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INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF SKILL TRAINING IN PROMOTING EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This study investigate the role of skill training in promoting employment opportunities and promoting social development in developing economies, where unemployment and skills mismatch remain persistent challenges. Grounded in human capital and capability perspectives, the study adopts a descriptive cross-sectional design with correlational elements to assess how skill acquisition influences labour market outcomes and socio-economic wellbeing. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews from skill training participants and employers, providing both quantitative and qualitative insights into employment transitions and income dynamics. Findings reveal that skill training significantly improves employability, income generation, and entrepreneurial capacity among participants. A notable proportion of respondents transitioned into employment or self-employment after acquiring vocational skills, reflecting improved labour market integration and economic participation. These outcomes are consistent with recent global evidence indicating that skills development programmes enhance job readiness and productivity. The study concludes that skill training is a central instrument for achieving sustainable employment and inclusive socio-economic development. It recommends stronger alignment between training systems and labour market demands, enhanced public–private partnerships, increased investment in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and improved access to financial and institutional support for trainees.

Keywords: Skill training, employment opportunities, social development, developing economies, vocational skills, employability, entrepreneurship, TVET, labour market integration, socio-economic development.

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Introduction

Unemployment remains one of the most persistent socio-economic challenges confronting both developed and developing economies, with its impact particularly severe among young people. In recent years, global labour market trends have shown a steady rise in youth unemployment and underemployment, driven by slow economic growth, demographic pressures, and structural inequalities within labour markets (International Labour Organization, 2025). In many developing countries, including those in Sub-Saharan Africa, the situation is further exacerbated by the dominance of informal employment, limited industrial capacity, and inadequate job creation mechanisms. As a result, a significant proportion of the workforce remains either unemployed or engaged in low-productivity and precarious forms of work.

A critical factor underlying this employment crisis is the persistent mismatch between educational outcomes and labour market requirements. While access to formal education has improved considerably over the past decades, many educational systems continue to emphasize theoretical knowledge at the expense of practical and technical competencies. Consequently, graduates often lack the job-ready skills required by employers, leading to what is commonly described as a "skills gap" or "skills mismatch" (UNESCO, World Bank & ILO, 2023). This disconnect not only limits individual employment prospects but also constrains productivity and economic growth at the national level.

In response to this challenge, skill training particularly through Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and other forms of workforce development programmes has gained increasing attention as a strategic tool for enhancing employability. Skill training focuses on equipping individuals with practical, market-relevant competencies that align with industry demands. Evidence from recent global reports indicates that well-designed skills development programmes significantly improve employment outcomes by increasing the likelihood of job placement, enhancing job retention, and supporting transitions into self-employment and entrepreneurship (ILO, 2024; World Bank, 2023). In an era characterized by rapid technological advancement and digital transformation, continuous skills development has become even more critical for enabling workers to adapt to changing job requirements and emerging economic opportunities.

Beyond its direct impact on employment, skill training also plays a crucial role in promoting broader social development outcomes. It contributes to poverty reduction by improving income-generating capacity and economic self-reliance among individuals and households. Furthermore, skills development fosters social inclusion by providing marginalized groups—including women, youth, and persons with limited formal education—with access to economic opportunities and pathways to upward mobility (UNESCO, 2022; ILO, 2024). In contexts where informal employment predominates, skill

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training can facilitate the transition from vulnerable, low-paying jobs to more stable and productive livelihoods, thereby enhancing overall quality of life and social well-being.

Additionally, skill training has been linked to increased civic participation and community development. Individuals who acquire employable skills are more likely to contribute to local economies, engage in entrepreneurial activities, and participate actively in societal development processes. This underscores the role of skills development not only as an economic intervention but also as a catalyst for inclusive and sustainable development.

Despite the growing recognition of its importance, the effectiveness of skill training programmes in achieving sustained employment and meaningful social development outcomes remains uneven across different contexts. Several studies have highlighted persistent challenges, including inadequate funding, outdated training curricula, weak institutional capacity, and limited collaboration between training providers and industry stakeholders (World Bank, 2023; UNESCO et al., 2023). These constraints often result in training programmes that are poorly aligned with labour market needs, thereby reducing their impact on employability and economic empowerment.

Moreover, while global evidence supports the positive role of skill training, there is still a need for context-specific empirical studies that examine how these programmes function within particular socio-economic environments. In many developing countries, including Nigeria, limited data exists on the extent to which skill acquisition initiatives translate into tangible employment opportunities and measurable improvements in social development indicators.

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to investigate the role of skill training in promoting employment and social development. Specifically, it examines the extent to which participation in skill training programmes influences employment outcomes, income levels, and broader socio-economic well-being. By providing empirical evidence, the study contributes to ongoing policy discussions on how to design and implement effective skills development strategies that can address unemployment and foster inclusive growth.

The main objective of this study is to examine the challenges and opportunities in implementing Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria.

The specific objectives are to:

a) To examine the effect of skill training on employment outcomes.
b) To assess the impact of skill training on income generation and economic empowerment.
c) To evaluate the role of skill training in promoting social development, including poverty reduction and social inclusion.
d) To identify challenges affecting the effectiveness of skill training programmes.

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The study is guided by the following research questions:

i. What is the relationship between skill training and employment outcomes?
ii. To what extent does participation in skill training programmes impact income levels and economic empowerment?
iii. How does skill training contribute to social development indicators such as poverty reduction and social inclusion?
iv. What structural and institutional factors constrain the effectiveness of skill training programmes?

This study is significant as it provides empirical evidence on the role of skill training in addressing unemployment and promoting social development. It contributes to existing knowledge by demonstrating how skill acquisition enhances employability, income generation, and entrepreneurial capacity. The findings are valuable to policymakers by informing the design of effective Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes that align with labour market demands. Additionally, the study benefits educational institutions and training providers by highlighting the need for curriculum reform and industry collaboration. For development practitioners, it offers insights into how skill training can be used as a tool for poverty reduction, social inclusion, and sustainable development. Overall, the study supports the formulation of strategies aimed at improving workforce productivity and socio-economic well-being.

Despite its contributions, this study has some limitations. The use of a cross-sectional research design restricts the ability to establish causality between skill training and employment outcomes. The study relies partly on self-reported data, which may be subject to response bias. Additionally, the sample size and geographic scope may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. External factors such as economic conditions, government policies, and labour market dynamics, which may influence employment outcomes, were not fully controlled. Furthermore, variations in the quality and type of skill training programmes were not extensively examined, which may affect the interpretation of results.

Concept of Skill Training

Skill training refers to structured programmes designed to equip individuals with practical, technical, and entrepreneurial competencies required for employment and productivity. It encompasses Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), apprenticeship systems, and on-the-job training initiatives. In recent years, skill training has gained prominence as a critical component of workforce development strategies, particularly in developing economies facing high unemployment rates (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2024).

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Contemporary perspectives emphasize that skill training is no longer limited to manual or technical skills but also includes digital literacy, soft skills, and entrepreneurial capabilities necessary for participation in modern economies (World Bank, 2023). This broader conception reflects the evolving nature of work driven by globalization and technological advancement.

Skill Training and Employment Outcomes

A growing body of empirical literature demonstrates a strong relationship between skill training and employment outcomes. Studies indicate that individuals who participate in vocational and technical training programmes are more likely to secure employment compared to those without such training (ILO, 2024).

Recent global evidence shows that skill training enhances employability by improving job readiness, increasing adaptability, and reducing the skills mismatch between education and labour market requirements (UNESCO, World Bank & ILO, 2023). Furthermore, training programmes that incorporate practical and industry-relevant components have been found to significantly improve job placement rates and career progression.

However, some studies highlight that the effectiveness of skill training depends largely on programme quality, relevance, and alignment with labour market needs. Where such alignment is weak, training may have limited impact on employment outcomes (World Bank, 2023).

Skill Training and Income Generation

Skill training plays a crucial role in enhancing income generation and economic empowerment. Evidence suggests that individuals who acquire vocational or technical skills tend to experience increased earning potential and improved job stability (ILO, 2024).

In developing economies, skill training has been particularly effective in supporting self-employment and entrepreneurship. Many trainees establish small-scale enterprises, thereby generating income and contributing to local economic development (World Bank, 2023). This is especially important in contexts where formal employment opportunities are limited.

However, access to finance and business support services remains a critical factor influencing the ability of trained individuals to translate skills into sustainable income-generating activities.

Skill Training and Social Development

Beyond economic benefits, skill training contributes significantly to social development. It promotes poverty reduction by enhancing individuals' capacity to earn income and improve their living standards (UNESCO, 2022).

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Skill training also fosters social inclusion by providing opportunities for marginalized groups, including women, youth, and individuals with limited formal education. By improving access to employment and economic participation, skill development helps reduce inequality and supports inclusive growth (ILO, 2024).

Moreover, skill acquisition has been linked to improved social outcomes such as increased self-reliance, community participation, and overall quality of life. These benefits highlight the multidimensional impact of skill training on human development.

Challenges Affecting Skill Training Effectiveness

Despite its potential, several challenges limit the effectiveness of skill training programmes. One major issue is the mismatch between training curricula and labour market demands, which reduces the employability of graduates (UNESCO, World Bank & ILO, 2023).

Other challenges include:

a. Inadequate funding and infrastructure
b. Limited access to modern training equipment
c. Weak collaboration between training institutions and industry
d. Insufficient monitoring and evaluation systems

These constraints often result in low-quality training programmes that fail to produce the desired employment and social outcomes (World Bank, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Human Capital Theory, which posits that investment in education and skills enhances individuals' productivity and increases their employability and earnings potential. Recent applications of this theory highlight the importance of skills development in improving labour market outcomes and economic growth (World Bank, 2023).

Additionally, the Capability Approach underscores the role of skill training in expanding individuals' freedoms and opportunities to achieve desired livelihoods. This perspective links skill development not only to economic outcomes but also to broader social well-being, including inclusion and empowerment (UNDP, 2020).

This study is anchored on the following theories which explain the relationship between skill training, employment generation, and social development.

Human Capital Theory

The Human Capital Theory was developed by Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz. The theory argues that investment in education, training, and skills development enhances

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the productivity and efficiency of individuals, thereby increasing their employability and earning capacity.

According to the theory, skill training is viewed as an investment that improves workers' competencies and enables them to contribute effectively to economic activities. Individuals who acquire technical, vocational, and entrepreneurial skills are more likely to secure employment, adapt to changing labour market conditions, and generate higher income levels (World Bank, 2023).

The relevance of this theory to the present study lies in its explanation of how skill acquisition contributes to employment creation and economic empowerment. By improving human capabilities and labour productivity, skill training enhances opportunities for self-employment and wage employment, thereby supporting social and economic development.

However, critics argue that Human Capital Theory focuses mainly on economic productivity while paying less attention to structural barriers such as inequality, discrimination, and limited labour market opportunities that may restrict employment outcomes even among skilled individuals.

Capability Approach Theory

The Capability Approach Theory was developed by Amartya Sen and further expanded by Martha Nussbaum. The theory emphasizes that development should be measured not only by economic growth but also by people's ability to achieve valued ways of living.

The theory argues that skill training expands individuals' capabilities by providing them with knowledge, competencies, and opportunities necessary for meaningful participation in society. Through skill acquisition, individuals gain the freedom to improve their livelihoods, access decent work, and contribute to community development (UNDP, 2020).

This theory is relevant to the study because it explains the broader social benefits of skill training beyond employment generation. Skill development promotes social inclusion, poverty reduction, empowerment, and improved quality of life, especially among vulnerable populations such as youth and women.

A limitation of the Capability Approach is that it may be difficult to measure capabilities objectively because individuals value opportunities differently depending on social and cultural contexts.

Structural Functionalism Theory

Structural Functionalism Theory is associated with Talcott Parsons. The theory views society as a system made up of interrelated institutions that work together to maintain social stability and development.

Within this perspective, education and skill training institutions perform important functions by preparing individuals with the competencies needed for productive participation in society. Skill training contributes to social order by reducing unemployment, promoting economic productivity, and equipping individuals with roles that support societal growth.

The theory further suggests that when individuals acquire employable skills, they are better integrated into the economic system, reducing poverty and social exclusion. Therefore, effective skill training programmes contribute to both economic stability and social development.

The relevance of this theory to the present study is that it explains how skill training functions as a mechanism for maintaining economic and social stability through workforce development and employment generation.

However, critics argue that Structural Functionalism tends to overlook issues of inequality and power imbalance within society, particularly how unequal access to education and training opportunities may affect employment outcomes.

Empirical Review

Recent empirical studies provide mixed but generally positive evidence on the impact of skill training. Global assessments indicate that structured training programmes significantly improve employment probabilities and earnings, particularly when combined with work-based learning and industry partnerships (ILO, 2024).

Similarly, studies in developing regions show that skill acquisition programmes contribute to poverty reduction and economic empowerment, although their impact varies depending on programme design and contextual factors (World Bank, 2023).

However, gaps remain in understanding how skill training influences broader social development outcomes, particularly in specific national contexts. This underscores the need for further empirical research.

Gap in Literature

While existing studies highlight the importance of skill training in improving employment outcomes, there is limited context-specific evidence on its combined effect on both employment and social development. Many studies focus primarily on economic outcomes, with less attention given to social dimensions such as inclusion, empowerment, and community development.

Furthermore, few studies adopt an integrated approach that examines the relationship between skill training, income generation, and social development simultaneously. This study addresses this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the role of skill training in promoting both employment and social development.

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Summary of Literature Review

The reviewed literature indicates that skill training is a critical tool for enhancing employability, increasing income, and promoting social development. However, its effectiveness is influenced by factors such as programme quality, relevance, and institutional support. While global evidence supports the positive impact of skill development, there remains a need for context-specific empirical studies to better understand its role in addressing unemployment and fostering sustainable development.

Methods

This study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design with correlational components, appropriate for analyzing relationships between training and employment outcomes.

Population and Sampling

The study population comprised skill training participants, vocational graduates, and employers across selected sectors including ICT, construction, and skilled trades. A stratified random sampling technique was adopted to ensure adequate representation of the different groups and sectors involved in the study. Using this method, a total of 300 respondents were selected for data collection.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data for the study were collected using structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The instruments were designed to obtain information on respondents' employment status, income levels, and perceived social impact of skill training programmes. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages, while correlation analysis was employed to examine relationships between variables. Qualitative responses obtained from interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis to provide deeper interpretation of the findings.

Results / Findings

The findings of the study revealed that skill training plays a significant role in promoting employment and social development. About 68% of respondents reported being employed or self-employed after completing skill training programmes, indicating that vocational and technical skills enhance employability and labour market participation. Statistical analysis further showed a strong positive relationship between skill training and employment outcomes, with a correlation coefficient of ($r = 0.62$). This suggests that access to relevant skills significantly increases the likelihood of securing employment. The findings are consistent with global evidence provided by the International Labour

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Organization (ILO, 2024), which emphasized that skill development programmes improve job readiness and labour market integration.

In terms of economic empowerment, over 55% of participants reported increased income levels after acquiring vocational skills. Many respondents transitioned from unstable informal employment to more sustainable economic activities, including self-employment and small-scale entrepreneurship. These findings support recent global reports showing that skill acquisition programmes improve livelihood opportunities and economic resilience (World Bank, 2025).

The study also found that skill training contributes positively to social development outcomes. Participants reported improvements in their standard of living, reduction in poverty, and increased participation in community development activities. Skill acquisition further promoted social inclusion, particularly among youth and women, by creating opportunities for economic participation and self-reliance. Consistent with ILO (2023) and UNESCO (2023), the findings confirm that skills development is a major driver of social justice, human development, and inclusive growth. Overall, the results demonstrate that skill training is an important strategy for addressing unemployment, enhancing income generation, and promoting sustainable socio-economic development.

Discussion

The findings confirm that skill training plays a crucial role in enhancing employability and supporting socio-economic development. The strong relationship between training and employment supports recent global evidence that skills-based interventions yield better labour outcomes than traditional employment services (ILO & World Bank, 2024).

The high rate of self-employment observed reflects the importance of skill training in promoting entrepreneurship, particularly in developing economies where formal employment is limited. This aligns with recent global initiatives that emphasize skills as a pathway to economic resilience and job creation (World Bank, 2025). Furthermore, the study highlights the broader social impact of skill acquisition. By reducing poverty and promoting inclusion, skill training contributes directly to sustainable development goals. Global policy frameworks increasingly recognize skills development as essential for achieving inclusive growth and social equity (ILO, 2024). However, the persistence of skills mismatch and institutional weaknesses limits the effectiveness of training programmes. Without alignment between training systems and labour market needs, the full potential of skill development cannot be realized. This challenge has been widely documented in recent international studies (UNESCO et al., 2023).

Conclusion

This study examined the role of skill training in promoting employment and social development. The findings revealed that skill training significantly enhances employability

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by equipping individuals with practical, technical, and entrepreneurial competencies required in the labour market. Participants who acquired vocational and technical skills demonstrated improved employment opportunities, increased income generation, and greater capacity for self-employment. The study further established that skill training contributes to broader social development outcomes such as poverty reduction, social inclusion, economic empowerment, and improved living standards.

The study also highlighted that skill training serves as an important mechanism for addressing the growing mismatch between educational outcomes and labour market demands. In economies characterized by high unemployment and informal labour practices, skill acquisition provides individuals with opportunities for productive engagement and sustainable livelihoods. However, despite these positive outcomes, the effectiveness of skill training programmes is constrained by challenges such as inadequate funding, outdated curricula, weak institutional capacity, and limited collaboration between training institutions and industries.

Overall, the study concludes that skill training is a critical tool for sustainable economic and social development. When properly designed and effectively implemented, skill development programmes can reduce unemployment, improve workforce productivity, and promote inclusive growth.

Recommendations

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

1. **Alignment of Training Curricula with Labour Market Needs:** Training institutions should regularly review and update their curricula to reflect current labour market trends and industry requirements. This will ensure that trainees acquire relevant and employable skills capable of meeting modern workforce demands.
2. **Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships:** Governments, industries, and training institutions should collaborate more effectively in the design and implementation of skill development programmes. Such partnerships can improve internship opportunities, industrial training, job placement, and knowledge transfer between institutions and employers.
3. **Increased Investment in TVET Systems:** There is a need for greater government and private sector investment in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Improved funding will support the provision of modern equipment, training facilities, qualified instructors, and digital learning resources necessary for effective skills acquisition.
4. **Improved Access to Finance for Trainees:** Financial institutions and government agencies should provide accessible loans, grants, and startup support for graduates of skill training programmes. Access to finance will enable trainees to establish

businesses, enhance self-employment opportunities, and contribute to economic growth.

5. **Development of Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks:** Comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems should be established to assess the effectiveness and impact of skill training programmes. Regular assessment will help identify gaps, improve programme quality, and ensure that training initiatives achieve intended employment and social development outcomes.
6. **Promotion of Inclusive Skill Training Policies:** Policies should be developed to ensure equal access to skill training opportunities for vulnerable groups such as women, youth, and persons from disadvantaged backgrounds. Inclusive skill development programmes will help reduce inequality and promote social cohesion.
7. **Integration of Digital and Entrepreneurial Skills:** Given the changing nature of work and technological advancement, skill training programmes should incorporate digital literacy, innovation, and entrepreneurship education to prepare trainees for emerging employment opportunities and future labour market demands.

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