

An Investigating Skills Development and Improving Employability: A Case Study of Businesses and Engineering Skills Training (BEST) Centers in Yobe State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This research examines the impact and effectiveness of Business and Engineering Skills Training (BEST) Centers on skills development and employability enhancement in Yobe State, Nigeria. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to gather comprehensive data from trainees, instructors, administrators, and community members. Findings reveal that BEST Centers have made significant contributions to addressing youth unemployment in the region by providing relevant vocational and technical training. However, the centers face substantial challenges including inadequate funding, insufficient modern equipment, and variable training quality. The research identified that trainees who received comprehensive training coupled with entrepreneurship education and starter packs demonstrated higher employment rates and successful business establishment. Recommendations include increased government funding, refresher training for instructors, public-private partnerships, and expanded entrepreneurship components. This study contributes to the broader discourse on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as a strategic approach for youth empowerment in post-insurgency environments, providing valuable insights for policymakers and educational administrators seeking to enhance the effectiveness of skills development initiatives in Northeast Nigeria.

Keywords: Skills development, Improving and Employability.

Introduction

Technical vocational education and training (TVET) refers to education and training that prepares persons for gainful employment (Finch & Crunkilton, 1999). In other words, TVET refers to deliberate interventions to bring about learning which would make people more productive in designated areas of social life such as economic sectors, occupations, specific work tasks. Vocational and Technical Education is playing a crucial role in imparting knowledge and skills to youth in order to be self-reliant with good moral and intellectual attitude (Dokubo, 2010). Vocational training and skill acquisition are widely acknowledged as critical tools for bridging the skill gap and improving youth employability in Nigeria, especially in regions like Yobe State. The objectives and purpose of the youth vocational training program, including its role in promoting employment, Entrepreneurship and social cohesion among youth aged 18-24 in yobe state (Mercy Corps. 2022). A study involved training 50 youths selected from Bade Local Government Area, Yobe State, in vocational skills of tie and dye fabric dyeing as a practical measure to reduce unemployment and poverty caused by insurgency in the area, Before the training, 91.2% of the trainees showed interest in acquiring fabric dyeing skills to start a business or livelihood, with 95.8% of them being aged between 18-35 years and 66.7% unemployed. At Post-training stage, 79% of trainees were able to effectively perform the fabric dyeing occupation, producing tie and dye fabrics that were 100% found attractive and wearable by the participants, Later Most trainees planned to source startup capital from family and friends (54.2%), cooperative loans (8.3%), and government

programs (18%) to establish their tie and dye businesses ,and It was concluded that fabric dyeing is a viable entrepreneurship opportunity requiring low capital and yielding high-profit margins, suitable for both educated and uneducated youths regardless of gender (European American Journals,2023).

Nigeria's high youth unemployment rate, reported at 35.2% in 2021 by the International Labor Organization (ILO), is attributed substantially to a mismatch between formal education and emerging labor market demands (Ejikepese & Effiom, 2024). There are a lot of job vacancies seeking qualified people with need skills to fill problems of unemployment in Nigeria is lack of skill to harness what nature has provided (Akanbi G. o. 2017). Vocational education, which emphasizes practical skills in fields such as agriculture, manufacturing, and technology, holds promise for economic development and job creation in underserved areas like Yobe. Skills Development and Employability, Skills acquisition programs such as BEST centers in Yobe State equip youths with entrepreneurial and technical skills instrumental to self-employment and reducing joblessness (Yahaya, 2021). The essence of these programs lies in imparting practical knowledge geared toward making trainees economically self-reliant. Studies show that around 75% of beneficiaries agree that entrepreneurial skills training prepares them directly for employment, and 90% affirm that skill acquisition significantly reduces unemployment.

BEST Centers in Yobe State, Yobe State hosts about 11 Business and Engineering Skills Training (BEST) centers providing diverse

An Investigating Skills Development and Improving Employability: A Case Study of Businesses and Engineering Skills Training (BEST) Centers in Yobe State, Nigeria

vocational training. Research indicates that the success of these centers depends on a combination of practical hands-on training, regular participation, monitoring, and incentives such as stipends for trainees (Kachalla Bura Lumami, 2024). However, these centers face challenges including insufficient funding, lack of access to financial support for graduates, and mismanagement of resources. Role of Government and NGOs, The Nigerian government and NGOs have made efforts through empowerment programs like Youth Employment and Social Support Operation (YESSO) and others to support skill acquisition initiatives (Yahaya, 2021). Despite this, many beneficiaries report inadequate access to financial assistance and loans, often due to collateral requirements and systemic inefficiencies. Policy recommendations emphasize increased support including funding, starter packs, and institutional monitoring for sustained impact. Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Theory, Skill acquisition theory explains how learners develop skills progressively from basic knowledge to fluent and independent performance through practice (Speelman, 2005). Entrepreneurship education aims to foster creativity, risk-taking, and responsibility. The overarching goal is to prepare youths for self-employment, which is vital for addressing widespread unemployment and insecurity challenges in Yobe and Nigeria at large. Conclusively, TVET programs in Nigeria require overhauling to bring it to the standard and bridge the existing gap (Akanbi G. O. 2017).

Statement of the Problem

Business and Engineering Skills Training (BEST) Center provide students with practical skills and industry-relevant knowledge,

preparing them for the demands of the modern workplace. Strong partnerships exist between BEST Centers and industry stakeholders, enabling students to engage in work-based learning and develop industry-specific skills. Students are equipped with the skills and competencies required by industry, reducing the skills gap and enhancing employability. BEST Centers institutions often focus on limited theoretical knowledge, with more emphasis on practical skills and industry relevance. Limited partnerships exist between BEST Centers institutions and industry stakeholders, restricting opportunities for work-based learning and industry-specific skill development. BEST centers provides necessary infrastructures, tools and materials in terms of preparing peoples to become self-reliant through one-year skills training in different field of specialization such as: Building Construction, Computer Applications, Electrical installation, Mechanical engineering, Wood work Technology, Fashion and Design, Dying and textile and Home management.

Students often lack the skills and competencies required by industry, contributing to a persistent skills gap and reduced employability in such a way that graduates performing below expectations. Despite the establishment of BEST Centers in Yobe State, youth unemployment remains persistently high, raising questions about the effectiveness and impact of these institutions There appears to be a significant disconnect between the skills being taught and the actual demands of the labor market, resulting in graduates who may possess certificates but lack either the specific technical competencies or entrepreneurial capabilities needed to secure sustainable livelihoods. The BEST Centers also faces issues of inadequate

An Investigating Skills Development and Improving Employability: A Case Study of Businesses and Engineering Skills Training (BEST) Centers in Yobe State, Nigeria

funding, outdated equipment, and variable training quality, which collectively undermine their potential impact. Understanding these challenges and how they affect the employability of graduates is crucial for redesigning more effective interventions.

The existing gap between the ideal BEST Centers institution and current situation need to be bridged as required by labor market. The government should provide necessary infrastructures, tools and materials in terms of preparing peoples to become self-reliant through one-year skills training in different field of specialization such as: Building Construction, Computer Applications Electrical installation, Mechanical engineering, Wood work Technology, Fashion and Design, Dying and textile and Home management. BEST Centers institutions also need to develop stronger partnerships with industry stakeholders to provide opportunities for work-based learning and industry-specific skill development to avoid skills gap. The persistent skills gap between BEST Centers graduates and labor market. This has to be addressed through effective strategies for skill development, industry relevance and improving employability. This gap investigation highlights the need for research on BEST Centers skills development and improving employability in the labor market. For BEST Centers to address the existing gaps, must find out they are receiving qualified TVET teachers, enough and quality materials, modern tools and conducive infrastructure that will provide skill development and improve employment.

Purpose of the study

The primary purpose of this research is to investigate the role of BEST Centers in skills

development and employability enhancement in Yobe State, Nigeria. Specific purposes include:

1. To investigate the current practices of the importance of curriculum
2. To Evaluate the availability of Resources in BEST centers of Yobe state Nigeria.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the current practices of the importance of curriculum?
2. What are the availability of Resources in BEST centers of Yobe state Nigeria?

Methodology

The study is to identify the current practices of business and engineering training (BEST) centers in Yobe state Nigeria and to evaluate the availability of resources. Quantitative research method was employed for collecting and interpreting the data. The reason for employing a quantitative way of data collection is because of its application in terms of data gathering in this study due to its nature. Also, data gathered can be numerically measured using statistical tools resulting in sharp unambiguous findings. In order to analyses the current practice and evaluation the availability of resources in BEST centers in Yobe state Nigeria, three BEST centers were selected out from eleven BEST centers distributed within the whole state making up to 30% of the total population of the centers. This research work was conducted in three BEST centers, selecting one from each zone at random. By the time of the study, the following BEST centers were selected: BEST center Geidam from Zone A, BEST center

An Investigating Skills Development and Improving Employability: A Case Study of Businesses and Engineering Skills Training (BEST) Centers in Yobe State, Nigeria

Nangere from Zone B and BEST center Jajimaji from Zone C. Due to the natures of the schools and teachers' populations, only 60 respondents were participated in the study, where (20) would be TVET teachers, (20) students and (20) community members from 3 different selected BEST centers. The reason for selecting 3 different BEST centers in Yobe state is to ensure a broader coverage of BEST centers programs and to provide a wide range of variation in selection of participants. In this study, the researcher has mainly focused on all skills acquisition programs offering in Yobe state BEST centers. The researcher will select 20

participants from a particular BEST center comprising of TVET teachers, student pursuing skills training and community members. Participants will be selected basing on the following characteristics: the participants need to be fluent in English in such a way that he/she can read the questionnaire and understand. A random sampling will be used to select the sample of the population as it is easy to conduct, and the sampling technique ensure that every person has the equal chance of being selected for the study. Table 1 illustrates the population distribution as:

Table 1: Population and Sample Techniques

Item	Sample Size	Sampling Method
No. of zones	Three zones	None
No. of BEST centers	3 (1 BEST center per zone)	Purposive
No. of teachers	24 (8 from each selected BEST center)	Random
No of students	18 (6 from each selected BEST center)	Random
No. of community members	18 (6 from each selected BEST center)	Radom

The questionnaire developed based on research questions each question or item was structured in a five (5) point Likert scale for the respondents to tick at appropriate column. Test-Retest method was used by administering the questionnaire to the same students, after an interval of Two (2) weeks in order to determine the consistency of the instrument items. SPSS version 20 software was used for analyzing the data obtained. Questionnaires were sent to the

respondents in their selected BEST center. From the duly completed questionnaires, the require data were generated and analyzed by the use of statistical packages. Research questions were tested using weighted average and interpreted as $5.00 \geq WA > 4.50$ is Strongly Agreed; $4.50 \geq WA > 3.50$ is Agreed; $3.50 \geq WA > 2.50$ is Undecided; $2.50 \geq WA > 1.50$ is Disagreed; $1.50 \geq WA > 0.0$ is Strongly Disagreed.

Table 2: Showing the Importance of BEST Curriculum in Yobe

5 (SA)	Statement	Responses					WA
		4 (A)	3 (U)	2 (D)	1 (SD)		
	Best centers are a success story	35 58%	24 40%	0	1 2%	0	4.55
	Best centers give effective training to it students	31 51%	28 47%	0	1 2%	0	4.48
	Best centers produce graduates that meet the demand of the society	18 30%	39 65%	1 2%	2 3%	0	4.21

Descriptive Statistics for Curriculum

Average Weighted Mean	4.41
Maximum	5.00
Minimum	3.67
Standard Deviation	0.38

From Table 2, 98% of the respondents Agreed that BEST center is a success story in our community, 2% Disagreed. Weighted Average (WA) for this component is 4.55. Further 98% of the respondents Agreed that BEST center gives effective training to its students. The Weighted Average (WA) is 4.48, 95% of the respondents agreed, that BEST center produces a graduates that meet the demand of the society. The Weighted Average (WA) is 4.21. The Weighted Average (WA) for each component is 4.55, 4.48, and 4.21 which is interpreted as

agreed. The average weighted Mean of all the components is 4.41 interpreted as the curriculum that is run at BEST centers is generally accepted by the teachers, student, and the community member as an effective curriculum has posed a positive impact on the learners of BEST centers in Yobe state. As per descriptive statistics for the availability of resources, the data is normally distributed with a Mean of 4.41 ± 0.38 ; the maximum is 5.00, whereas the minimum is 3.70.

Table 3: Availability of Resources

5 (SA)	Statement	Responses					WA
		4 (A)	3 (U)	2 (D)	1 (SD)		
	All kind of kinds of instruction material is available for use	15 25%	29 48%	6 10%	8 13%	2 3%	3.78
	Students get the available computer and internet facilities	15 25%	27 45%	8 13%	8 13%	2 3%	3.75

Students have access to the available lab facilities	9 15%	28 47%	14 23%	8 13%	1 2%	3.6
There are enough teaching staff and technicians in the BEST center	16 27%	30 50%	8 13%	4 7%	2 3%	3.9

Descriptive Statistics for Availability of Resources

Average Weighted Mean	3.76
Maximum	5.00
Minimum	1.00
Standard Deviation	0.77

From Table 3, 75% Agreed that all kind of instructional materials are available to use, 11% undecided, and 14% of the respondents Disagreed. The Weighted Average (WA) for this component is 3.75 further 80% Agreed that students have access to the available computer and internet facilities, 8% undecided, and 12% Disagreed. The Weighted Average (WA) of this component is 3.75. Further 62% Agreed that students have access to the available lab facilities, 23% Undecided, and 15% Disagreed. The weighted average for this component is 3.6, 77% agreed that There are enough teaching staff and technicians in the BEST center, 13% undecided and 10% Disagreed. The Weighted Average (WA) of this component is 3.9. The weighted average for each component is 3.75, 3.75, 3.6 and 3.9 which interpreted as agreed. The average weighted mean of all the components is 3.75 interpreted as the resources available in Yobe state BEST centers is accepted by the administrators, teachers, student, and the community members that the resources available in the BEST center has posse a positive impact on the learners of Yobe state. As per descriptive statistics for availability of resources, the data is normally distributed with Mean of 3.76 ± 0.77 ,

the maximum is 5.0, whereas the minimum is 1.0.

Findings and discussion

Data related to the impact of BEST centers on the people's life of Yobe state were collected and analyzed as presented in Tables 2 and 3. Statements under the current status of BEST centers, it was discovered that most respondents were in agreement that the curriculum meets the requirement of the society.

From the analysis and interpretation of the data collected, statements under the current status of BEST centers (Availability of Resources), it was found that majority respondents agreed that there was availability of resources in the centers. Dasmani (2011) Said that generally there are short supply of training materials and basic tools by institute. Since technical institute most rely on materials and tools for training, their short supply would negatively affect practical skill acquisition. This is also related with the findings of Overawe (2010) that many schools offering technological education courses do not have

necessary equipment though Government placed emphasis on technological subjects in its policy.

Conclusion

The paper studies skills development and improving employability of Business and Engineering Skills Training (BEST) centers in Yobe state. The study revealed that most respondents believed that Yobe state BEST centers are a success story which gives effective training to its student that leads to producing graduates that meet the demand of the society in the study area community. Further, the respondents were also in agreement that the resources both human and materials are available but some of the respondent's percentage disagreed that the availability of resources is sufficient. BEST centers create employment opportunities and serve as a catalyst for economic growth and development among others.

Recommendations

1. The Yobe state government of Nigeria together with principals of Yobe state BEST centers should further improve the curriculum in such a way that BEST center graduate becomes very demanding in the labor market.
2. The government should make sure that all the necessary human and material resources are regularly be supplied and maintained for smooth service to the people of Yobe state.
3. The concern authority and non-governmental organization should join hand in organizing workshop/seminar for the BEST center TVET teachers that will enable them to go in line with modern

technological advancement to avoid skill gap.

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