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Introduction

Globalization post COVID-19 has a complex yet unpredictable element of dynamism that calls for and necessitates economic growth and resilience; the explosive expansion of the regional job market at present is aptly due to a growing need for productivity and efficiency through quick technological integration. There are two major avenues that avail to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) graduates in order to capture a satisfactory standard of living in today's competitive workforce across Small Island Developing States (SIDS): gaining wage employment through the exchange of skilled labour for monetary compensation, and becoming an entrepreneur-at-large.

"Entrepreneurship is a key driver of economic growth and development" (Schumpeter, 1934, as cited in Mohan, 2022). The TVET graduate has a gargantuan weight of expectation on their shoulders to solve at least one of society's many fiscal problems through their acquired ingenuity from skills training, expectedly becoming sole proprietors or business partners. "There is growing interest in how innovators and entrepreneurs find meaningful problems to address in order to create novel value" (Nickerson et al., 2012 ; von Hippel & von Krogh, 2016, as cited in Bianchi & Verganti, 2021). Furthermore "to raise new questions, new problems, to regard old problems from a new angle, requires creative imagination and marks real advances in science"(Einstein & Infeld, 1938, p. 92, as cited in Bianchi & Verganti, 2021).

"In Caribbean SIDS there are fewer opportunities for entrepreneurship compared to higher-income countries that are more likely to have opportunity-driven entrepreneurship (Mohan et al., 2018; Skeete et al., 2007 as cited in Mohan, 2022). Despite the aforementioned, "Entrepreneurship is shown to reduce poverty, improve well-being, and empower disadvantaged segments of the population (Schumpeter, 1934; Thomas & Mueller, 2000, as cited in Mohan, 2022). The growing number of skill and trade workers from the Caribbean region brings forth a necessary watershed moment that concretises creative destruction to the highest degree, and given the fragility of many SIDS to growing climatic and economic shocks, it is within reason to hasten the process with notable urgency.

According to Mitzkus (2024), creative destruction leans towards making meaningful economic progress through innovation and technology, at the expense of old industries being destroyed in the process. Making the transition from the classroom to the working world can be daunting and scary to the new minted TVET graduate. Despite a low 3.3 per cent unemployment rate in Jamaica, tertiary graduates of renowned universities and colleges are still feeling the effects of a drifting job security: its either be unemployed or underemployed. The difference now that there is an eroding barrier to accessing capital by knowing how to manipulate digital technology, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and marketing one's skills earned.

I experienced a wave of fulfilment when I eventually became an educator for Entrepreneurial Strategies, being able to share my corporate sector experiences to disquieted yet brilliant young minds, whom would fiscally and responsibly lead the country's future. In fact, learning about entrepreneurship-along with financial Literacy-should be mandatory, beginning from primary school level.

Using the example of Singapore in my Entrepreneurial Strategies class comes with fervent passion. Why though? For a country that came to Jamaica (1/15th its size) and copied Jamaica's economic model, they rank high in economic development (a 600 Billion USD GDP), and they have made the prudent choice of Financial Literacy being mandatory at the primary, secondary and post-secondary levels. Henceforth I see no reason why Caribbean SIDS cannot follow the same approach to financial literacy education.

Context of Entrepreneurial Theory and Associated Frameworks

"Entrepreneurial theories are mental models of a business opportunity and how to organize to capture it" (Felin and Zenger 2017, Ehrig and Schmidt 2022, as cited in Ott & Hannah, 2024). The theoretical frameworks developed 50 years ago still hold merit, and explains in remarkable detail on consumer behavior, product demand, and how entrepreneurs think: the cornerstone of entering business is being able to solve problems that others instinctively evade due to complexity or lack of startup capital and operating expenditure.

Felin et al. (2024) posits that entrepreneurs are in a never ending cycle of creating novel ideas to address a common issue, or retrofit novel ways to solve old age problems. "This process is imaginative in that it necessarily entails a creative "leap" beyond the existing world as it is, with entrepreneurs envisioning various new possibilities (Kosslyn 1980, Weick 1989, as cited in Ott & Hannah, 2024), potential futures (Rindova and Martins 2021, as cited in Ott & Hannah, 2024), and conceptual combinations" (Martins et al. 2015, as cited by Ott & Hannah, 2024).

Moreover, becoming an entrepreneurs requires, by proxy, constructing a Business Model Canvas (BMC). "This framework, characterized by nine building blocks, offers a structured approach to elucidating a business's value proposition, target customer segments, channels, customer relationships, key activities, key resources, key partners, cost structure, and revenue streams" (Dikjman et al., 2015, as cited in Bachmann et al., 2025).

> *I personally like the Business Model Canvas, as it allows the students to visualise the start, operations and potential end of their firm, and thus being better equipped to take on what the entrepreneurial contours will reveal. What a delight it would be to have a story board of how your business starts, runs, and potentially ends, amid the untold uncertainty and approximated risks involved.*

Two other models worth mentioning for the budding entrepreneur and TVET graduate would be the BRIE model and "Me Money and Market" Model. "'Me' is the attractiveness of any match between 'me and the idea.' 'Market' is the belief that there is customer demand for your idea. 'Money' focuses on your assessment of the resources required to start up" (Greene, 2020, p. 68).

The BRIE Model "encompass both structure and process, and are the minimum necessary characteristics for identifying the existence of any organization, therefore defining any new organization as well (Katz and Gartner, 1988, as cited in Slocum, Davis & Winchester, 2013). Any aspiring entrepreneur should at least construct their business plan prior to registering and operating their business. However, Greene (2020) asserts that constructing the business plan before operations is simply a bad idea for anyone new to entrepreneurship due to the business plan's elastic nature and forthcoming uncertainties (p.94).What's important here is that Entrepreneurship theory should grant the TVET graduate the pivotal groundwork to deliver enduring value to their homes, communities, schools, and the wider society.



Economic Development and Resilience in the Anglophone Caribbean through SME's

Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Entrepreneurship is pivotal in the continuity of a state's economic development and resilience and "Economic complexity reflects the nature of knowledge accumulated and technological capability of a nation" (Ajide, 2022).

"Indeed, entrepreneurship has been linked to the growth and prosperity of nations, as well as the ability to lead to the sustainable development of various sectors" (Dean and McMullen, 2007; Van Stel, Storey, & Thurik, 2007; Shepherd and Patzelt, 2011; Belz and Binder, 2017; De Nicola, Muraközy, & Tan, 2021, as cited in Minto-Coy, 2023). Agreeably, Minto-Coy (2023) argues that there is an urgent drive to further develop the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the Caribbean region to effectuate sustainable development.

Many of the Caribbean's Small Island Developing states' (SIDS) Macro, Meso, and Micro Economies rely heavily on the creative juices that spring forth from novel entrepreneurial activity in SME's and yet simultaneously suffer from what I uniquely coin *"Nominal Economic Independence"* (NEI).

> *NEI, in this context, gives the illusion that a developing state is fully economically independent through significant entrepreneurial activity, but their economy heavily relies on a developed country's economic infrastructure, so much so that if the developed state were to fall then the developing country's economy would also fall.*

Small and Medium enterprises have gained meaningful spotlight in recent years after the COVID-19 Pandemic, as they paved the way to a comfortable livelihood for sole proprietors in the digital space; although the possibility of living affluent lives after graduation have crossed my students' mind during spirited class discussions, they found creating large scale companies too difficult or unattractive.

I often affirmed that SME's are a good start to a future multimillion dollar conglomerate; one of the characteristics of successful entrepreneurs would be calculated risk taking, and thus they shouldn't afford fear to paralyse revolutionary ideas. "The main argument for this is that SMEs are the dominant form of business organization, representing roughly 95 – 99% of all companies" (Robu, 2013). This is necessary as "The Caribbean nations ranked low on the Global Competitiveness Index" (Joseph, 2025).

Amid the low competitive nature of Caribbean SIDS, anglophones rank high in starting up a business venture. According to a briefing by the Department of Economics at the University of the West Indies Mona (The UWI Mona) (n.d.), Jamaica ranked 6th in starting a business globally in 2019, and 5th in 2018, despite ranking low on operating a business (75th globally). The *Doing Business* scaling now has been discontinued however, and Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago now rank 91st and 93rd respectively (Jamaica 1st in the Caribbean region) on the global startup index in 2026 (StartupBlink, n.d.).

Teaching students to be their own bosses through a Constructivist Classroom

Generation Z and Generation Alpha are embedded in a digital age where dynamic agents of socialization reigns king, and thus there is a constant tug-of-war for their attention in the classroom. I would often investigate what learning strategy would give the best results, especially teaching entrepreneurship prior to starting the qualification plan. "Learning theories help describe how people learn and thus help in identifying best practices for teaching" (Pounder, 2014, as cited in Pounder, 2016).

I envision my students after graduation to become beacons, or rather operatives of change through entrepreneurship, and thus it is imperative to engage the appropriate learning domains to maximize the connection between working memory and their trade, thus why I chose the *Constructivism Learning theory*. "Constructivism is an approach to learning that believes in the personal construction of knowledge by learners through the interaction of prior knowledge to form a new experience. (Akpomi, & Kayii, 2022). Additionally, "Constructivism is a learning theory based on observation and how people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences (Ekpenyong & Edokpolor, 2016 as cited in Akpomi & Kayii, 2022).

I saw notable progress when using the constructivist approach, as it became relatable for my students to exercise their business autonomy; the resurgence of the Entrepreneurial Club, and staging multiple sale opportunities at the institution engaged the kinesthetic domain to a high degree, and gave them meaningful experience in handling and managing cash flow.

"In the teachings of entrepreneurship, students develop a level of insight and confidence from practicing methods for navigating unknown territories and from experiencing success and failure as in the real world" (Pounder, 2016). "There is now consensus in the literature (e.g. Elmuti, Khoury, & Omran, 2012; Field, 2014; Henry, Hill, & Leitch, 2005; Kuratko, 2003 as cited in Pounder, 2016). that entrepreneurship (or at least some aspects of it) can be taught" (Pounder, 2016).

Carefully selected assessments provided practice in creating their business plans under subtle scaffolding, and they would have to defend their plan (similar to a viva defense) through lived experiences and research. The best part for me: when a product with immense potential is constructed through coordinated teamwork. “Product innovation corresponds assertively to the introduction of a new good or service, or a significantly improved one in terms of its characteristics or intended use, through which significant improvements are included in technical characteristics, components, materials, ease of use, or other functional characteristics” (Chang-Muñoz et al., 2022).

To take it a step further, a Trainee Business Startup Programme was introduced for those desirous of opening their own business while pursuing their programme; the programme would offer a sum of cash to buy equipment while being consulted and audited throughout their business journey. The Global Entrepreneurship Week runs from November 16 to 22, 2026 with the theme ‘Together We Build’ is a fitting avenue for my students to showcase their creativity to key stakeholders in the Lluidas Vale Community.



Conclusion

In 2026, the globe has considerably evolved through powerfully incremental contributions brought on by entrepreneurs through ingenuity, risk taking and the incorporation of artificial intelligence. The growing TVET graduate network in the Caribbean region has hence been charged in leading the way to fostering a potent, powerful and productive workforce, amid an aging population and declining birth rate in key Small Island Developing States (SIDS). While there are key aspect of entrepreneurship that can be taught, it is preferable to practically exercise opening a business, which equates to a better standard of living for their family and countless others long-term. The constructivist learning theory in my candid opinion has the greatest level of efficacy in bridging the gap between a TVET student in training and being a cherised entrepreneur, while developing novel entrepreneurial venture in furthering the growth of a Caribbean Circular Economy (CCE).

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