

Skills Development and Nigeria Development Strategies: A Proposed Policy Framework

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Abstract

Skills development is central to Nigeria's economic reform agenda, particularly in light of persistent youth unemployment and rapidly evolving labour market demands. The objective of this study is to examine existing skills development policies in Nigeria and propose a coherent policy framework that aligns skills supply with national development strategies. Drawing on a qualitative research approach, the study employs content analysis of key policy documents, including the Nigeria Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP), National Youth Policy, and the Nigeria Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), alongside secondary data analysis. The findings reveal significant gaps in policy coordination, implementation effectiveness, stakeholder participation, and alignment between education, training systems, and labour market needs. These gaps continue to undermine the capacity of skills development initiatives to respond to economic and workforce realities. Based on these findings, the study recommends the adoption of an integrated skills development policy framework supported by effective governance structures, stronger inter-agency coordination, inclusive stakeholder engagement, and sustainable financing mechanisms. The study contributes to policy and academic literature by offering evidence-based insights and practical recommendations for strengthening skills development systems in Nigeria.

Keyword: Content analysis, human capital theory, skills development, development strategy

1. Introduction

Nigeria is burdened with a huge responsibility of aligning its skills development policies with overall national plans that promote economic diversification, job creation, and inclusive growth. Nigeria has over 60% of its population under the age of 25, and over 35% youth unemployment, which is significant, necessitating critical targeted and sustained skills policies (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). National plans such as the ERGP (2017-2020), National Development Plan (2021-2025), sector programmes; the 3 Million Technical Talent (3MTT) programme all acknowledge the imperative of equipping citizens with employability skills. Despite these strategic plans in place, Nigeria continues to experience a wide skills mismatch between what the job market needs and what training institutions offer. The economic objectives articulated in national plans, including technological advancement, industrialisation, and empowerment of youth, are often not translated into concrete, integrated skills development policies. The communication breakdown is attributed to a mix of interlinked challenges, including poor intra-agency coordination, absence of a shared national implementation plan, inadequate stakeholder engagement, and outdated training curricula. The majority of skill development projects are carried out in a standalone manner by various agencies, with coordinating responsibilities overlapping and no

coordinating system that enables collaboration or sharing of information. National policies such as the National Skills Qualifications Framework NSQF, designed to harmonise and standardise the certification of skills and enhance training quality, are not maximally exploited. This has led to inefficiency, duplication, and propagation of training courses that do not align with national economic objectives or the forces of labour markets. Addressing this gap is a technical policy issue and a development imperative that is timely and relevant. With Nigeria's increasing youth population and unemployment level, an out-of-date skills policy hinders the country's ability to achieve inclusive economic prosperity. With many industries turning knowledge-based and global competitiveness dependent on skills, the urgency to develop a labour force equipped with the appropriate, forward-looking competencies is important.

This research adds to what is known about the skills development environment in Nigeria by presenting a critical review of existing policy frameworks and their alignment with overall national strategies. It evaluates the congruence and compatibility of national development plans and the implementation of skills policies, identifies system and institution-level disincentives to alignment, and proposes a holistic policy alignment framework. This framework is based on the integration of governance structures, translating strategic plans into feasible skills programmes, and the incorporation of relevant stakeholders: the private sector, development partners, training institutions, and communities. The author lends voice to ongoing debate on development finance by proposing a framework that fosters better targeting, coordination, and evaluation. This study provides a basis for optimising development finance in human capital initiatives, ensuring that investments yield measurable economic and social returns. Finally, this study offers policymakers, educators, and international organisations concerned with developing an environment conducive to skills development some useful lessons. By identifying the challenges as well as opportunities within Nigeria's policy context, this paper advocates a strategic shift towards a more harmonised, responsive, and inclusive skills development system

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine skills development policies in Nigeria and propose a policy framework that aligns skills supply with labour market and national development needs. The specific objectives are to;

1. to examine existing policy frameworks for skills development in Nigeria.
2. to assess the alignment between skills development programs and labour market demands in Nigeria.
3. to analyze gender and institutional factors affecting the effectiveness of skills development initiatives in Nigeria.

4. to evaluate the perceptions of employers regarding the skills and competencies required for youth employability in Nigeria.
5. to propose integrated policy strategies that enhance coordination, inclusivity, and sustainable skills development in Nigeria.

2. Methodology

Based on qualitative content analysis, supported by secondary data analysis, the author explored Nigeria's skills development alignment with national strategies. Qualitative content analysis is useful for systematically analysing text-based information such as policy reports, legislative frameworks, and institutional documents to identify patterns and dissonances in policy discourse and implementation strategies (Bowen, 2009; Schreier, 2012). This is appropriate for policy research, where one needs to describe and make sense of policy arrangements and actions. In addition, this design is suitable for capturing the institutional fragmentation nature of Nigeria's skills development landscape. Due to the decentralised implementation of policies through many ministries and agencies, a content analysis design enables systematic assessment of coherence, policy objectives, and conformity mechanisms across different documents and actors (Patton, 2015). The primary materials considered include strategic national plans such as the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP, 2017–2020), the National Development Plan (2021–2025), and the Nigeria Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF). Programmes at sector levels such as the 3 Million Technical Talent (3MTT) programme, policy statements of primary agencies (e.g., National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), Industrial Training Fund (ITF), NBS, and National Directorate of Employment (NDE), and reports of foreign development partners (e.g., World Bank) were also considered to corroborate evidence and enhance the validity of analysis.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Global Perspectives on Skills Policy Alignment

At the global level, countries whose skills development has been aligned with national economic policies are leading the way in coordinating policy interventions supported by institutional arrangements, labour market intelligence, and stakeholders' engagement. As such, Nigeria can learn from these countries. Germany's dual education system incorporates vocational training in schools and apprenticeship training in companies. The system delivers a steady pipeline of industry-ready graduates. The model is complemented by an institutional and legal framework that promotes collaboration between the federal and regional governments, industry chambers, and vocational schools (ILO, 2019). The result is a low rate of youth unemployment and an employed workforce whose skills are aligned with the needs of a changing industrial economy. Singapore's SkillsFuture supports long-term national planning. Launched in 2015, SkillsFuture provides all citizens access to learning credits, modular courses, and career guidance services in perpetuity. This initiative enjoys the support of the government and regular industry consultation to monitor emerging skill shortfalls and technology trends over time (OECD, 2020). Matching skills development with national strategy has made Singapore a global leader for workforce adaptability and innovation. Australia's National Skills Agreement and Canada's Future Skills Centre suggest strong coordination mechanisms. These countries employ current labour market data, employer perceptions, and skills forecast models to make policy and plan training programmes. Both countries ensure

that skills development initiatives are inclusive and accessible to disadvantaged groups (World Bank, 2021; OECD, 2020). These countries ensure that skills development aligns with national strategies by following four key pillars, namely (1) labour market-driven training systems, (2) institutionalised employer involvement, (3) firm quality assurance and certification systems, and (4) lifelong learning and upskilling policies. These pillars ensure that skills development is not only reactive but also anticipatory, preparing citizens for future economic change. Arguably, Nigeria can use these international lessons to inform its policy context. The adoption of integrated systems of governance, enhanced stakeholder coordination, and incorporation of rigorous labour market analysis into skills planning are essential steps toward greater alignment.

3.2 Nigerian Skills Development Environment

The Nigerian environment for skills development is governed by institutions, policies, and processes directed at building human capital and enhancing employability. Major actors include the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), which oversees technical and vocational education and training (TVET); the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), which oversees the training of the workforce and employer-arranged programmes; and the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), which conducts labour market activation and vocational skill schemes (NBTE, 2022; ITF, 2021). These institutions are supervised by the Federal Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Employment, but generally lack coordination in strategy and implementation. The Nigeria Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), launched in 2013 and revised in subsequent years, seeks to harmonise vocational training and certifications across sectors, improve labour market relevance, and facilitate lifelong learning (NBTE, 2022). Its execution, however, has been uneven. The majority of training institutions, especially subnational ones, have not put the framework into practice due to weak enforcement mechanisms, inadequate awareness, and poor funding (Okolie et al., 2020). Fragmentation remains a key barrier to skills development in Nigeria. Multiple government agencies manage several skills programmes without coordination and shared goals for evaluating impact. For instance, NDE and ITF implement skills acquisition programmes among youth, but with overlapping beneficiaries and unequal curriculum and delivery systems (World Bank, 2021). Yet, this duplication leads to inefficiency, hinders scalability, and erodes accountability. Nonetheless, the disconnect between vocational training requirements and national economic planning persists. Despite the National Development Plan (2021–2025) and Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) emphasis on new sectors such as ICT, agribusiness, and renewable energy, most vocational training interventions remain in low-scale conventional areas such as tailoring, welding, and hairdressing, which are non-scalable in modern economies (NBS, 2023). These are exacerbated by structural underfunding of TVET institutions, outdated machinery, and the absence of industry-experienced instructors. Put together, all these hinder Nigeria from establishing a competitive, future-oriented workforce in line with its strategic development goals.

3.3 Policy Coherence and Implementation Gaps

Despite several skills development policies and programmes in Nigeria, there are huge gaps in their coherence and implementation. One of the major issues is the absence of coordination between training programmes and the economic

priorities identified in national strategies. The Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP), which emphasises strategic sectors such as agribusiness, information and communication technology (ICT), and renewable energy, has the majority of skills training programmes continuing to focus on traditional vocations such as tailoring, carpentry, and cosmetology (Auta, 2022). Such trades, though important, suffer from scalability and do not align with high-growth sectors earmarked for national transformation. This disconnect is worsened by the absence of a harmonised monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system to measure impacts and inform policy adjustments. According to the World Bank (2021), lack of a robust national M&E system suggests that data on training success, employment placement rates, and sectoral demand are disconnected or unavailable, which undermines accountability and ongoing improvement. Another issue is lack of coordination among agencies responsible for skills development. The National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Industrial Training Fund (ITF), and National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) operate in silos with mixed mandates, leading to duplication and inefficient use of resources (Okolie et al., 2020). Institutional fragmentation hinders skills development and confuses participants. Furthermore, training syllabi have not been updated to include technological innovation or changes in the labour market. Training institutions lack the incentive or autonomy to revise their courses to suit the requirements of employers or emerging industries, resulting in a perennial skills mismatch.

Empirical Review of Related Studies

Recent empirical studies have examined the effectiveness of skills development initiatives in addressing youth unemployment and labour market mismatches in Nigeria. Evidence from these studies highlights both the potential and limitations of existing policy and institutional arrangements. Empirical research by Adebayo and Ogunyemi (2024) investigated the influence of vocational skills training on youth employability in Lagos State using a survey research design. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between vocational skills acquisition and employability outcomes, indicating that skills training enhances job readiness and self-employment opportunities. However, the study also noted that weak industry participation limits the relevance of acquired skills to labour market demands. Similarly, a nationwide survey conducted by International Labour Organization (ILO, 2024) examined youth employment and decent work conditions in Nigeria. The study found that skills mismatch remains a major contributor to youth unemployment, as formal education systems often fail to provide practical and market-relevant competencies. The findings emphasised the need for closer alignment between skills development policies and labour market requirements. Using a mixed-methods approach, Okorie, Eze, and Balogun (2025) analysed technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes and their impact on employment outcomes in selected Nigerian states. The study revealed that while TVET programmes improve technical competencies, their effectiveness is undermined by inadequate funding, fragmented governance, and limited coordination among implementing agencies. Gender disparities in access to skills training were also identified as a key challenge. From an institutional perspective, Adekunle and Yusuf (2025) employed time-series econometric analysis to examine the relationship between institutional quality and youth unemployment in Nigeria. Their findings showed that weak governance structures and ineffective policy

implementation significantly reduce the impact of skills development initiatives on employment outcomes. The study concluded that skills policies must be supported by strong institutions to achieve sustainable labour market improvements. Employer-focused empirical evidence by Olatunji and Aremu (2025) further revealed a disconnect between graduates' skills and industry expectations. Using survey data from manufacturing and service-sector firms, the study found deficiencies in communication, problem-solving, and digital skills among job seekers. The authors recommended stronger collaboration between policymakers, educational institutions, and employers to ensure skills development policies are demand-driven. Overall, the empirical literature indicates that although skills development initiatives positively influence employability in Nigeria, their effectiveness is constrained by skills mismatch, weak coordination, limited stakeholder participation, and governance challenges. These gaps underscore the need for an integrated and aligned skills development policy framework, which the present study seeks to address.

4. Theoretical Framework

Based on Human Capital Theory HCT and Institutional Alignment Theory IAT, the author explored skills development and Nigeria's development strategies.

4.1 Human Capital Theory

Human capital theory, as originally proposed by Becker (1964), assumes that individuals and organisations can increase their economic productivity and earning power by investing in training, health, and education. Education and skill acquisition are forms of capital that yield higher incomes for individuals and higher productivity for the economy as a whole. According to this perspective, national growth depends on a nation's ability to create an educated and flexible workforce. This theory is particularly relevant to the Nigerian context, where youth unemployment is over 35% and most of the employed working population lacks formal technical or vocational training (NBS, 2023). Consistent with Becker's model, TVET can improve employability, increase productivity, and contribute to the diversification of the economy and growth (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2018). However, HCT also highlights that quality and relevance in education are important. Training programmes that are mismatched with the demands of the labour market are less likely to bring desired economic returns (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2008). This important observation underscores the need for Nigerian skills development policy to be informed by current labour market information tailored to sector-specific needs, such as ICT, renewable energy, and agribusiness.

4.2 Institutional Alignment Theory

While human capital theory suggests a rationale for investing in capabilities, institutional alignment theory emphasises effective policy implementation within complex governance systems. According to Scott (2008), institutions consist of regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive elements. IAT assumes that successful policy implementation is dependent on the degree to which institutional norms, structures, and processes are coherent. In the context of skills development, IAT can explain the importance of coordinated actions among government ministries, training organisations, and labour market participants. Indeed, misalignments of goals (e.g., between the labour and education ministries), overlapping mandates (e.g., ITF and NDE), and fragmented resource allocation erode coherence and effectiveness in policy

implementation (World Bank, 2021; Okolie et al., 2020). Therefore, this theory is essential to understanding why well-designed policies such as the Nigeria Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) fail to achieve significant outcomes. Further, IAT also supports the argument that skills policy success relies on inbuilt feedback mechanisms, inclusive decision-making, and performance monitoring. For example, in the absence of a centralised M&E system or coordination platform for stakeholders, skills development interventions tend to be duplicated, misplaced, or rendered unsustainable (Peters, 2015).

4.3 Synthesising the Frameworks

Based on the integration of HCT and IAT, this study uses a holistic approach in evaluating Nigeria's skills development environment. While the HCT focuses on the economic rationale of skills investment, IAT considers the determinants of governance and institutions in enhancing the effectiveness of these investments. Together, these theories guide research into the nexus between skills development and Nigeria's development strategy, e.g., the National Development Plan (2021–2025), and what institutional factors support or obstruct such alignment. The synthesised framework informs the study's methodological choice, particularly the use of policy content analysis and institutional mapping, and frames the interpretation of findings relating to fragmentation, policy-practice mismatches, and implementation challenges. The two theoretical stances offer a combined basis for explaining and re-engineering Nigeria's skills policy landscape.

5. Findings and Discussion

The research underscores the structural and functional flaws in Nigeria's skills development system, stressing the urgent need for higher levels of coordination and strategic action at policy harmonisation. The policy design redresses these shortcomings on its own by mandating higher levels of governance, labour market orientation, and widespread monitoring. The analysis of recent empirical studies on skills development in Nigeria reveals both progress and persistent challenges in addressing youth unemployment. Evidence consistently shows that vocational and technical training enhances employability. For example, the Lagos State study demonstrated a strong positive relationship between skills acquisition and job readiness (RSI International, 2024). Critically, this suggests that while training can improve immediate employability, its effectiveness depends on the relevance of the skills to actual labour market demands, indicating that not all training programs yield equally impactful outcomes. This finding calls into question the blanket implementation of skills programs without careful labour market alignment. A recurring theme across studies is the persistent mismatch between educational outputs and industry needs. Nationwide surveys indicate that graduates frequently possess skills that are either outdated or misaligned with employer expectations (NGYouthSDGs et al., 2024). From a critical perspective, this mismatch reflects systemic weaknesses in Nigeria's education and training ecosystem, including insufficient engagement between educational institutions, employers, and policymakers. It also highlights a structural gap in the translation of national skills policies into practical, labour-market-ready competencies. Gender disparities further complicate skills development outcomes. Research in Akwa Ibom State shows that women, despite receiving comparable training to men, face barriers that limit the application of their skills in employment contexts (Frontiers in Sociology, 2025). This finding is particularly critical because it reveals that skills acquisition alone cannot

guarantee equitable outcomes. Socio-cultural constraints, workplace discrimination, and limited access to professional networks undermine the potential impact of training initiatives for women. Policies that ignore these social dimensions risk perpetuating inequalities, even within technically sound programs. Institutional quality emerges as another pivotal factor. Findings indicate that robust governance and civil liberties positively influence youth employment outcomes (DergiPark, 2025). Critically, this suggests that skills development programs cannot operate in isolation; their success is mediated by the broader socio-political and institutional environment. Without systemic support, even well-designed training programs may fail to translate into meaningful employment outcomes, pointing to the need for coordinated policy interventions that integrate education, governance, and labour market planning. Employer perspectives further illuminate the practical gaps in skills development. Studies in Oyo State identify deficiencies in communication, digital literacy, and creative problem-solving among graduates (EAUEDJMS, 2025). Critically, this highlights that technical proficiency alone is insufficient for employability; employers increasingly demand soft and adaptive skills that allow graduates to navigate dynamic work environments. This underscores a limitation in current training programs that prioritize technical competencies without equally emphasizing transferable skills. In synthesis, these findings demonstrate that while skills development is essential for addressing youth unemployment in Nigeria, its effectiveness is conditional on alignment with labour market needs, attention to gender inclusivity, supportive institutional frameworks, and responsiveness to employer demands. Critically, the research suggests that current interventions, though beneficial, are fragmented and insufficiently integrated, calling for holistic, evidence-based strategies that simultaneously address technical skills, socio-cultural barriers, and institutional capacity. Nonetheless, this study confirms the stated below with a **Proposed Policy Framework for Matching Skills Development with Development Strategies in Nigeria**

5.1 Disjointed Governance Frameworks

The study confirms that duplicating mandates between the NDE, ITF, and NBTE led to duplicate programmes and resource wastage. Disjointed governance issues, as observed in other developing countries characterised by enclosed operations, undermine coordinated programme implementation (Kim, 2020). An NSDC is useful for coordinating, fostering mutual accountability, and aligning skill development initiatives with national goals. Coordination at the centre has been effective in countries like Singapore and Germany, with their national skills councils playing important roles in policy coherence and stakeholder coordination (ILO, 2019). Analysis of policy documents shows that Nigeria's skills development system is characterised by fragmented governance structures with multiple agencies having overlapping and conflicting mandates. Institutions such as ITF, NDE, NBTE, and other state-level departments function independently to implement vocational and technical training schemes. This fragmentation leads to inefficiencies such as duplication of efforts, different standards, and competition for limited resources. For instance, although ITF and NDE have different vocational training programmes aimed at youth employment and skill development, in the absence of a coordinating central system, their activities repeatedly overlap by geographic region and target group. In addition, state governments and local governments often take initiatives in their own skills programmes with minimal federal programme

coordination, contributing to governance complexity. Weak institutional linkages and ineffective skills development efforts are a result of the absence of a single coordinating institution or multi-sectoral coordination platform. This finding aligns with Okolie et al. (2020), who cited the proliferation of programmes and agencies with no established functions and coordination as the most common skills development bottleneck in Nigeria. The fragmented governance structure further impedes the establishment and application of standardised quality assurance and certification frameworks. Despite frameworks like the Nigeria Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), responsibility diffusion guarantees that adoption is unequal among agencies and regions, hence denying national unity and recognition of skills qualification.

5.2. Misalignment with National Priorities

The analysis of national economic plans used in the research, such as the National Development Plan and the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP), indicates a strategic focus on growth sectors that can generate employment, namely information and communication technology (ICT), renewable energy, agro-processing, and manufacturing. These sectors have been identified as drivers of economic diversification and inclusive growth in Nigeria's economic diversification away from oil dependence. Yet, existing skills training programmes are characterised by a strong inclination towards low-growth and conventional trades such as carpentry, tailoring, hairdressing, and shoe-making; they fail to match the focus sectors driving Nigeria's economic agenda. The focus needs to be more placed on ICT, digital skills, and green technologies highlighted in national strategies." This mismatch is also a result of curriculum lag in renewal and insufficient integration of labour market intelligence into planning programmes. Providers of skills base their supply on historical demand or traditional community capability, rather than economic projections or sector priorities. The lack of institutionalised processes to access and analyse labour market data aggravates this issue, deterring responsiveness to evolving industry needs. Consequently, trainees acquire qualifications and abilities that do not provide meaningful employment or entrepreneurial prospects in new industries. This misfit contributes to high rates of underemployment and youth unemployment despite massive investment in skills development programmes (Auta, 2022). It also limits the strategic agenda of leveraging skills development for economic transformation. Arguably, establishing a dynamic labour market intelligence system, coupled with institutionalised public-private partnerships, will make the curriculum responsive to evolving industry needs. This aligns with OECD (2020) recommendations, placing a strong focus on the importance of labour market information and employer involvement in enhancing the quality and relevance of skills development.

5.3 Poor Implementation and Oversight

One such critical finding is the pervasive lack of implementation and M&E infrastructure in Nigeria's skills development policies. Though national frameworks such as the NSQF provide directive maxims for the standardisation of skills and quality assurance, its operationalisation is lacking. The adoption of the NSQF by training institutions is inconsistent, with the majority lacking institutional capacities, finances, or regulatory sensitivities to fully integrate the framework into their certification and accreditation processes. M&E systems are generally weak, focusing predominantly on quantitative output indicators such as the number trained,

ignoring whether trainees become employed or their livelihoods enhanced in the long term. The absence of robust M&E also means that skills policies are not adequately flexible to respond to feedback from labour market change or implementation challenges. This precludes ongoing adaptation and risks supporting misalignment among training programmes and national economic goals. The author argues that reviving the NSQF as a federal standard, linked with outcome-based accountability structures, would promote transparency and incentive for performance. This is consistent with the World Bank (2021) report, effective skills development systems require robust feedback loops and policy learning through data. Nigeria's skills development framework is faced with governance fragmentation, a lack of labour market-driven curriculum, and weak monitoring and implementation. These challenges weaken the ability of skills development to make meaningful contributions to the national strategy for economic diversification, employment generation, and growth inclusivity.

6. Proposed Policy Framework for Matching Skills Development with Nigeria's Development Strategies

Based on the content analysis of relevant data a policy framework is proposed to address the challenges hindering skills development and development strategies in Nigeria. Our proposed framework is anchored on three pillars, namely: coordinated governance and institutional integration, labour market-driven curriculum and programme development, and effective monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement. Each pillar comprises key elements and processes for effective policy alignment, sustainability, and responsiveness.

6.1 Institutional Integration and Coordinated Governance

Create Centralised Coordination Body: The author proposes establishing a topmost National Skills Development Council (NSDC) comprising members from Federal and State ministries (Education, Labour, Industry), key skills agencies (NBTE, ITF, NDE), private sector associations, trainers, and development partners. The NSDC will be responsible for coordinating skills development policies, overseeing implementation, and encouraging inter-agency collaboration to avoid duplication and optimise resources. **Mandate Clarification and Role Definition:** This will precisely define Federal, State, and Local agency responsibilities to prevent overlaps. There should be formal mechanisms for cooperation, e.g., joint planning meetings, shared databases, and coordinated funding streams to leverage synergies between institutions. **Integrated Policy Alignment Mechanism:** NSDC will ensure that all the skills development programmes are harmonised with national strategies and sectoral priorities. This entails placing skills development goals in sectoral strategies (agro-processing, renewable energy, ICT) directly to ensure consistency.

6.2 Labour Market-Driven Curriculum and Programme Design

Dynamic Labour Market Intelligence System: There is a need to create a real-time, centralised labour market information system (LMIS) to collect and analyse statistics concerning skills demand, emerging industries, and employment trends. The system will inform curriculum development and programme prioritisation to promote labour market alignment. **Public-Private Partnership Platforms:** Institutionalise collaboration platforms between training providers, employers, industry associations, and government to co-design curricula and apprenticeships. These partnerships

would ensure that training programmes effectively align with current and future industry needs and provide graduates with employability skills. Curriculum Overhaul and NSQF Integration: Revive the Nigeria Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) by mandating its implementation across the country in all accredited training institutions and linking certification with labour market skills. The government should provide funding and technical support to institutions for revising curricula, training teachers, and adopting modern pedagogies that promote digital and green skills.

6.3 Effective Monitoring, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement

Integrated M&E System: Design an integrated M&E system that tracks both quantitative (e.g., the number of trainees) and qualitative measures such as training usage rates, income levels, and employment after training. It must be complemented by standardised data collection tools and reporting routines shared with all parties concerned. **Outcome-Based Accountability:** Align funding and accreditation with quantifiable employment and usage of skills outcomes. Agency effectiveness and strategic alignment should be incentivised through performance-based rewards. **Feedback Loops and Policy Adjustment:** Establish mechanisms for regular stakeholder consultation and feedback, including employers, trainees, and training providers. Government agencies should leverage M&E findings for policy review, curriculum creation, and resource management as part of a responsive adaptive cycle.

6.4 Cross-Cutting Drivers

Capacity Building: Invest in institutional and human capacity building for governance, curriculum, and M&E through focused training, technical assistance, and international collaboration. **Sustainable Financing:** Create a multi-source funding mechanism, including government budget support, private sector investment, and donor funding, with transparent governance for the sustainable financing of skill development activities. **Inclusive Access and Equity:** Establish policy guidelines that explicitly address access barriers for women, individuals with disabilities, and marginalised groups through affirmative action, focused outreach, and inclusive training methodologies. Figure 1 shows the proposed policy framework. This coordinated policy architecture is aimed at governance coherence, labour market relevance, and accountability through the existence of robust monitoring frameworks, which respond to the basic challenges in Nigeria's skills development environment. Its implementation will enable Nigeria to build a more coordinated, demand-driven, and outcomes-oriented skills development system that is responsive to national development and labour market imperatives. This approach will enhance youth employability, promote economic diversification, and sustainable inclusive growth.

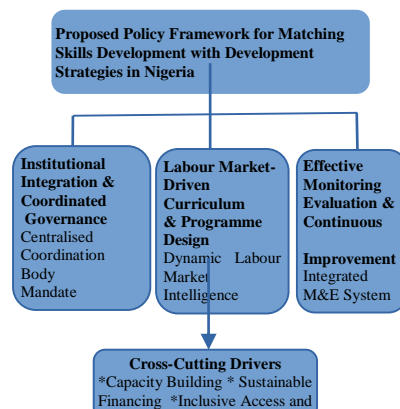


Figure 1. Proposed Policy Framework for Matching Skills Development with Development Strategies in Nigeria
Source: Author's Own Work

Conclusion

This paper explored skills development and Nigeria's development strategies. Given the rampant youth unemployment, underemployment, and training-job imbalance, this study uncovered systematic misalignments and governance challenges in Nigeria's skills development system. A content analysis of key policy documents reveals chronic fragmentation among agencies, inadequate inter-sectoral coordination, and lack of responsiveness to priority sectors such as ICT, renewable energy, and agribusiness. In response to these problems, this study proposed a policy alignment framework, emphasising coordinated governance by national skills development council, labour market-driven curriculum design, and effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism. These policy recommendations would make the skills development environment more responsive, demand-driven, and inclusive. Aligning skills development policy with Nigeria's development strategies is not merely a policy priority but a socio-economic priority. Without strategic and operational coordination, the country would waste its vast human capital endowment. A well-aligned policy framework for skills development is important to Nigeria's aspirations for economic diversification, industrialisation, and inclusive growth. The emphasis on equity and inclusiveness in the framework is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) (UN, 2015). Although the proposed framework is robust, its implementation depends on political will, adequate financing, and effective change management across several organisations.

Research Implications

Future studies should employ a longitudinal approach to assess the long-term impact of coherent skills development policy interventions on employment rates, wage progressions, and career progression among Nigerian youth. Such research can provide empirical insights into the effectiveness and sustainability of policy interventions across economic sectors and demographic groups. In addition, mixed methods that consider employers', trade unions', and training providers' perspectives could offer enhanced understanding of real-world challenges of maintaining skills supply in line with labour market requirements. Cross-regional or sectoral comparative case studies of those regions or sectors using aligned or non-aligned training programmes would determine best practice and policy implications. These research methods will inform evidence based skills policy reform and flexible, inclusive, and context-sensitive solutions to Nigeria's evolving labour market.

Recommendations

The study recommends that skills development programs and educational curricula should be continuously updated in consultation with industry stakeholders to ensure relevance. It is suggested that these programs integrate practical, hands-on experiences and align competencies with emerging sectors

and technological advancements to bridge the gap between formal education and employer expectations. It is further recommended that gender-sensitive approaches be incorporated into skills programs to remove barriers that limit women's access and utilization of skills. Experts argue that mentorship programs, targeted scholarships, supportive workplace policies, and interventions addressing socio-cultural constraints can enhance female participation in the labour market. The findings indicate that the success of skills development initiatives depends on robust governance and supportive institutions. Policymakers are encouraged to strengthen coordination between federal, state, and local agencies, ensure accountability in program implementation, and create enabling environments that facilitate youth participation and employment outcomes. The study also emphasizes that partnerships between educational institutions and employers should be strengthened. This would ensure that graduates acquire both technical and soft skills demanded by the labour market, with internships, apprenticeships, and co-designed curricula serving as effective mechanisms to reduce employability gaps. Furthermore, the study notes that beyond technical competencies, training programs should emphasize transferable skills, including communication, creativity, problem-solving, and digital literacy, enabling youth to adapt to evolving work environments. Finally, it is suggested that continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms be implemented to assess the effectiveness of skills programs, identify gaps, and inform iterative improvements in policy and program design.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge by integrating skills development with Nigeria's national development strategies, identifying gaps in current policies, and proposing a comprehensive policy framework. It provides empirical evidence linking skill acquisition to economic growth and employment, offers practical guidance for policymakers, and lays a foundation for future research on effective skill development interventions in Nigeria.

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