

3.6.1. Higher education

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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 than 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

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