3.6.1. Higher education

3.6.1. Higher education

Sources indicated that many young Nigerians see a university degree as the ‘only’ path to success.1150 Vocational education is seen in Nigeria as a ‘second-class’ option, chosen when admission to university fails, which discourages talented people from pursuing college education.1151 Over 60 % of Nigerians in tertiary education are enrolled in technical and vocational training.1152 Sources noted, however, that industries such as technology, renewable energy, and manufacturing struggle to find qualified professionals, forcing them to recruit from abroad or invest heavily in staff training.1153

Nigerian newspaper Punch reported that, according to the Director-General of the National Power Training Institute, skills in Nigeria are disappearing ‘at an alarming rate’.1154 The same source reported that six out of ten graduating Nigerians lack the necessary competencies required in the job market, and that tradespeople graduating in other countries in the region such as Benin, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Togo, are more qualified that their Nigerian counterparts.1155 Business Day reported that ‘many’ Nigerian graduates in business, for example, find their academic knowledge ‘insufficient’ for the labour market, and that in fields that require specialised training such as software developers, cybersecurity, and data analysis, prospective candidates do not meet the required competencies.1156 Daily Trust reported that common deficiencies in tertiary education include communication, information technology, and decision-making skills, which force businesses to invest in costly retraining initiatives.1157 The cost of some programs is also out of reach for many Nigerians, with a standard boot camp on coding costing between 200 000 [110 Euros] and one million Naira [554 Euros].1158

According to Nigerian media source Business Day, the university curriculum has not changed much in decades and focuses less on practical or digital skills.1159 While some private universities and other tertiary institutions are adding more industry-relevant courses, public institutions lag behind due to bureaucratic constraints.1160 Daily Trust similarly reported that higher education institutions focus heavily on theory and less on applied learning, which leaves students unable to compete in the labour market.1161 The same source noted that the private sector is not very involved in shaping academic curricula, ‘resulting in a disconnect between what students learn and what employers need’.1162

In April 2024, the President signed into law the Student Loan (Access to Higher Education) Act of 2024 to ‘guarantee sustainable higher education and functional skill development for all Nigerian students and youths’.1163 Under the Act, eligible Nigerian students can access zero interest loans to pay for higher education within Nigeria.1164

In April 2024, the government launched an initiative through its Industrial Training Fund (ITF) to train five million Nigerian artisans per year in an effort to ‘empower’ them with practical knowledge in trades such as welding, plumbing, and information technology.1165 On 27 June 2024, Punch reported that the training would be conducted in ‘batches’ of 100 000, starting with a ‘pilot phase’ of 100 000.1166 In May 2025, sources reported that the ITF had trained 29 000 Nigerians since 2024.1167 Other programs include N-Power, which offers training in areas such as agriculture and hardware maintenance, and Three Million Technical Talent (3MTT), which offers training in information technology.1168 Daily Trust reported, however, that limited funding, inconsistent monitoring, and high dropout rates continue to affect the long-term impact of these initiatives.1169 The same source reported that the private sector and local NGOs also have training programs in areas such as design, coding, entrepreneurship, and digital skills, but with limited budgets.1170

Daily Trust reported that many training centres lack qualified instructors and essential infrastructure, such as modern tools, digital equipment, and adequate classroom space.1171

- 1150

  Business Day, Five rail transport projects that can shape Nigeria’s economy, 24 March 2025, url

- 1151

  Daily Trust, Bridging the Gap: Why Nigeria Needs Skills-Based Education for Its Youth, 27 June 2025, url; Business Day, National development through vocational education, 25 June 2025, url

- 1152

  Jobberman, Nigeria’s informal sector: A Pathway to Sustainable Economic Transitions for Young People, 2024, url, p. 58

- 1153

  Business Day, Five rail transport projects that can shape Nigeria’s economy, 24 March 2025, url; Punch, Nigeria’s shrinking skills gaps, 17 June 2025, url

- 1154

  Punch, Nigeria’s shrinking skills gaps, 17 June 2025, url

- 1155

  Punch, Nigeria’s shrinking skills gaps, 17 June 2025, url

- 1156

  Business Day, Widening skills gap keeps millions of Nigerians jobless, 19 March 2025, url

- 1157

Daily Trust, Bridging the Gap: Why Nigeria Needs Skills-Based Education for Its Youth, 27 June 2025, url

- 1158

  Business Day, Widening skills gap keeps millions of Nigerians jobless, 19 March 2025, url

- 1159

  Business Day, Five rail transport projects that can shape Nigeria’s economy, 24 March 2025, url

- 1160

  Business Day, Five rail transport projects that can shape Nigeria’s economy, 24 March 2025, url

- 1161

  Daily Trust, Bridging the Gap: Why Nigeria Needs Skills-Based Education for Its Youth, 27 June 2025, url

- 1162

  Business Day, Five rail transport projects that can shape Nigeria’s economy, 24 March 2025, url

- 1163

  Nigeria, The State House, In Detail: The Student Loan (Access to Higher Education) Act, 2024, 4 April 2024, url

- 1164

  Nigeria, NELFUND, Frequently Asked Questions, n.d., url

- 1165

  News Reservoir, Industrial Training Fund set to empower five million Nigerians artisans annually – DG, 24 April 2024, url; People’s Gazette, FG launches initiative to empower five million artisans yearly, 24 June 2024, url

- 1166

  Punch, FG begins training for 5 million youths, 26 June 2024, url

- 1167

  NAN, ITF trained 29,000 youths in various skills in 2024, says D-G., 24 May 2025, url; Peoples’ Gazette, ITF trained 29,000 youths in various skills in 2024: Official , 24 May 2025, url

- 1168

  Daily Trust, Bridging the Gap: Why Nigeria Needs Skills-Based Education for Its Youth, 27 June 2025, url

- 1169

  Daily Trust, Bridging the Gap: Why Nigeria Needs Skills-Based Education for Its Youth, 27 June 2025, url

- 1170

  Daily Trust, Bridging the Gap: Why Nigeria Needs Skills-Based Education for Its Youth, 27 June 2025, url

- 1171

  Daily Trust, Bridging the Gap: Why Nigeria Needs Skills-Based Education for Its Youth, 27 June 2025, url