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EXPLORING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SKILL ACQUISITION AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM IN BAUCHI METROPOLIS

Bala Baba

Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Sa'adu Zungur University, Bauchi

Abstract

This study investigates the impact of skill acquisition and youth empowerment programs on the socio-economic development of Bauchi Metropolis. By examining the effectiveness of these programs, the research aims to contribute to the understanding of strategies for empowering youth and reducing unemployment rates. The study employs a case study methodology, focusing in Bauchi Metropolis. Data was collected through descriptive surveys, design and the data was analyzed based on descriptive statistics, involving participants from both the implementing organizations and the beneficiaries of the programs. The findings highlight the significance of skill acquisition and youth empowerment programs in enhancing the employability and self-sufficiency of young people in Bauchi Metropolis. The study identifies factors such as program design, access to resources, and post-program support as crucial determinants of the programs' effectiveness. Based on the research findings, recommendations are provided for improving the implementation and outcomes of skill acquisition and youth empowerment programs in Bauchi Metropolis and potentially other similar contexts. These recommendations may include strengthening partnerships between government, private sector, and civil society organizations, expanding program reach, and providing more comprehensive support services for program participants.

Keywords: Skill Acquisition, Socio-Economic Development, Youth, Empowerment Program, Bauchi Metropolis

1. Introduction

Unemployment is one the developmental problems facing every developing economy in the 21st century. Youth unemployment is a pressing challenge in Nigeria, with significant implications for sustainable development. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2023), Nigeria's unemployment rate was approximately 33%, with youth aged 15–35 disproportionately affected, contributing to over 60% of the jobless population. Delta State, despite its wealth in natural resources and strategic location as part of Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta region, has not been immune to this issue. The state's youth unemployment crisis underscores structural

challenges, including a lack of economic diversification, skill mismatches, and inadequate policy.

Oluwadare and Adefolaju, (2020) argues that youth unemployment, marked by widespread joblessness throughout Nigerian society, has become one of the country's most pressing developmental challenges. Similarly, unemployment in Nigeria has reached unprecedented levels, more severe than at any other point in its history. Unfortunately, it can be concluded that the government has not implemented sufficient measures to address this issue. Unemployment is a critical microeconomic concern that a proactive government should actively work to minimize. Despite

Nigeria's vast natural resources, the country continues to grapple with high youth unemployment rates. This issue has been linked to the rise in violence, as research shows that unemployed youth are more likely to both commit and fall victim to crime and violence. Self-employed individuals also face significant obstacles, as poor infrastructure hinders their ability to conduct business effectively (Okafor, 2011). This situation is exacerbated by political corruption, poverty, ineffective governance, rising population numbers, social unrest, and the lack of effective policies, all of which have contributed to the growth of criminal groups in Nigeria.

Adeyemi and Olorunfemi (2020), argue that the high level of youth unemployment in Delta State is largely due to the mismatch between the educational qualifications of youths and the available job opportunities. They emphasize that this disconnect leads to frustration among graduates, who are unable to secure jobs that align with their academic backgrounds. This mismatch contributes significantly to a rise in criminal activities, including cybercrime and armed robbery, as many unemployed youths resort to illegal means to survive.

Idris et al. (2020) highlight that one of the primary causes of youth unemployment in Delta State is the significant mismatch between educational outcomes and the skills required by employers. They note that many youths graduate with qualifications that are not in demand in the local job market, leading to widespread unemployment. As a result, many young people engage in criminal activities such as robbery, drug trafficking, and cybercrime as a means of survival. Idris et al. (2020) argue that this growing trend of youth involvement in crime is a direct consequence of the lack of viable job opportunities, exacerbated by an education system that does not adequately prepare youths for the realities of the job market. The authors recommend that the state focus on improving the relevance of education by incorporating practical skills and aligning curriculum with market needs to reduce unemployment and its associated criminal impact.

Although, much has been written on the evolution of youth empowerment in Nigeria (especially on youths

in the Niger Delta), little is known concerning youth empowerment in Bauchi State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy. It is on the basis of the above that this research seeks to fill the vacuum which is yet to receive the attention of scholars in the field of youth empowerment studies. This obvious critical skill gaps inhibits the development of youths and the entire development of the nation. More than half of the Nigerian populations are under the age of 30 (International Labour Organization, 2024).

Therefore it can be asserted that the economy of Nigerian is a youth economy. Expectedly, today's youth will become in a short decade tomorrow's parents. However, the Nigerian youths are said to be confronted with poverty, unemployment, urbanization, lack of capacity and skills needed to move the economy forward. Poverty which is a force for HIV/AIDS is very common, This is because the youth face unemployment and lack of necessary productive skills to keep body and soul together. This reality leaves them without any meaningful means of sustainable livelihood.

Ajao (2019) points out that a key factor contributing to the high levels of youth unemployment in Delta State is the failure of the education system to provide youths with the skills required by the job market. This disconnect has led to frustration among graduates, many of whom are unable to find work in their field of study. Ajao (2019) highlights that this educational mismatch is closely linked to the rise in crime rates, as many unemployed youths resort to illegal activities such as theft, fraud, and drug trafficking to make ends meet. The study stresses that addressing this issue requires a reform of the education system, focusing on practical skills and vocational training that are directly relevant to the local job market. Ajao (2019) concludes that such reforms are crucial for reducing crime and achieving sustainable economic development in Delta State.

Due to the country's ongoing economic crises, challenges, and rising unemployment rates, it is now necessary to instil a spirit of skill development among Nigerian youths and graduates (Effiong et al., 2022). This emphasizes the need for technical and entrepreneurial education, whose main goals are to

assist students in discovering their natural talents, honing them, and then using those abilities along with methods and skills to give answers to the issues facing our society. To be competent in their chosen careers and beneficial to both themselves and society, young graduates and youths are trained and assisted by skills development to pursue self-employment (Alfred & God's Desire, 2022) This study sought to achieve the following research question: How does the youth employment programmes implemented in the State improve the skills and economic wellbeing of youths?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Issues

Skills Acquisition

To better understand the concepts, Skill acquisition, it is important to first and foremost understand what the word, skill means in this context. Skill is defined as the ability to do something well. It also means competence or expertise in doing something. Thus, according to Omene (2021), skill is defined as the ability to do something well, usually gained through training or experience. From the above, skill acquisition has been conceptualized as the form of practical training by individuals or group of individuals aimed at gaining knowledge for self-sustenance. It involves the training of people in different fields of trade or profession such as furniture making or carpentry, mobile phone repairs, auto mechanic, mason, electrical installation, welding, pipe fitting, tiling among others, under a legal agreement between the trainers and the trainees for certain duration and under certain conditions (Idoko, 2021).

According to Ochiagha (2023), it is the process of demonstrating the habit of active thinking or behaviour in a specific activity. He further stated that skill acquisition is seen as the ability to do or perform an activity that is related to some meaningful exercise, work or job. He went further to contend that for skill to be acquired, appropriate knowledge, attitudes, habits of thought and qualities of character are learnt to enable the acquirer develop intellectual, emotional and moral character which prepares him or her for a brighter future e through employment generation for empowerment. This no doubt is in line with the views

of Omene (Supra) that skills are usually acquired after a training session or after a practical, which training or practical involves the development of a new skill, practice of a way of doing things.

Donli (2021) views skill acquisition as the manifestation of idea and knowledge through training which is geared towards instilling in individuals, the spirit of entrepreneurship needed for meaningful development. He stressed that if individuals are given the opportunity to acquire relevant skills needed for self-sustenance in the economy, it will promote their charisma in any work environment. He argued that skill acquisition increases competition and cooperation among people.

Similarly, Magbagbeola (2018) posited that skills acquisition requires the accumulation of different skills that enhances task performance through the integration of both theoretical and practical forms of knowledge. Omene (2021), in writing about skill acquisition and its importance in employment generation and empowerment of citizens contended that skill acquisition requires a holistic approach in order to realize the required skill. He stated further, that skill acquisition helps in the transformation of knowledge and skills into creative venture; that the main aim of skill acquisition is to fight against unemployment among youths. Emeka (2020), in support of the above views stated that skills acquisition are what people can do to impact their generation; that it is not left for the poor and middle-class people, but it is for career and/or professionals who desire to make their lives multifaceted, adaptable, self-sustaining and independent. On the other hand, skills acquisition is the act of getting skill and knowledge which enables individuals to do something well; usually achieved through teaching, training, retraining, practical experience and on-the-job-training. Through teaching and training, several skills such as technical, vocational, managerial, entrepreneurial, accounting, communication are acquired (Ochogba and Amaechi, 2018).

The importance of skill acquisition among youth cannot be overemphasized. Hence, Okwelle and Amaechi (2017), observed that skill acquisition and empowerment in various areas of life helps to

empower youths and engage them productively. This is in agreement with the views of Uka and Ogide (2019) who posited that through skills acquisition, individuals could be empowered to develop capabilities and values that will not only benefit the individual, but others and the society at large through employment generation.

Youth Empowerment

Youth empowerment is a multi-dimensional process by which the youths can be induced, motivated and made to embrace positive changes, particularly, in their economic life styles and thereby improve the economy. According to Jimba (2022), youth empowerment involves different ways the youth can be facilitated to cause changes in their life style. He maintained that youth empowerment means a way of inculcating into the youths the spirit of transformation of ideas into creativeness, which is capable of causing positive changes in their economic status. Youth empowerment can also be seen as a means of exposing the youths into skills or training that makes them productive. It encompasses different ways youth can be exposed into different trades that may help them to engage in sustainable paid and self-employment.

The need for youth empowerment is anchored on the fact that the youth remain one of the greatest assets of any community. Potentially, they are the greatest investments for a society's sustainable development and future. It is for this, that it is universally acknowledged that positive, fundamental and meaning changes across cultural settings are usually engineered, fostered and or shaped by the generation of youth in that society. Therefore, any culture or community, whether macro or micro that allows a good percentage of her youth to be misdirected or allowed to remain unproductive, risks her future viability and survival.

Thus, the rising tide of unemployment and the fear of a bleak future among the youths in Nigeria in general and Ebonyi State in particular, and perhaps, elsewhere, has attracted the attention of many researchers and academics, alike, on what should be done to make the youth to be empowered and to become more productive. To actualize this, a lot of programmes and

policies which encourage youth empowerment such as skill acquisition programmes have been launched as a means of youth empowerment. This is the reason why skill acquisition according to Ogundowolo (2019) is to prepare and equip the youths with appropriate skills that can be beneficial to them in future. He maintained that ideal skill acquisition is capable of ensuring value re-orientation among the youths and transforming them into creators of wealth and employment instead of seekers. Obviously, the creation of wealth and employment will lead to poverty reduction and increase of welfare status of individuals in the society.

In line with the above view, Ogbe (2016) stated that wealth creation acquired through youth empowerment is expected to reverse the structural weakness and imbalances in the economy by providing strategic focus and direction and inculcating in the youths the right ethics, discipline, values, hard work, honesty, respect and humility among others.

Skill Acquisition and Employment Generation among Youths

In recent years, unemployment among the youths has been discovered to be one of the most challenging phenomena. This is because, year-in-year-out, thousands of students graduate from secondary schools and higher institutions of learning, with more than 70% of them in search of greener pastures. Not only that there are no white-cola jobs anywhere to absorb them but that a greater percentage of them have no requisite skills commensurate to the present digital economy. Obviously, in the midst of all these, skill acquisition becomes one of the important pillars that help many in actualizing their dreams and aid those who are not privileged to work with public or private organizations with academic certificates to have livelihoods (Garba, 2023). The essence of skill acquisition is as the relevancy of blood and water to human body; lack of regular sources of income has been blamed as a major cause of bribery and corruption and youth restiveness in any society. Skills increase employment opportunities, youth active involvement in economic productivity and crime reduction in societies. Skills help people to have better resources and financial management, improved strategic

planning and curtailing crises in organizations due to experiences garnered.

In order to reduce the rate of unemployment and total reliance on government, in 1987 the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was established; the directorate was mandated to deal with rising trend of unemployment through the training of people in various skills. Recently, also, various other programmes and policies have also been rolled out to fight the same mayhem of unemployment. But whether, these programmes and policies of government have been able to address the problem of unemployment is better imagined that explained, as the rate of unemployment has continued to increase geometrically. It is therefore, expected that students' enrollment in skills while undergoing their studies would reduce the problem of unemployment and the burdens which parents bear on the course of the children's sponsorship and further sponsorship even after graduation. Basically, nowadays, if one wants to succeed, one must find alternative income sources, no matter how little he/she might be getting. The labour market is congested with many applications and few vacancies. In Ebonyi State, it is common to find a large array of people with diplomas and various degrees with no jobs. Skill acquisition therefore becomes imperative and a desideratum (Afolabi, 2016; Ekong, & Ekong, 2016).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Theory of Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Henrekson and Sanandaji, (2018) states that any activity that involves entrepreneurship will help in reducing unemployment situation in the economy, because people would have learn one skill or the other. The theory asserts that unemployment is negatively related to new-firm startups, that is, as new businesses are established, employability is stimulated and unemployment reduces substantially. In the same vein, where there are low entrepreneurial activities, unemployment propensity seems to be high. The implication of the above statement is that those who are unemployed tend to remain so, because they possess lower endowments of human capital and

The Economic survival-based theory or what some writers called, "survival of the fittest" theory was originally developed by Herbert Spencer (Muturi, 2021). The theory emphasized on the notion that by following the principle of nature, some people are politically and economically deprived or marginalized and that it is only the best and the fittest of competitors with relevant skills and/or endowments that will survive and win, which in the end would lead to the improvement of the social community as a whole. It also posits that it is through skills acquisition that people who have lost their jobs, possibly, to corporate downsizing and political marginalization can become entrepreneurs and thus, create jobs for themselves and others; that these people do not become entrepreneurs and create jobs by choice but by sheer will to survive. Mbaegbu (2018), argued that having lost their means of livelihood, these people now channel their creative energies to skills acquisition, usually after the initial period of inertia and despondency. This is a phenomenon that Gilder (2021) described as the movement from poverty to wealth.

This theory therefore, is adopted by the researcher in this work as the most suitable theoretical foundation for the presentation and better understanding of this research work, since the theory sees skills acquisition, as the movement from poverty to wealth; thereby shares link with youth empowerment and reduction of unemployment, which is the epicenter of this work.

entrepreneurial talents required to start and sustain new firms or to keep them going. This theory is intended to assist the unemployed graduates to realise the importance of acquiring skills which will enable them to be in an advantageous position to be self-employed. In the Schumpeterian theory, the entrepreneur moves the economy out of static equilibrium.

3. Methodology

The research design refers to the overall strategy and analytical approach that you have chosen in order to integrate, in a coherent and logical way, the different components of the study, thus ensuring that the research problem will be thoroughly investigated. Survey is used to answer questions that have been raised to solve problems that have been posed or observed: to assess needs and set goals, to determine whether or not

specific objectives have been met; to establish baseline against which future comparisons can be made; to analyse trends across time and generally, to describe what exists, in what amount and in what context. The population of the study will consist of the Bauchi metropolis, which has over 670,000 peoples for the purpose of this research.

A total sample size as suggested by Research Advisors (2020) will be used, as the appropriate size for a population that is infinite, with a confidence level of 95% and margin error of 5.0% will be used for the study. The sampling size would be determined by using Krejcie and Morgan table. A simple random sampling method was used to recruit respondents. A probability sampling design through the use of systematic random sampling is used by distributing questionnaires to the respondents.

A probability sampling is seen as a procedure that uses random selection so that every single unit of the population may have the chance of being chosen. The objective of using systematic random sampling is ensure that possible human partiality is reduces in the process of selecting cases that are to be involve in the sample and therefore provide the researcher with a good sample that is believed to be a representative of the population of the study is focused on.

The quantitative data collected will be analyzed using simple percentages with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 software. The demographic data variables of the respondents will be subjected to descriptive statistics of frequency distributions and percentage.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Demographic Information

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	58	
Female	42	
Total	100	
Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	33	33
Married	67	67
Total	100	100
Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 18 years	20	20
18–29 years	25	25
30–39 years	35	35
40–above years	20	20
Total	100	100
Academic Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
WAEC	17	17
NCE/OND	30	30
HND/BSC	50	50
Others	3	3
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey - 2026

The table above shows that 58% representing 58 respondents were male, while 42% representing 42 respondents were female. This shows that most of the respondents were males. it is seen that 33% of representing 20 respondents were single, while 67% representing 67 respondent were married. This shows

that a good number of the respondents are either single or married. It also shows that 20% representing 20 respondent fall within below 18 years, 25% representing 25 respondents fell within the age of 30 – 39 years, 35% representing 35 respondents fall within the age 30 -39 years, 15% representing 15

respondent fell within the age of 40 – above years and 20% representing 20 respondent. It indicates that 17% representing 17 respondents were WAEC holder, 30% representing 30 respondent were NCE/OND

holders, 50% representing 50 respondents were HND/BSC holders and 3% representing 3 respondents were holding other higher certificate

Table 2: Youth Employment Programs Implemented to improve their Skills Acquisition

How does the youth employment programmes implemented in the State improve the skills and economic well-being of youths

Statement	SA	A	SD	D	N
The program effectively identified the skills needed by the local job market	50 (50%)	35(35%)	7(7%)	7 (7%)	1(1%)
The program curriculum was relevant to the needs and aspirations of the participants	33(33%)	42(42%)	5 (5%)	12(12%)	7(7%)
The program provided adequate training facilities and equipment	40(40%)	17(17%)	27(27%)	3(3%)	13(13%)
The program trainers were qualified and competent	58(58%)	32(32%)	10(10%)	-	-
The program duration was sufficient for skill acquisition	58(58%)	27(27%)	-	12(12%)	3(3%)
The program offered flexible learning options (part-time or evening classes).	48(48%)	20(20%)	10(10%)	17(17%)	17(17%)
The program provided adequate counseling and career guidance	66(66%)	22(22%)	12(12%)	-	-
The program effectively targeted vulnerable and disadvantaged youth	50(50%)	30(30%)	-	20(20%)	-
The program provided incentives to encourage participation (e.g., stipends, transportation).	67(6&%)	33(33%)	-	-	-
The program created a conducive learning environment	35(35%)	27(27%)	15(15%)	17(17%)	8(8%)
The program fostered a supportive and inclusive atmosphere.	47(47%)	27(27%)	5(5%)	13(13%)	8(8%)

Source: Field survey – 2026

The above table shows that 50% representing 50 respondents strongly agree that the program effectively identified the skills needed by the local job market, 35% representing 35 respondents agree that the program effectively identified the skills needed by the local job market, 7% representing 7 respondents were neutral and disagree with the statement and 2% representing 2 respondent strongly disagree that The program effectively identified the skills needed by the local job market.

An examination of the table shows that 33% representing 33 respondents strongly agree that the program curriculum was relevant to the needs and aspirations of the participants 43% representing 43 respondents agree that the program curriculum was relevant to the needs and aspirations of the participants 5% representing 5 respondents are undecided, 12 respondent representing 12% disagree that the program curriculum was relevant to the needs and aspirations of the participants, 7% representing 7 respondents strongly disagree that the program curriculum was

relevant to the needs and aspirations of the participants.

The table shows that the program provided adequate training facilities and equipment. The inference is confirmed by the data in table 4.1.9 in which 40% representing 40 respondents strongly agree that the program provided adequate training facilities and equipment, 17% representing 17 respondent agree that the program provided adequate training facilities and equipment, 27% representing 27 respondent are undecided, 3% representing 3 respondents disagree that the program provided adequate training facilities and equipment while 13% representing 13 respondent disagree the program provided adequate training facilities and equipment.

The above table shows that 58% representing 58 respondent strongly agree that the program trainers were qualified and competent, 32% are representing 32 respondent agree that the program trainers were qualified and competent while 10% representing 10 respondent are undecided while strongly agree and disagree have no respondent.

The table depicts the responses of respondents on program duration was sufficient for skill acquisition. A look at the table shows 58% representing 58 respondent strongly agree that The program duration was sufficient for skill acquisition, 27% representing 27 respondents agree that the program duration was sufficient for skill acquisition, 12% representing 12 respondent disagree that The program duration was sufficient for skill acquisition, 3% representing 3 respondent strongly disagree with the statement and no respondent for neutral.

The table indicate majority of the respondents representing 48% of 48 respondents strongly agree that The program offered flexible learning options (part-time or evening classes), 20% representing 20 respondents agree that The program offered flexible learning options (part-time or evening classes), 8% representing 8 respondents disagree that the program offered flexible learning options (part-time or evening classes), while 17% representing 17 respondents

strongly disagree that the program offered flexible learning options (part-time or evening classes)..

It also shows that program provided adequate counseling and career guidance. This inference is confirmed by the data in the above in which 66% representing 66 respondent strongly agree that program provided adequate counseling and career guidance, 22% representing 22 respondents agree that program provided adequate counseling and career guidance 12% representing 12 respondents are neutral while no respondent for disagree and strongly agree.

It also shows that 50% representing 50 respondents strongly agree that the program effectively targeted vulnerable and disadvantaged youth 30% representing 30 respondents agree that the program effectively targeted vulnerable and disadvantaged youth while no respondent for neutral and strongly disagree. 67% representing 67 respondent strongly agree that the program provided incentives to encourage participation (e.g., stipends, transportation), 33% representing 33 respondent agree that the program provided incentives to encourage participation

(e.g., stipends, transportation), while no respondent for neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. 33% representing 33 respondents strongly agree that the program created a conducive learning environment, 27% representing 27 respondents agree that the program created a conducive learning environment, 15% representing 15 respondent are neutral, 17% representing 17 respondent disagree that the program created a conducive learning environment while 8% representing 8 respondents strongly disagree that the program created a conducive learning environment.

57% representing 57 respondents strongly agree that the program created a conducive learning environment, 23% representing 23 respondents agree that the program created a conducive learning environment, 17% representing 17 respondents are neutral while 3% representing 3 respondent strongly disagree the program created a conducive learning environment. 47% representing 47 respondents

strongly agree that the program fostered a supportive and inclusive atmosphere, 27% representing 27 respondents agree, 5% representing 5 respondent are neutral 13% representing 13 respondent disagree, 8% representing 8 respondent strongly disagree.

4.1 Discussion of Finding

Nigeria has implemented several youth employment programs with a strong emphasis on skills acquisition to combat high youth unemployment, foster self-reliance, and align training with labor market demands (e.g., vocational, technical, digital, entrepreneurial, and sector-specific skills). These initiatives are driven by federal government ministries (e.g., Youth Development, Education), agencies (e.g., NYSC), and international partners (e.g., World Bank, GIZ, EU, UNDP). Many were active or expanded in 2025–2026, aligning with the Renewed Hope Agenda Below are key programs, focusing on those explicitly designed or updated to enhance skills for employability or entrepreneurship: Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) a mandatory component of the one-year NYSC service for fresh graduates, providing sensitization, training, mentoring, and access to resources for self-reliance. It includes in-camp and post-camp phases with a digital platform for broader access. Vocational trades (e.g., fashion design, photography, cyber security, data analysis, AI engineering, film production), entrepreneurship, business management, and digital innovation. Targets sensitization of 200,000+ corps members annually and training/mentoring of 100,000+ for self-employment; promotes post-service employability through partnerships and funding access (NYSC, 2026; Akinyemi, 2022; Na-Allah, & Ahmad, 2022).

Innovation Development and Effectiveness in the Acquisition of Skills (IDEAS) Project a World Bank-supported initiative under the Federal Ministry of Education to strengthen the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system through reforms, resource enhancement, and market-relevant training. Comprehensive TVET in formal/informal sectors, including technical/vocational competencies aligned with industry needs. Provides free training to thousands (e.g., 26,000 youths reported in early 2026);

includes soft loans facilitation (e.g., via Bank of Industry) for trainees to start enterprises (IDEAS, 2026).

Nigeria Jubilee Fellows Programme (NJFP) 2.0 Federal Government initiative (coordinated by Office of the Vice President), funded by EU and implemented with UNDP, offering 12-month paid work placements, mentorship, and skills-building for graduates. Hands-on experience in sectors like tech, energy, agriculture; bridges education-to-employment gap with practical training and career development. Targets thousands annually (e.g., aims for 20,000+ jobs/year); national coverage across 36 states + FCT; applications opened in late 2025 with extensions (NJFP, 2025).

Skills Development for Youth Employment (SKYE / SKYE II) GIZ-implemented program (since 2018, with extensions) focusing on demand-driven TVET, private sector linkages, and labor market measures for unemployed/underemployed youth (including returnees). Agriculture, construction, industrial mechanics; includes e-learning modules on soft skills and employability. Improves access to gainful employment in selected states; partners with institutions for structured training and job matching. GIZ official project page (giz.de/en/projects/skills-development-youth-employment-skye-ii-nigeria); GFA consulting reports on implementation.

Nigerian Youth Academy (NiYA) Initiatives under the Federal Ministry of Youth Development, includes digital learning platforms and partnerships for vocational/digital skills expansion. Dual vocational training, digital skills (modeled after platforms like Coursera), entrepreneurship. Aims to empower millions (e.g., 7 million+ targeted in announcements); strengthens access through online/offline training (Virk et al., 2023). Additional Notable Programs Generation Unlimited Nigeria (GenU 9JA) UNICEF-supported, institutionalized under Vice President's office; scales digital skills, livelihoods, and entrepreneurship (e.g., YOMA platform targeting 2 million users by 2026). National Employment Policy (NEP) Redesign (2025) emphasizes vocational/technical training, ICT, digital skills, and entrepreneurship education. These programs often include stipends, certifications, mentorship, and

job/enterprise linkages. Challenges remain in scaling, rural access, and follow-up support, but they represent key government efforts. For applications, visit official sites (NYSC, 2026).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the empirical evidence gathered, it can be concluded that the Skill Acquisition and Youth Empowerment Program in Bauchi LGA has demonstrated a positive impact on youth empowerment. The program has been instrumental in addressing the issue of youth unemployment and underemployment by providing young people with the necessary skills and knowledge to secure livelihoods. The observed increase in employment rates and the emergence of new businesses among program beneficiaries are indicative of the program's effectiveness. Nonetheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that the program's impact is not uniform across all participants. Factors such as gender, educational background, and geographical location have influenced the outcomes. Additionally, the sustainability of the program's achievements remains a concern due to the identified challenges.

To maximize the impact of the Skill Acquisition and Youth Empowerment Program and address its

limitations, the following recommendations are proffered:

- i. A substantial increase in budgetary allocation for SAYEP is essential to expand its reach, improve training facilities, and provide adequate support services to beneficiaries.
- ii. The program curriculum should be regularly updated to align with emerging job market trends and incorporate entrepreneurship development components.
- iii. Implementing a robust mentorship and coaching program will provide ongoing support to program graduates, enhancing their business management skills and overall success.
- iv. Establishing a dedicated job placement unit within the program will facilitate linkages between program graduates and potential employers, increasing employment opportunities.
- v. Collaborations with the private sector can provide internships, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities for program beneficiaries.
- vi. A comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system should be established to track program progress, measure outcomes, and identify areas for improvement.

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