

Contributions of Skill Acquisition Programmes to Employability of Young Adults for Sustainable Community Development in Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The mismatch between the skills possessed by young adults and the ones required by employers needs urgent attention. Hence this study examined the contributions of skill acquisition programmes to employability of young adults for sustainable community development in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research design of ex-post facto type. Three hundred and sixty-one (361) respondents were randomly selected for the study. Findings revealed that (i) stakeholders' collaborative partnership (government, private sector, and educational institutions) have made notable contributions to enhance skill acquisition programmes effectiveness for employability of young adults in Ogun State. (ii) Skill acquisition programmes are highly effective in creating meaningful employment opportunities for young adults to enhance sustainable community development in Ogun State. Based on these findings, it was concluded that skill acquisition programmes have contributed immensely to employability of young adults and a driving force for sustainable community development in Ogun State.

Keywords: Employability, Skill acquisition programmes, Sustainable community development, Young adults

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Background to the Study

Nigeria as a nation is blessed with numerous human and non-human resources required to attain a greater height. In spite of this, the nation is still battling with the problem of unemployment which seems to have defiled all measures directed at curbing it. In response to this, the government of Ogun State had launched many skill acquisition programmes to minimize the rate of unemployment in the state. Notable among these programmes are Project T Max, Ogun State Skill Fund and Ogun State Gateway Skill Programme.

These programmes are basically organized to equip young adults with the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies to enhance their employability and foster economic growth for sustainable community development. These tailored programmes engage young adults in various training programmes which includes vocational training, technical training, entrepreneurship development and capacity building in emerging industries such as information and communication technology (ICT) and renewable energy.

The major objective of these programmes is to create a pool of skilled and employable young adults who can contribute to the development of their communities and the state's economy at large. By empowering young adults with the relevant skills, these programmes offer an opportunity for them to become self-employed or find decent employment in various sectors. Ogbeide-Akugbe, Iredia, and Momoh (2024) argued that skill acquisition training exposes learners to various skills that can make them to be self-reliant and self-dependent in their area of trade.

Ultimately, addressing the challenges of unemployment is not only a matter of economic necessity and sustainable community development but also a moral imperative. Empowering young adults with the skills and opportunities to thrive in the labour market is vital for fostering social cohesion, reducing inequalities, and ensuring that the benefits of economic growth are shared equitably among all segments of the society. Through concerted efforts and a commitment to continuous improvement, Ogun State has the capacity to create a path leading to productive and economically sustainable future for its young adult population.

The uniqueness of these programmes lies in the fact that they are completely free for all eligible residents in Ogun State. More so, trainees may not need any prior experience to participate. The programmes take care of various skill levels and also cater for beginners and those that intend to build on existing skills. Time constraint does not affect the programmes since time commitment depends on the training course a trainee chooses. In addition to this, the programmes are designed to accommodate the trainees' needs as many courses are offered online; thus, allowing trainees to learn at their own pace.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, the problem of unemployment among young adults has gone beyond acquisition of paper certificates which stand as the major criterium for gaining employment. Ossai and Okokoyo (2022) reported that 23 million of Nigeria's 40 million unemployed youths were unemployed due to a lack of employable skills, with the majority being university graduates.

Finding potential employees who will match the required job specification is one of the major challenges facing many employers of labour. Yinusa and Adeku (2021) corroborated this by stating that 40% of industry experts revealed that universities and other training outfits have failed to align their curriculum and training package with industry needs; leading to skill mismatch which makes many graduates unemployable. Over the years, employers of labour have lamented about the mismatch between the skills possessed by the job seekers and the skills required by the industries. Many of the technical and vocational training graduates as well as university graduates have failed to meet up with the skills required by the industries. Lack of relevant skills among young adults has not only resulted to acute unemployment and underemployment; but to a multitude of socio-economic problems ranging from poverty, crime of varying types, social unrest to reduced economic output, ultimately hindering the state's progress towards sustainable development. It is imperative to address issues relating to unemployment as young adults are not only vital contributors to nation's labour force but also catalysts for innovation, entrepreneurship, sustained economic growth and development.

Objective of the Study

The study examines the contributions of skill acquisition programmes to employability of young adults for sustainable community development in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions emanated from the study:

- i. What role do stakeholders' collaborative partnerships (government, private sector and educational institutions) play in enhancing the effectiveness of skills acquisition programmes for employability of young adults in Ogun State?
- ii. How do skill acquisition programmes contribute to employability of young adults for sustainable community development in Ogun State?

Literature Review

In Nigeria, youth unemployment has always been an issue of great concern to parents, communities, and governments at federal, state and local levels. Giving the devastating impact this has on youth and national development; the government has been looking for ways to provide alternative sources of employment for the teeming youth since white collar jobs are almost unavailable. One of the programmes introduced thus far is the skills acquisition programme. The expectation of government and that of the society is to see, among others, a drastic reduction in the unemployment rate and youth engagement in social vices (Oladeji, 2019).

According to Federal Ministry of Education (2021), Governments play a crucial role in skill acquisition programmes by developing policies, funding initiatives, and creating an enabling environment for individuals to acquire and apply relevant skills. Below are the key roles the government plays in skill acquisition:

- i. Policy formulation and implementation
- ii. Funding and infrastructural development
- iii. Partnership with private sector and NGOs

- iv. Establishment of vocational training institutions
- v. Encouraging entrepreneurship and job creation

The private sector is another stakeholder that has the potential to address deficiencies in skills development as well as to bridge the skill mismatch which occurs between employers and employees. Companies are contributing to the education and training process, in turn producing qualified employees. Private sector does not only help improve national competitiveness but also increases its profitability as better trained staffs are produced. Private sector actors have a role in both the design and the delivery of skills training programmes. Without the engagement of companies, chambers and business associations, the skills gap will continue to grow. The unemployment rate among youth and marginalisation of disadvantaged groups will only get worse. In order to overcome these challenges, the private sector's role must be better understood by all stakeholders, from public institutions to civil society. In the opinion of Canlı, Hale and Asuman (2014), the role of the private sector in skills development should not be seen as a substitute for state systems, but as a complement and a self-benefiting contribution to labour productivity and profits.

Stronger participation of the private sector in developing skills further ensures that employees' qualifications will adjust to meet the needs of greening economies with sustainable production and consumption patterns. Vocational, technical and entrepreneurial skills should change with the market if the private sector scaled up its participation in building people's 'knowledge and capacities. According to Dumbbar (2013), the private sector has been involved in multiple ways to promote skill acquisition and youth employment, including but not limited to:

- i. Partnering in initiatives to train youth by providing funding, developing course content, contributing to teaching and providing on-the-job experience to trainees
- ii. Funding entrepreneurship promotion programmes, and supplying credit, grants, and technical assistance to young entrepreneurs
- iii. Engaging in high-level planning for training and employment strategies with government and other stakeholders
- iv. Supplying training services under competitive contracting with the public sector or with employers
- v. Developing inclusive value chains in agriculture and other sectors involving young entrepreneurs
- vi. Defining skill demand

Educational institutions also play a huge role in providing technical, vocational and entrepreneurial training programmes for students. These Programmes have a great deal of potential to address issues concerning unemployment to enhance sustainable growth and development. Afolabi and Taleat (2024) reported that the field of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is changing, presenting opportunities as well as challenges that could impact the workforce of the future. Students will learn at least a trade before graduating if they are effectively and sufficiently supplied with fully equipped materials and tools.

Those who drop out of school at any level would have learnt skills like carpentry, plumbing, fashion designing, painting, hair dressing, cake baking, shoe making, photography, soap making among others; thus, making them to be self-reliant in the process. In addition, engineering disciplines like civil, automobile, electrical engineering are offered in higher institutions of learning to equip students with the relevant skills to complement the theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom.

UNESCO (2015) submitted that educational institutions play a crucial role in skill acquisition programmes by equipping students with practical knowledge, hands-on experience, and industry-relevant competencies. Their contributions can be categorised into the following key areas:

- i. Curriculum development for practical skills
- ii. Establishment of vocational training center
- iii. Internship and Industrial Training Programmes
- iv. Entrepreneurship education and Business Development Support
- v. Digital and ICT skill training
- vi. Research and innovation for skills development
- vii. Partnerships with government and private sector

Skill acquisition programmes are specialized training programmes organized to equip learners not only with vocational, technical and entrepreneurial skills but with a broad range of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are now recognized as indispensable for meaningful participation in work and life (Olaire, 2016). The primary objective of any skill acquisition programme is to prepare learners towards acquisition of necessary skills required for gaining paid employment or becoming self-employed in a specific occupation. Olaire (2016) further corroborated this by stating that skill acquisition programmes are specially designed to develop specific occupational skills in learners. The establishment of skill acquisition programmes is premised on creating more jobs for the teeming populace, especially the young adults; with a view to making them self-reliant.

In order to have a broader view of skill acquisition, UNESCO (2012) reported that skill acquisition is a kind of training programme designed to prepare skill workers for Industry, Agriculture, Commerce and Home Economics. UNESCO (2012) further stressed that skill acquisition focuses on the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitude, understanding and knowledge relating to occupation in various sectors of economic and social life.

Through skill acquisition, individuals are prepared for lifelong learning which entails development of necessary mental tools, vocational, technical and entrepreneurial skills and attitude. Apart from this, it helps to develop individuals' capacity in the area of decision making and it also provides individuals with the qualities necessary for moving the entire nation forward. In agreement to this submission, Ogunlela (2012) affirmed that skill acquisition programmes stand as the most viable tool for self-reliance, economic survival and advancement of knowledge accumulation for the development of the entire nation.

The fact that the available white-collar jobs cannot cater for the large number of unemployed young adults in the country, brings about the reality that calls for such training which can be offered to individuals in different areas of human Endeavour. Skill acquisition fits this description as it prepares individuals towards acquiring different marketable skills which can be subsequently rendered as services to earn a living. UNESCO & ILO (2002) cited in Idowu, Adewuyi and Akinkunmi (2020) submitted that skill acquisition training aligns with the educational system and the world of work while Africa Union (2011) stressed that skill acquisition places premium on training the work force that Africa needs to create wealth and energy out of poverty.

Skill acquisition programmes are game changers and a means of attaining sustainable community development since it develops the minds and body towards self-employment for personal and societal development. Oge (2023) submitted that skill acquisition is of great importance to women since it offers them economic empowerment skills, increased employment opportunity, closes the gender gap and provides opportunities for entrepreneurship and business ownership. Likewise, Ogunlela (2012) posited that skill acquisition programmes are tools for personal development as well as the backbone for successful national development because such programmes enhance the creation of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

In order to further elaborate on the imperativeness of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises, Adofu and Ocheja (2013) reported that United State of America economy was developed by over 23 million small businesses; employing more than 5% of the private workforce and generating more than half of the nation's Gross Domestic Product. Undoubtedly, the development of more skill acquisition programmes will be a major contributor to the nation's small business enterprises since there will be a considerable increase in business turn over while more job opportunities will also be created to absorb a considerable number of the unemployed young adults roaming the streets and cities of the nation. Adofu and Ocheja (2013) highlighted the prospect of skill acquisition training programmes in relation to employability, sustainable economy and sustainable development in communities and the nation at large. These include:

1. Development of manpower required to complement the nation's workforce.
2. Promotion of independent living where individuals will worry less since they are equipped with different kinds of skills that can conveniently make them to be self-reliant.
3. Creation of employment opportunities for individuals through establishment of Small and Medium Enterprises.
4. Advancement of technological based production where industries will start from small units operating on indigenous innovative technologies for production of local and domestic items.
5. Promotion of indigenous vocational and entrepreneurship talents which will in turn help to develop manpower techniques.
6. Establishment of adequate skill acquisition programmes will further lead to development in the nation's economy through establishment of numerous SMEs

- which will increase the GDP; as well as raising the standard of living of the citizens.
7. Provision of self-employment which will afford the employees the opportunity of engaging in trade and business talent.
 8. Improvement of training and exposure to ICT at all levels.
 9. Promotion of private enterprises which are the engine room of growth and development of any nation.
 10. Promotion and development of industrial sector by relying more on local resources which are more cost effective.
 11. Diversification of the economy from oil and solid minerals in order for the economy to be more stable and also to generate greater employment opportunities.
 12. Attainment of National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) objectives through provision of courses that build vocational, technical and entrepreneurial skills.
 13. Revealing of macro-economic fact pointing to development that will enhance more income, production rate; and lower inflation rate by producing more and creating more room for competition among industries.

Methodology

This research adopted a survey research design of ex-post facto type. The target population comprises all young adults aged 15 to 25 who are learners in the three skills acquisition programmes. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted to ensure adequate representation from each of the three programmes. The strata were based on the programmes, and participants were randomly selected within each stratum. Stratified random sampling selection of respondents was done according to the population size of each of the three programme. This was done by dividing the target population in each programme by the total population of participants across the three centers. Hence, 361 respondents were selected for the study.

Structured Questionnaire titled “Skills Acquisition Programmes and Employability of Young Adults for a Sustainable Community Development Scale (SAPEYASCDS) was developed and administered to the selected young adults. 367 copies of questionnaire were administered while 361 copies were filled and returned. The questionnaire was piloted with a small group of respondents in skill acquisition centre outside Ogun State within the interval of two weeks. Test-re-test method was used to assess the reliability of the scales using Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the test gave a reliability coefficient (r) of 0.781 which is close to 1.0, indicating a good internal consistency. Analysis of data was done using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviations.

Data Analysis and Results

Research Question 1: What role do stakeholders' collaborative partnerships (government, private sector, educational institutions) play in enhancing the effectiveness of skills acquisition programmes for employability of young adults in Ogun State?

Table 1: Respondents' Responses on Roles of Stakeholders' collaborative Partnerships (N=361).

Scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)

Items	SA	AD	D	SD	X	SD	Remark
Government involvement in funding and regulating skills acquisition programmes have improved their quality and effectiveness.	105 (29.1%)	252 (69.8%)	4 (1.1%)	---	3.28	0.47	Agree
Partnerships with industries have ensured that the skills taught in these programmes are relevant to current job market demands.	95 (26.3%)	257 (71.2%)	9 (2.5%)	---	3.24	0.48	Agree
Collaboration between educational institutions and industries has enhanced the practical training provided in skills acquisition programmes.	108 (29.9%)	241 (66.8%)	12 (3.3%)	---	3.27	0.51	Agree
Industry participation in curriculum development has made skills acquisition programmes more aligned with future employment needs.	214 (59.3%)	143 (39.6%)	4 (1.1%)	---	3.57	0.56	Agree
Educational institutions play a crucial role in delivering quality instruction that meets industry standards in skills acquisition programmes.	185 (51.2%)	161 (44.6%)	4 (1.1%)	11 (3.0%)	3.44	0.67	Agree
Effective collaboration among government, industry, and educational institutions has increased the employability of graduates from skills acquisition programmes	209 (57.9%)	123 (34.1%)	20 (5.5%)	4 (1.1%)	3.51	0.66	Agree
Grand mean					3.39		

Table 1 revealed the roles played by stakeholders' collaborative partnerships in enhancing the effectiveness of skills acquisition programmes for employability of young adults in Ogun State. The data show overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward stakeholders' collaborative partnerships, with a grand mean of 3.39 and all items receiving "Agree" or "Effective" ratings. The respondents generally believe that partnerships between government, industry, and educational institutions had significantly improved skills programmes.

With respect to government involvement in funding and regulation (Mean: 3.28), nearly all respondents (98.9%) agree or strongly agree that government involvement in funding and regulating skills programmes has improved their quality and effectiveness. This suggests strong support for government oversight and investment. Also, a similar pattern emerges for industry-education partnerships for relevant skills (Mean: 3.24), with 97.5% agreement that

partnerships with industries ensure the skills taught are relevant to current job market demands. This highlights the importance of industry input in curriculum design.

On enhanced practical learning (Mean: 3.27), respondents strongly support (96.7% agreement) the idea that collaboration between educational institutions and industries enhances practical learning in skills programmes, emphasising hands-on experience.

On industry participation in curriculum development (Mean: 3.57), this item received the highest agreement rate (99% agreement), with 59.3% strongly agreeing. This suggests respondents view direct industry involvement in curriculum design as particularly crucial.

On quality instruction standards (Mean: 3.44), there is a strong consensus (95.8% agreement) that educational institutions play a crucial role in delivering quality instruction that meets industry standards. Tri-party collaboration impact (Mean: 3.51), the collaboration between government, industry, and educational institutions is seen as highly effective (92% agreement) in increasing graduate employability, with only 6.6% expressing any disagreement.

The result suggests that stakeholders recognise the value of multi-sector partnerships in skills development. The high agreement rates across all items indicate that respondents believe effective skills programmes require coordinated efforts from government (funding/regulation), industry (relevance/standards), and educational institutions (quality delivery). The strong support for industry involvement in curriculum development suggests this may be a priority area for enhancing programme effectiveness.

Research Question 2: How do skill acquisition programmes contribute to employability of young adults for sustainable community development in Ogun State?

Table 2: Respondents' Responses on the Contribution of Skill Acquisition Programmes to Employability of young adults for sustainable community development (N=361).

Scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)

Items	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD	Remark
Skills acquisition programmes have contributed significantly to decent job creation in Ogun State.	178 (49.3%)	179 (49.6%)	4 (1.1%)	---	3.48	0.52	Agree
These programmes have empowered young adults to create their own businesses, thereby boosting local economic activity.	153 (42.4%)	208 (57.6%)	---	---	3.42	0.49	Agree
The skills acquired through these programmes have led to innovative solutions and products that drive community growth.	189 (52.4%)	172 (47.6%)	---	---	3.52	0.50	Agree
Skills acquisition programmes have promoted entrepreneurship, which is essential for poverty reduction in Nigeria.	178 (49.3%)	179 (49.6%)	4(1.1%)	---	3.47	0.56	Agree
The job opportunities generated by these programmes have reduced unemployment rates among young adults in Ogun State.	185 (52.2%)	176 (48.8%)	---	---	3.51	0.51	Agree
Skills acquisition programmes in Ogun state gave access to different categories of young adults to participate thereby promoting social inclusion.	197 (54.6%)	160 (44.3%)	4(1.1%)	---	3.52	0.56	Agree
The continuous innovation fostered by skills acquisition programmes contributes to long-term community development sustainability in Ogun State	201 (55.7%)	160 (44.3%)	---	----	3.56	0.49	Agree
Grand mean					3.49		

Table 2 shows respondents' responses on contribution of skills acquisition programmes to employability of young adults for sustainable community development in Ogun State. The findings reveal overwhelmingly positive perceptions across all measured dimensions. Respondents show strong agreement that skill acquisition programmes have made significant contributions to decent job creation in Ogun State, with 98.9% of participants either strongly agreeing or agreeing with this statement (mean score of 3.48). The programmes are also widely credited with empowering young adults to establish their own businesses and boost local economic activity, garnering 100% agreement from respondents with a mean score of 3.42.

The impact on innovation and problem-solving capabilities receives equally strong support, with all respondents agreeing that skills acquired through these programmes have led to innovative solutions and products that drive community growth (mean score of 3.52). The entrepreneurial dimension is particularly well-regarded, as 98.9% of respondents agree that

these programmes have promoted entrepreneurship, which they view as being crucial for poverty reduction in Nigeria (mean score of 3.47). Employment outcomes show remarkable consensus, with 100% of respondents agreeing that job opportunities created by these programmes have reduced unemployment rates among young adults in Ogun State (mean score of 3.51). Similarly, there is complete agreement that skill acquisition programmes provide young adults with access to different economic sectors, thereby promoting social inclusion (mean score of 3.52).

The highest level of agreement emerges regarding long-term community development impact, with 100% of respondents concurring that continuous innovation driven by skills acquisition programmes contributes to long-term community development sustainability in Ogun State (mean score of 3.56). The overall grand mean of 3.49 indicates strong positive perceptions across all dimensions. The consistently low standard deviations (ranging from 0.49 to 0.56) suggest relatively uniform agreement among respondents, with minimal variation in their responses. The absence or near-absence of disagreement responses across all items underscores the perceived effectiveness of skill acquisition programmes in contributing to employability of young adults for sustainable community development in the region.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from research question (1) showed that partnership between the government, industry and educational institution has significantly enhanced skill acquisition for employability of young adults in Ogun State. This finding is in support of the report of the Federal Ministry of Education (2021) which stated that governments play a crucial role in skill acquisition programmes by developing policies, funding initiative and creating an enabling ground for individuals to acquire and apply relevant skills. In addition to this, Dumbar (2013) reported that the private sector is funding entrepreneurship programmes and supplying credit, grants and technical assistance to young entrepreneurs. On the part of educational institutions, UNESCO (2015) argued that educational institutions have played a crucial role in skill acquisition programmes by occasioning curriculum development for practical skills, establishing vocational training centers, corroborating with industries to provide internship and industrial training programmes, providing entrepreneurship education and business development support, providing digital and ICT training, carrying out research and innovations for skill development and partnering with the government and private sector.

Findings from research question (2) established that skill acquisition programmes have made significant contributions to employability of young adults for sustainable community development in Ogun State. In line with the above view, Oge (2023) submitted that skill acquisition is of great importance to women since it offers them economic empowerment skills, increased employment opportunity, closes the gender gap and provides opportunities for entrepreneurship and business ownership. Similarly, the findings back the reports of Ogunlela (2012) which noted that skill acquisition programmes are tools for personal development as well the backbone of successful national development because such programmes enhance the creation of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

Conclusion

This discourse centered on the contributions of skill acquisition programmes to employability of young adults for sustainable community development in Ogun State, Nigeria. The finding revealed that stakeholders' collaborative partnerships (government, private sector and educational institutions) have played a major role in enhancing skill acquisition programmes effectiveness for employability of young adults in Ogun State. The study also showed that skill acquisition programme has contributed immensely to employability of young adults for sustainable community development in Ogun State. The implication of this is that the collaboration between the government, private sector and educational institutions has not only enhanced the effectiveness of skill acquisition programmes but has also prepared young adults towards the world of work for sustainable economic and community development. The study has contributed to the ongoing struggle on poverty reduction, unemployment reduction and improved employability rate among young adults. This simply implies that provision of adequate skill acquisition programmes will go a long way to reduce the number of job seekers in Ogun State and by extension, reducing the rate of crimes among the youth in the state. However, the effectiveness of skill acquisition programmes in enhancing employability of young adults for sustainable community development can only be felt if the following recommendations are adequately implemented.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Ogun State government should establish a centralized and coordinated skills development framework that harmonizes the activities of Project T-Max, Ogun State Skill Fund, and the Gateway Skill Programme. This will minimize duplication, ensure consistency in curriculum standards, and strengthen linkages between training providers and labour market demands.
2. Skill acquisition curricula should be periodically reviewed and updated to incorporate competency-based and demand-driven learning outcomes. Emphasis should be placed on experiential learning, entrepreneurship, innovation management, and digital literacy to improve employability and adaptability among young adults.
3. A dedicated unit should be set up within the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of skill acquisition programmes. This unit should employ evidence-based performance indicators to measure impact on employability, job creation, and economic sustainability, ensuring accountability and continuous improvement.
4. Policy reforms should prioritize equitable access to skill acquisition opportunities for women, persons with disabilities, and rural youth. Targeted subsidies, mobile training units, and community-based learning centres should be deployed to reduce participation barriers and enhance inclusiveness.

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