate, collaborations are increasingly cited as a solution to many of the challenges faced by colleges and universities today” and several tertiary institutions adopt different techniques to make this happen. One of the forms of institutional collaboration used in businesses is consortium. This is a type of partnership where institutions pull their resources together to carry out an activity that is for their joint interest. However, Porter and Perris (2023) pointed out that there are other types of institutional collaborations such as propositional collaborations are usually proposals but intentions could be made by making partial investments. In this case, facilities, personnel, funds and other resources can be deployed into the agreement with the expectation that greater outcomes and commitment will be required in the future.

Furthermore, institutions can also go into cooperative where each institution has an equal right of administration in the business and they both equally determine how future activities of the business will be carried out. According to Porter and Perris (2023), this type of collaboration differs from the proposition where commitment of parties may be distinct. On the other hand, institutions can also go into mutual service alliances which require the least amount of commitment from the collaboration. This type of partnership can be characterized as participants engaged in an arrangement that provides content, service, and support at a lower cost or with lower overhead than what might be expected participating in the same service as a singular entity (Porter & Perris, 2023). All of these institutional collaboration types are helpful in promoting access to several resources that can be useful in promoting the self-employment of students from tertiary institutions. In today’s global economy, tertiary institutions that wish to assist their graduate students become self-employed after graduation cannot shy away from this kind of collaborations. Researchers have conducted studies on how tertiary institutions and the industry can collaborate in the achievement of short and long term educational goals and objectives. Onajite and Oyerinde (2017) conducted a study on promoting institutional collaborations for capacity improvement of business educators in tertiary institutions in Delta State of Nigeria and the study showed that cooperation facilitates the achievement of goals, permits expert interaction, encourages the pooling of knowledge, and enhances the conduct of cooperative research, which increases efficiency and productivity. Similarly, Hindi and Frenkel (2022) investigated the contribution of collaboration to the development of sustainable innovation in the high-tech companies where it was revealed that businesses that collaborate with outside parties see a 3.95 times greater increase in revenue than those that do not. Onyinloye and Asonibare (2020) also conducted a related study on synergy and collaboration of institution-industry as a panacea to development of quality office technology and management curriculum in polytechnics which indicated among other things, that collaboration and synergy between institutions and businesses will lead to shared resources for educational programs' long-term sustainability as well as lay the groundwork for joint investments in facilities and equipment. It will also provide students with the common employability skills that businesses need, which can then be taught to them and reinforced in the classroom.

Nungse et al., (2020) also conducted another study on enhancing school-industry collaboration for effective skill development of technical education students in South-East Nigeria and the outcome was that among the strategies for enhancing school-industry collaboration in skill development of technical education students for efficient skill development in South East Nigeria, preparing skill training programs that will suit the school academic calendar, industry personnel participating in special lectures, and narrowing the gap through periodic meetings on technological innovations. It is therefore obvious that no institution can promote or advance its products without collaboration and this also applies to tertiary educational institutions that graduate students into the larger society.

The aim of the study was to investigate institutional collaboration as a panacea for students' self-employment in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

1. find out the forms of institutional collaboration required for students' self-employment in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.
2. examine the extent of institutional collaboration existing for students' self-employment in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State
3. determine the strategies for improving institutional collaborations for students' self-employment in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were answered in the study:

1. What are the forms of institutional collaboration required for students' self-employment in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State?
2. What are the extent of institutional collaboration existing for students' self-employment in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State?
3. What are the strategies for improving institutional collaborations for students' self-employment in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State?

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted convergent mixed method approach as it combined both qualitative and quantitative instruments for data collection. The population of the study consisted of all private employers of labour in small and medium scale businesses in Bayelsa State as well as Directors, lecturers and students in the various Entrepreneurship Centres across all the State owned tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. The sample size for the study was 192 respondents which was 50% of the projected 384 participants targeted among the respondents using the Cochran formula from an unknown population size. The multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted for the selection of study respondents. First, three tertiary institutions in the State were randomly selected and

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secondly, the three Directors of the entrepreneurship centres in each of these institutions were selected purposively. In the third stage, five lecturers in the entrepreneurship centres were randomly selected for the study totaling 15 lecturers in these three institutions. Similarly, ten employers of labour around the perimeter of each of these institutions were randomly selected for the study which totaled 30 employers of labour. Furthermore, random sampling method was used to select 48 (twenty-four first year and twenty-four final year) students from the three randomly selected tertiary institutions totaling 144 students. The employers selected were CEOs of selected STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics) industries. These selections made up the total of 192 respondents drawn for the study. The 192 respondents consisted of three Directors, 30 CEOs of STEAM industries, 15 lecturers and 144 students within and around the selected institutions. The study adopted primary sources of data collection which were questionnaire and Key Informant Interview (qualitative) which were administered to the respondents of the study. Data for the study were collected by the researcher with the aid of five trained enumerators. Three enumerators were deployed to assist in the collection of data from the students in each institution while one enumerator assisted in the collection of data from the lecturers and the last enumerator assisted in collecting data from the CEOs. These enumerators were trained on the data collection process before they were assigned in the data collection process. The data collected quantitatively was analyzed using frequency and percentage while the qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis.

## RESULTS

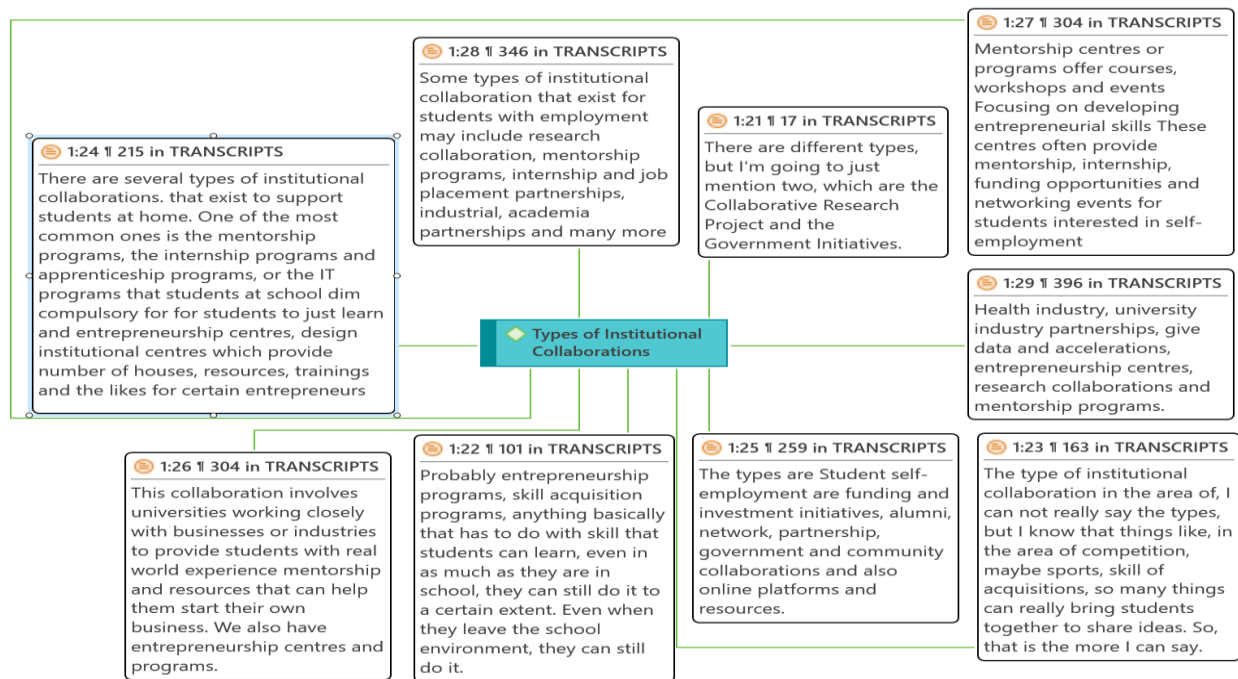
**Table 1: Forms of institutional collaboration required for students' self-employment in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State**

<b>Institutional Collaboration for Students' Self-employment</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Research-based collaboration	46	24.0
Funding collaboration	68	35.4
Curriculum development collaboration	36	18.8
Skill development collaboration	35	18.2
Professional network collaboration	7	3.6
Total	192	100.0

Table 1 showed the collective opinion of the respondents sampled for the study on the forms of institutional collaboration that is required for students' self-employment in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. Primarily, 68 respondents which is 35.4% of the total respondents of the study indicated that funding collaboration was the main stay of meeting students' self-employment needs in these tertiary institutions. This was followed by 46 respondents with a share of 24.0% who believe that research collaboration between these institutions was paramount for students' self-employment. Other respondents with a share of 18.8%, 18.2% and 3.6% alluded to curriculum

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK development collaboration, skill development collaboration and professional network collaboration as relevant to students' self-employment in these institutions.

Participants interviewed equally shared the various types of institutional collaboration they are aware of. The participants identified a wide range of institutional collaborations, emphasizing their diversity and practicality. These collaborations include government initiatives, entrepreneurship and skill acquisition programs, mentorship and internship opportunities, and partnerships between universities and industries. The discussions reflect a recognition of the various ways in which institutions can work together to support student development, particularly in areas like self-employment, research, and professional skill-building. The participants highlighted both formal and informal types of collaborations, showcasing the different forms these partnerships can take, from structured programs to more spontaneous, student-driven activities (Figure 1).



**Fig. 1: Types of institutional collaboration**

One of the participants mentioned that there are different types of institutional collaborations, specifically pointing out the "*Collaborative Research Project and the Government Initiatives*" as examples. This suggests an understanding of collaboration that involves both research-focused projects and initiatives led or supported by government bodies. Another participant highlighted *entrepreneurship programs and skill acquisition programs* as types of collaborations. They emphasized that these are activities where students "can learn, even in as much as they are in

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK school," and that these skills are applicable "even when they leave the school environment." This perspective emphasizes the practical and enduring value of skill-building initiatives within collaborative frameworks. A participant admitted some uncertainty in identifying specific types but mentioned that "**competition**, maybe sports, skill acquisitions" are areas where institutional collaborations can take place. They noted that these activities "can really bring students together to share ideas," suggesting that collaboration often occurs in practical, student-centered contexts. While another participant provided a more comprehensive list of types, including "**mentorship programs, internship programs and apprenticeship programs**," as well as IT programs and entrepreneurship centers. They described these as institutional collaborations that provide "resources, trainings, and the likes for certain entrepreneurs," indicating a broad scope of support mechanisms available through such collaborations. Also "**funding and investment initiatives, alumni, network, partnership, government and community collaborations**," and "**online platforms and resources**" were identified by a participant as types of institutional collaborations. This highlights the variety of approaches, from financial support to networking and digital resources, that institutions can utilize to collaborate.

In addition, another participant focused on the role of universities in working "**closely with businesses or industries**" to provide **mentorship and real-world experience** to students. They also mentioned entrepreneurship centers and programs as key components of these collaborations, which are designed to help students start their own businesses. Another participant also spoke specifically about "**mentorship centres or programs**," which offer "**courses, workshops and events**" aimed at developing entrepreneurial skills. They noted that these centers provide "funding opportunities and networking events" for students interested in self-employment, emphasizing the importance of structured support in entrepreneurial development. A participant also reiterated the existence of various types of institutional collaboration that support student employment, including "**research collaboration, mentorship programs, internship and job placement partnerships**," and "**industrial, academia partnerships**." This response underlines the diverse forms of collaboration that are geared towards enhancing student employability. Supportively, another participant mentioned the health industry and university-industry partnerships as examples of collaboration, highlighting the provision of "**data and accelerations, entrepreneurship centres, research collaborations and mentorship programs**." This reflects an understanding that collaboration spans across different sectors, each offering unique contributions to student development.

**Table 2: Extent of Existing Institutional Collaboration for Students' Self-Employment**

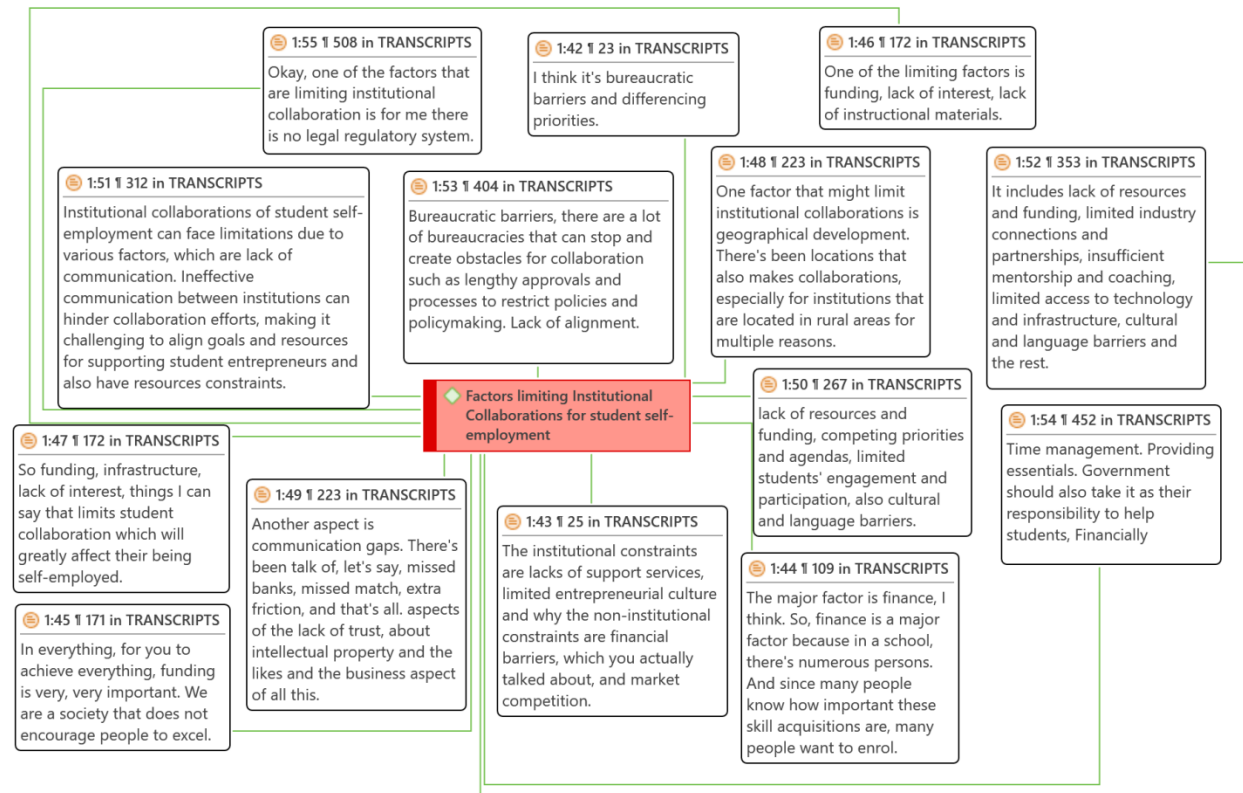
S/N	Extent of institutional collaboration	VLE	LE	HE	VHE
		%	%	%	%
1	Joint programme implementation between educational institutions and the industry for students self-employment	9.9	28.6	41.1	20.3
2	Co-implementation of projects by educational institutions and the industry for students self-employment	8.4	28.3	36.6	26.7
3	Partnership in the development of school curriculum for students self-employment	9.4	27.7	43.5	19.4
4	Co-funding of educational activities for students self-employment	13.1	26.2	38.2	22.5
5	Joint capacity building for students self-employment	3.7	35.6	33	27.7

Table 2 indicated that there existed a high extent of institutional collaboration for students' self-employment in terms of programme implementation, projects implementation, school curriculum development, funding and capacity building as indicated from the responses of the respondents of the study. More than 50% of the respondents indicated that these collaborations are to a high extent with the issue of capacity building and project implementation taking the lead. However, the area of funding with the highest rate of respondents indicating very low extent is an area that these collaborators need to pay closer attention to among other needs.

During the interview sessions, participants identified a range of factors that limit institutional collaborations aimed at fostering student self-employment. Key barriers include bureaucratic hurdles, financial constraints, and a lack of support services. Participants also highlighted issues such as ineffective communication, limited resources, and geographical challenges, particularly for institutions in rural areas. Additionally, cultural and language barriers, as well as the absence of a legal regulatory system, were cited as significant obstacles (Figure 2).



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**Fig. 2: Factors imitating against intuitional collaboration**

One participant identified *bureaucratic barriers* and differing priorities as significant obstacles to institutional collaboration. The participant believed these factors complicate and hinder the collaborative efforts needed for fostering student self-employment. Another participant highlighted both institutional and non-institutional constraints, noting that a "*lack of support services*" and a "*limited entrepreneurial culture*" are key barriers. They also mentioned financial barriers and market competition as external challenges that can further limit collaboration. A participant emphasized the importance of *finance*, stating that it is "a major factor" in limiting institutional collaborations. They explained that the demand for skill acquisition programs is high, but financial constraints often prevent many students from enrolling, thereby limiting the effectiveness of these programs. Another participant stressed that funding is "very, very important" for achieving success in any endeavor. They expressed concern that societal attitudes do not encourage people to excel, which could further inhibit the availability of resources and support for student self-employment initiatives. *Funding* is a critical limiting factor as identified by another participant, adding that a "*lack of interest*" and "*lack of instructional materials*" also pose significant challenges. They believed these factors directly affect the ability of students to collaborate effectively, which in turn impacts their potential for self-employment. The same

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participant expanded on their previous statement, adding that infrastructure issues and a general lack of interest further limit student collaboration. They suggested that these limitations have a detrimental effect on students' ability to become self-employed.

It was pointed out by another participant pointed that *geographical development* can be a limiting factor, especially for institutions located in rural areas. They believed that these locations create additional challenges for collaboration due to limited resources and accessibility. The same participant also mentioned communication gaps as a barrier to collaboration. They referred to issues such as "missed banks, missed match, extra friction," and a lack of trust, particularly concerning intellectual property and the business aspects of collaboration. A different participant identified several barriers to collaboration, including a "*lack of resources and funding*," "*competing priorities and agendas*," and "*limited student engagement and participation*." He also mentioned cultural and language barriers as additional challenges. Another participant focused on the impact of ineffective communication between institutions. They noted that "*lack of communication*" can hinder collaboration efforts, making it difficult to align goals and resources, which ultimately affects support for student entrepreneurs.

A participant reiterated the importance of resources and funding, stating that limited industry connections, *insufficient mentorship and coaching*, and limited access to technology and infrastructure are all factors that restrict collaboration. They also mentioned cultural and language barriers as additional obstacles. *Bureaucratic barrier* was identified by a participant as a significant limitation, pointing out that "lengthy approvals and processes" can create obstacles for collaboration. They believed that restrictive policies and a lack of alignment between institutions further complicate efforts to collaborate effectively. Another participant mentioned *time management* and the need for providing essentials as factors limiting collaboration. They argued that the government should take responsibility for helping students financially to overcome these barriers. A participant expressed concern about the *absence of a legal regulatory system*, which they believed is a major factor limiting institutional collaboration. They suggested that without clear regulations, it is difficult to establish and maintain effective collaborations.

Overall, the discussion reflects a broad consensus that while institutional collaboration has great potential, it faces numerous challenges that need to be addressed to support student entrepreneurship effectively.

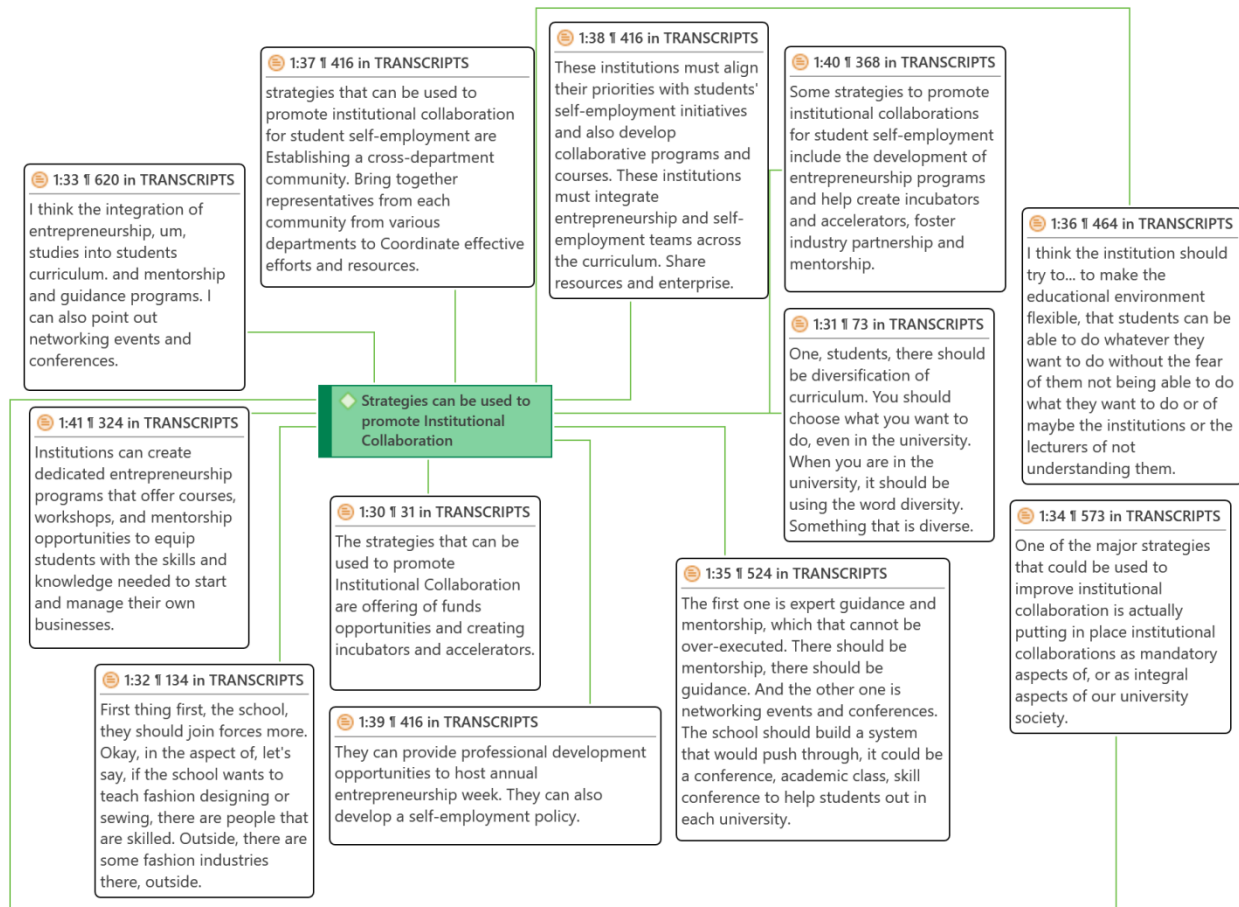
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**Table 3: Strategies for improving institutional collaborations for students' self-employment**

S/N	Strategies	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
		%	%	%	%
1	Focus should be on collective institutional goals	5.2	15.6	45.3	33.3
2	Establishing strong legal regulatory framework	3.1	11.5	46.9	38.5
3	Adoption of modern technology in the collaboration process	2.1	12.5	41.7	43.8
4	Creating open communication among existing collaborators	2.6	10.4	35.9	51
5	Clear definition of the responsibilities of partnering institutions	4.2	10.4	35.9	49.5

Table 3 revealed that the respondents sampled for the study agreed to the strategies for improving collaboration among institutions for students' self-employment. The strategies identified included focusing on institutional goals, strong legal framework, adopting modern technology, creating open communication and defining responsibilities of each collaborator. However, while defining the responsibilities and roles of each collaborator was a major strategy followed by the adoption of modern technology in the collaboration process, the issue of institutional goals was an area where a large percentage who indicated strongly disagree were clustered and this suggests that the issue of institutional goals was not a major concern.

Participants interviewed identified various strategies to promote institutional collaboration for student self-employment. Key suggestions included offering funding opportunities, creating incubators and accelerators, and integrating entrepreneurship studies into curricula. Participants also emphasized the importance of mentorship, guidance, and networking events, as well as the need for more flexible educational environments. Additionally, they recommended aligning institutional priorities with students' self-employment initiatives and making collaboration a mandatory aspect of university life (Figure 3).



**Fig. 3: Strategies to promote institutional collaboration**

One participant suggested that offering funding opportunities and creating incubators and accelerators are effective strategies to promote institutional collaboration. The participant believed that these initiatives would provide essential support for students looking to start their own ventures. Another participant emphasized the importance of curriculum diversification as a strategy. They stated that students should have the freedom to choose their areas of focus, even within the university, to better align their education with their entrepreneurial goals. A participant proposed that schools should join forces with external industry experts. For instance, they mentioned that if a school wants to teach fashion designing, it should collaborate with skilled individuals and fashion industries outside the school to enhance the learning experience. Another participant highlighted the integration of entrepreneurship studies into students' curricula as a key strategy. They also pointed out the value of mentorship, guidance programs, networking events, and conferences in promoting institutional collaboration.

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One participant argued that institutional collaborations should be made mandatory aspects of university societies. It was believed that by embedding collaboration into the fabric of the university system, it would become a more integral and effective component of student self-employment efforts. Another participant stressed the importance of expert guidance and mentorship, noting that these elements cannot be overemphasized. They also recommended that schools should organize conferences and networking events to help students connect with industry professionals and gain valuable insights. A participant suggested that institutions should create a more flexible educational environment. They believed that students should be able to pursue their interests without fear of being misunderstood or unsupported by the institutions or lecturers. Another participant recommended establishing a ***cross-department community to promote institutional collaboration***. He suggested bringing together representatives from various departments to coordinate efforts and resources effectively. The same participant added that institutions should align their priorities with students' self-employment initiatives. They advocated for the development of collaborative programs and courses, and the integration of entrepreneurship themes across the curriculum. He also suggested that institutions could promote collaboration by providing professional development opportunities, hosting annual entrepreneurship weeks, and developing self-employment policies. Another participant identified the development of entrepreneurship programs, the creation of incubators and accelerators, and the fostering of industry partnerships and mentorship as key strategies to promote institutional collaboration. While a participant recommended that institutions create dedicated entrepreneurship programs offering courses, workshops, and mentorship opportunities. They believed these programs would equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge to start and manage their own businesses.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The response from the different respondents sampled for the study indicated that funding collaboration was the main form of collaboration and these institutions need to establish in order to enable the students from these tertiary institutions to become self-employed. This kind of collaboration has a multiplier effect as Hindi and Frenkel (2022) indicated that institutions that collaborate make over three times their revenue in the period. Collaborating in the area of funding can therefore create a financial cycle which can enable more new businesses to be created in the long run. The idea that funding collaboration is paramount is understandable as this is remains an important resource that determines the success or failure of most businesses. This means that if the tertiary institutions and other establishment establish a funding mechanism, they can better assist students in various ways to start their own business at graduation. In a similar manner, the respondents also consider research collaboration as important. This may be due to the fact that this kind of collaboration will enable the students identify development gaps, access industry facilities and provide the network needed to succeed in business. Other forms of collaboration such as curriculum implementation, skill development and professional network were also considered important but at varying degrees. Despite the fact that skill development was not scored so high, Nungse et al., (2020) considered it in their study as an important aspect of collaboration which

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Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK should not be ignored. Educational stakeholders must therefore identify and more in areas of higher influence to solve students' employment needs after graduation.

The respondents also responded to the various initiatives for fostering student self-employment through collaboration between educational institutions and industry. The majority of respondents (41.1%) indicated that joint programme implementation is done to a high extent (HE). Combined with those who indicated a very high extent (VHE) at 20.3%, it suggests that around 61.4% perceive significant involvement of educational institutions and industry in this area. However, there's still a notable portion (38.5%) that sees this collaboration at a lower extent (VLE and LE). Similar to joint programme implementation, a significant proportion (36.6% HE and 26.7% VHE) recognizes co-implementation of projects to a high or very high extent, totaling 63.3%. This indicates strong collaboration, although nearly 37% see it as less extensive. The highest percentage of respondents (43.5%) indicates that joint development of the curriculum is happening to a high extent. Including the VHE category (19.4%), 62.9% of respondents perceive substantial industry-education collaboration. However, over a third (37.1%) still see this as limited. A notable 60.7% of respondents see co-funding as happening to a high or very high extent. This suggests that financial collaboration is relatively robust, though 39.3% feel this is not as extensively practiced. The responses here show the highest combined percentage for LE (35.6%) and VLE (3.7%), totaling 39.3%. However, the combined high and very high extent (60.7%) indicates a strong presence of joint capacity building initiatives, but also reflects the highest perception of low extent compared to other categories.

The data suggests a generally positive perception of industry-education collaboration for fostering student self-employment, particularly in project co-implementation and curriculum development. However, there's room for improvement, especially in joint capacity building, which shows the highest perceived low extent.

Furthermore, the respondents' indicated their perceptions of various suggestions aimed at improving the effectiveness of collaborations between institutions, particularly in the context of industry-education partnerships. The suggestions include focusing on institutional goals, the establishment of a strong legal regulatory framework, the adoption of modern technology, open communication, and clearly defined responsibilities for partnering institutions. Majority of the respondents (78.6%) agree or strongly agree that collaboration should focus on the goals of partnering institutions, with 45.3% agreeing and 33.3% strongly agreeing. This suggests widespread support for the idea that collaboration is essential for the success of industry-education partnerships if the goals of institutions are put into perspective. However, 20.8% of respondents either disagree or strongly disagree, indicating that while most of them see collaboration as beneficial, there are some reservations or challenges that might need to be addressed to fully embrace collaborative efforts. This aligns with the position of Onajite and Oyerinde (2017) who indicated in their study that efficiency and productivity may be affected if institutional goals are not given the attention it deserves.

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Similarly, majority of respondents (85.4%) agree or strongly agree that a strong legal regulatory framework should be established among institutions, with 46.9% agreeing and 38.5% strongly agreeing. This reflects a strong belief that clear legal guidelines and regulations are necessary to ensure successful collaboration and prevent misunderstandings or conflicts. The relatively low percentage of disagreement (14.6%) suggests that while most see the need for regulation, a small number may believe existing frameworks are sufficient or that regulation could introduce rigidity. An overwhelming 85.5% of respondents agree or strongly agree that modern technology should be embraced in the collaboration process, with nearly equal percentages agreeing (41.7%) and strongly agreeing (43.8%). This consensus underscores the importance of technology in facilitating effective collaboration, enhancing communication, and ensuring that partnerships are innovative and up-to-date. The low level of disagreement (14.6%) indicates that very few respondents oppose the adoption of modern technology, suggesting it is widely seen as a critical component of successful collaboration. This agrees with the findings of Onyinloye and Asonibare (2020) who indicated that collaboration can only contribute to the creation of more shared resources which can promote the success of partnering institutions in the long run.

A significant majority of respondents (86.9%) agree or strongly agree that open communication should exist among collaborators, with 51% strongly agreeing. This highlights the vital role that communication plays in the success of collaborations, ensuring that all parties are aligned and informed. The small percentage of disagreement (13%) suggests that while most respondents recognize the importance of open communication, a few may feel that existing communication channels are adequate or that other issues are more pressing. A vast majority of respondents (85.4%) agree or strongly agree that the responsibilities of partnering institutions should be clearly defined, with 49.5% strongly agreeing. Clear definition of responsibilities is crucial for ensuring accountability and preventing overlap or gaps in the collaboration process. The low percentage of disagreement (14.6%) suggests that most respondents see the need for clarity in roles and responsibilities, although a small minority might believe that these are already well-defined or that flexibility is sometimes needed.

The data indicates strong support for key strategies aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of industry-education collaborations. Emphasizing collaboration, establishing a robust legal framework, adopting modern technology, ensuring open communication, and clearly defining responsibilities are all seen as crucial to the success of these partnerships. The high levels of agreement across all items suggest that these strategies are widely recognized as important, though there are some minor reservations. Addressing the few concerns raised by respondents who disagreed could involve ensuring that collaborative efforts are flexible enough to adapt to specific needs, that legal frameworks do not become overly restrictive, and that modern technology is accessible and easy to use. Overall, these findings provide a clear roadmap for institutions looking to improve their collaborative efforts and better support student outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

The study concluded that funding collaboration was the major area of need among institutions in the process of meeting students' self-employment needs and this has remained a major challenge so far. Several efforts already exist to promote institutional collaboration for students' self-employment in these institutions but more interventions are still required particularly in the area of funding and programmes implementation. The respondents hence indicated that if the responsibilities of collaborating institutions are clearly defined, more students can be assisted to become self-employed after graduation.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. Tertiary educational institutions need to strategize on improving their financial base through internally generated revenue while also entering into a fund raising template that will enable them meet the employment needs of students who intend to start their own business after graduation.
2. The government need to establish more laws that will compel private organizations to enter into partnership with existing tertiary educational institutions for the production of more self-employed students. This will require repealing some of the laws which currently hinders such collaboration.
3. Regular business engagement should be established between tertiary educational institutions and other private entities to identify areas of collaboration needs and intervention for the socio-economic development of the nation through improved students' self-employment initiatives.

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