DAKKADA Skill Acquisition Programmes and Vocational Skills Development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

Imoh-Obong Nsikak Akamba
Department of Public Administration
Akwa Ibom State University, Nigeria
Email: akambaimoh@gmail.com

Ekong E. Daniel
Department of Public Administration
Akwa Ibom State University, Nigeria
Email: ekongdaniel@aksu.edu.ng; ekong.e.daniel@gmail.com

Stephen Chinedu Chioke
Department of Public Administration
Southern Delta University, Ozoro
Email: eruditescholar001@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5337-452X

Unwana-Abasi S. Udoh
Department of Public Administration
Akwa Ibom State University, Nigeria

Abstract
Despite government efforts in the establishment of the Dakkada Skills Acquisition Centre (DASAC) to cater for youth unemployment, over-dependence on white-collar employment remains a pressing challenge in Akwa Ibom State. These training frameworks have equipped thousands of young people with technical and vocational competencies in areas like information and communications technology (ICT), carpentry, agriculture, and metal fabrication. There exists a persistent disconnect between the program and economic independence. Many graduates struggle to sustain their business ventures. Thus, this research examined the relationship between using Dakkada Skill Acquisition Programmes and vocational skill acquisition in Akwa Ibom State. The study's population consisted 1,345 graduates who completed their training through the Dakkada initiatives between 2017 and 2026. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires, utilising a five-point Likert scale. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to the data. Hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis at a 0.05 significance level. The findings underscore the importance of vocational and technical education in providing beneficiaries with vocational skills needed for self-employment and personal income generation. Therefore, recommendations were that the Akwa Ibom State Government institute post-graduation start-up capital, micro-credit grants for DASAC graduates, and mandatory placement with industry mentors or business incubators upon program completion. Also, an alumni tracking and monitoring unit should be created to oversee long-term progress and real-world outcomes.

Keywords: Brain drain, social investment programme, vocational skill development, Dakkada skill acquisition programmes.

Introduction

Around the world, the struggle for a better life has become a universal human challenge. Nigeria, as a nation, is actively trying to rewrite its own narrative. Despite being a nation rich in talent and natural resources, millions of citizens still live in poverty and economic vulnerability (Agidi, 2023; Alikor, 2022; Atakpa, 2024; Chioke, 2021; Chioke et al., 2021; World Bank, 2022). To curtail this, the Federal Government established the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP), managed by its dedicated agency (NSIPA) (Utok et al., 2025; Ekpo et al., 2026). True progress anywhere is rarely easy, as countries everywhere face similar deep-seated obstacles: Persistent budget constraints, outdated or failing infrastructure, and unpredictable political shifts. These systemic barriers frequently leave brilliant young minds stranded without opportunities and result in migration to other countries. In response, the NSIP functions as more than just a bureaucratic policy. NSIP therefore operates as a vital safety net built to lift families out of distress, shield the vulnerable, and invest directly in the potential of the Nigerian people.

The persistent economic crisis has fueled a severe 'brain drain,' driving the nation's brightest minds and most skilled talents abroad. Supporting this, studies found that economic and political instability (Iyabo, 2026) and governance deficiencies (Chioke et al., 2026) serve as critical drivers of brain drain and/or migration. Like many developing countries, this has grown into a defining socio-economic challenge of all time, affecting most developing countries of the world, including Nigeria. Nigeria faces a frustrating cycle of underdevelopment, burdened by a rapidly growing population while struggling with an inefficient distribution of resources – a critical sign of the paradox of plenty. In a direct response, the Akwa Ibom State Government, in line with the National Social Investment Programme, introduced the Dakkada Skill Acquisition Programme, built on the belief that the truest path to socio-economic recovery is investing in people. By shifting the focus toward human capital development, the programme equips individuals with practical, market-driven expertise in vocational skills acquisition sectors like shoemaking, tailoring, carpentry, automobile and mechanical technology, and integrated agriculture. The Dakkada Skill Acquisition Programme's broad mandate involves giving Akwa Ibom State the tools they need to succeed. At its core, the programme empowers youth by teaching practical skills, opening doors to microfinance, and providing essential equipment grants to kickstart entrepreneurial dreams. The initiative was built to truly transform lives and communities. By focusing on human capital and building up local infrastructure, the scheme aims to lift the standard of living, create meaningful jobs, boost local revenues, and ensure that resources are shared more equitably across the state.

Mahon (2019) noted that the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) considers social support as a genuine investment in human capital development; its primary objective is to transform the persistent poor state of the nation into economic growth and development. This objective is in line with the modern global thinking from organisations like the World Bank and the OECD, which advocate steady, long-term funding in healthcare, education, and social safety nets as the truest path to a fair and thriving economy (Nalado & Sunday, 2026). Traditional welfare, over time, has been aided by cash transfers which keep people afloat for a moment, but have failed to fix the underlying issues that trap families in poverty. A lasting solution requires a double-edged approach: pairing immediate financial relief with real-world skills. By meeting people's urgent needs while offering practical training in contemporary skills such as digital tools, trade skills, and entrepreneurship, this gives citizens the leverage they need to build their own futures. It aids in moving the system from government-reliant survival to lasting independence.

The Dakkada Skills Acquisition Centre (DASAC) serves as Akwa Ibom State's practical strategy to combat youth unemployment by providing vocational training to youths in several skills. The state government focuses on practical, vocational training paired with

leadership and entrepreneurial education. This initiative supports local artisans by tuning their capabilities to current market demands, providing secure financial assistance, and enforcing a transparent selection system for candidates. According to Olabiyi (2015), the Dakkada Skills Acquisition Centre (DASAC) was created to drive self-reliance, boost regional output, and spark sustainable economic growth; over time, the centre has ultimately empowered Akwa Ibom State youths.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria faces a frustrating cycle of underdevelopment, burdened by a rapidly growing population while struggling with an inefficient distribution of resources. In a direct response, the Akwa Ibom State Government, in line with the National Social Investment Programme, introduced the Dakkada Skill Acquisition Programme. This initiative is built on the belief that the truest path to socio-economic recovery is investing in people. By shifting the focus toward human capital development, the program equips individuals with practical, market-driven expertise in vocational skills acquisition sectors like shoemaking, tailoring, carpentry, automobile and mechanical technology, and integrated agriculture.

The Dakkada Skill Acquisition Programme's broad mandate involves giving Akwa Ibom State youth the tools they need to succeed. At its core, the programme empowers youth by teaching practical skills, opening doors to microfinance, and providing essential equipment grants to kickstart entrepreneurial dreams. The initiative was built to truly transform lives and communities. By focusing on human capital and building up local infrastructure, the scheme aims to lift the standard of living, create meaningful jobs, boost local revenues, and ensure that resources are shared more equitably across the state.

Despite the implementation of the Dakkada vocational skills development programme, with the ultimate promise of a better standard, it is assumed that the situation remains unchanged. Years after completing their training, many participants still struggle to build sustainable livelihoods. A significant number of trainees continue to live in underserved rural communities, cut off from basic amenities and economic opportunities that should follow successful skill acquisition. The gap between training and actual economic empowerment has raised serious concerns, with critics suggesting that the core objectives of the Dakkada initiative may not have been achieved; as such, this study examines the effect of the Dakkada skills acquisition programme on vocational skills development, using Akwa Ibom State as a case study.

The objective of the Study is to **e**xamine the relationship between the Dakkada Skills Acquisition Programmes and vocational skills development in Akwa Ibom State. This is hinged on the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the Dakkada Skills Acquisition Programmes and vocational skills development in Akwa Ibom State.

Review of Related Literature

National Social Investment

National social investment implies the commitment of government to its people. These initiatives are designed to equip individuals to become self-reliant, especially those who have been marginalised or left behind economically. Instead of just offering temporary fixes, these programmes focus on long-term growth. They provide robust social safety nets, create stable jobs, and fund training programmes that give people the skills they need to thrive. The ultimate goal is to improve daily well-being, close the gap between the rich and the poor, and ensure everyone's economic success. Investing in people has become one of the most powerful tools available to achieve sustainable development goals targeted at wiping out extreme poverty.

In the words of Agboola et al. (2017), social investment programmes are public policies designed to help people grow through skills in the job market. At its core, social investment is about the government actively boosting both the economic and social capabilities of its citizens.

This means welfare programmes should focus on skills building, an adaptable workforce that can thrive in a rapidly changing, knowledge-driven economy (Wakili & Lamidi, 2019). According to Hemerijck (2018), this represents a fresh shift in paradigm for the modern welfare state.

Nishimwe-Niyimbanira and Ferdinand (2021) argue that social investment is built on a simple but powerful idea that targets creating jobs to reduce unemployment, lower poverty rates, and drive steady economic growth (Morel et al., 2012). Instead of just offering financial safety nets after people fall on hard times, social investment focuses on a deeper shift in strategy. It moves away from merely shielding vulnerable individuals from economic hardships through handouts, and moves toward actively empowering them with the skills and resources they need to thrive and participate fully in the economy.

Vocational Skills Development

According to Idoko (2014), vocational skills development means acquiring instructional frameworks which empowers citizens with the necessary skills expertise to achieve financial independence. This development entails structured training across diverse fields, governed by a formal agreement between mentors and learners that dictates specific conditions and timelines. The primary purpose of vocational skills development is to equip young people with practical skills that will eliminate unemployment.

The International Labour Organisation (2000) emphasises that foundational schooling serves as the initial springboard for skill acquisition, fostering personal growth, civic engagement, and initial employability. Introducing vocational preparation at an early stage establishes a robust groundwork by imparting fundamental professional competencies and sector-specific expertise. Due to their versatile nature, these capabilities streamline an individual's entry into employment (Atakpa, 2016). Furthermore, ongoing professional development enables the workforce to adapt to technological advancements and evolving market demands. This commitment to perpetual learning not only advances personal career trajectories but also stimulates broader macroeconomic output, elevates earning potential, and promotes social equity.

Employee growth relies heavily on cultivating the essential expertise and capabilities required for peak job performance (Abdulrahman & Mshelia, 2022). Companies can foster this advancement by utilising interactive, practical training strategies, including professional workshops, peer mentorship, industry conferences, tailored coaching, educational seminars, and strategic job rotation. To maintain a competitive edge in modern markets, businesses must prioritise continuous learning, which directly enhances corporate productivity, operational efficiency, and systemic effectiveness. Furthermore, the broader objective of expanding one's skill set is to equip individuals with lucrative, in-demand talents that either secure high-quality employment or foster entrepreneurial ventures (Akpan, 2017). Expanding on this concept, vocational skills development concentrates directly on the technical expertise and experiential training vital for distinct trades and occupations. This framework acts as a foundational pillar for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), effectively linking traditional academic instruction with the practical expectations of the contemporary workforce.

Dakkada Skills Acquisition Programmes and Vocational Skills Development in Akwa Ibom State

The Dakkada Skills Acquisition Programme has fundamentally fostered vocational education in Akwa Ibom State by creating authentic pathways for youth empowerment. This is grounded in economic restructuring and moral revitalisation of the state, thereby equipping citizens with contemporary technical skills expertise and an entrepreneurial mindset needed to thrive in a competitive economy (Akpan, 2022). Dakkada Skills Acquisition Centre (DASAC), participants receive practical training in vocational skills like information technology, modern

agriculture, manufacturing, and fashion design. Essien (2023) noted that the Dakkada Skills Acquisition Centre is more than just an educational framework; it serves as a vital social safety net, which is a professional divide for unemployed and out-of-school youth, empowering them to secure stable jobs by venturing into businesses. Through self-sufficiency and innovation, the project successfully turns vocational training into a powerful engine for reducing poverty and driving socio-economic development in Akwa Ibom State.

The Dakkada Skills Acquisition Centre (DASAC) serves as a cornerstone for economic empowerment by offering practical, technical and vocational education. Through a curriculum that merges hands-on training with globally recognised credentials. The institution provides trainers with robust technical expertise, business ideas, and skills. This approach ensures graduates are fully prepared to either fill high-demand workforce roles or launch their own commercial ventures. This aligns directly with international standards: cultivating practical competencies is essential for elevating societal living standards, driving technological innovation, and stimulating economic health. At DASAC, students are trained in a range of skills including advanced ICT, modern agricultural practices like poultry and mechanised farming, automotive engineering, hospitality management, carpentry, and consumer product manufacturing.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in empowerment theory, drawing on foundational contributions from Julian Rappaport (1987) and Marc A. Zimmerman (2000). Empowerment theory examines how people expand access to knowledge, tools, opportunities, and decision-making power, allowing them to take charge of their own lives. It is beyond just receiving material goods; it is an active growth process that builds personal skills so individuals can independently use available resources and participate meaningfully in economic and social life.

This theoretical framework directly applies to the current debate that social investment initiatives are transformative engines. The theory highlights how social investment initiatives transition marginalised populations toward independence by cultivating practical skills, self-belief, and social awareness.

Empirical Review

Lateef et al. (2026) examined the relationship between vocational skill acquisition and organisational efficiency across manufacturing firms in Southwest Nigeria. The research used a quantitative framework, applying Structural Equation Modelling via Smart PLS 4 to analyse data gathered from 302 junior and senior staff members across ten purposefully selected manufacturing enterprises. Findings revealed that each skill category significantly boosts company output.

Omotosho et al. (2026) investigated the relationship between youth empowerment and the skill acquisition initiatives of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in Cross River State, Nigeria, specifically on fashion design and hairdressing training. The researchers applied a descriptive survey framework to examine 600 young participants who completed NDE training programs between 2018 and 2023, utilising a stratified random sampling technique. Information was gathered via structured questionnaires, and the measurement tool demonstrated a reliability score of $r = 0.70$ through Pearson's correlation coefficient. Using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at a 0.05 significance level, the data revealed a significant, positive association between fashion design proficiency and youth empowerment ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.05$).

Umo and Eyo (2025) investigated ARISE and DAKKADA social investment frameworks and socio-economic progress in Akwa Ibom State. Their research centred on educational assistance, the expansion of small-scale enterprises, and vocational skill acquisition training. Surveying a descriptive sample of 120,424 participants whose responses

were evaluated via simple percentages, the authors advised expanding the ARISE Initiative's scholarship framework to encompass housing, tuition, and daily upkeep for vulnerable students, rolling out accessible micro-loans for youth and women-led ventures, and actively promoting local business initiatives to boost household earnings.

Muhammad (2022) studied the effects of the vocational skill development programme of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) on youth employment in Kaduna State. The primary data utilized questionnaire while the secondary data were the annual reports of NDE and World Bank Development Reports, unpublished thesis, published journals and internet materials. The data produced were displayed and analysed in the form of averages, percentages, tables and Spearman rank correlation. The study revealed that the VSD programme helped to create jobs for lots of youths in the state. It also showed that there are insufficient tools to train beneficiaries in the three training centres of the state.

Research Methodology

This study used a survey research design to examine the relationship between the Dakkada Skill Acquisition Programmes and vocational skill development within Akwa Ibom State. This methodological approach facilitated the direct collection of primary data from the target population. The study's population consisted of 1,345 graduates who completed their training through the Dakkada initiatives between 2017 and 2026. Applying Taro Yamane's (1967) formula, a sample size of 294 participants was established. Data collection involved both primary and secondary sources, with a structured, researcher-designed 5-point Likert scale questionnaire serving as the primary instrument for gathering participant responses. The quantitative data were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The hypothess and data patterns were evaluated using descriptive statistics and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC), with hypotheses tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1 Questionnaire Distribution

Questionnaire administered	Questionnaire filled and returned	Questionnaire filled and not returned	Questionnaire filled and returned %	Questionnaire filled and returned %
309	294	15	95	5

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 1 shows that 309 respondents were given copies of questionnaire, 294 representing 95 % correctly filled and returned while 15 copies of questionnaire epresenting 5% were not returned. The analysis relied on 95% compliance.

Data Analysis

Research Objective

Examine the relationship between the Dakkada Skills Acquisition Programmes and vocational skills development in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 2: Dakkada Skills Acquisition Programmes and Vocational Skills Development

S/N	Questions	Mean	SD	Decision
1	The Dakkada training provided adequate hands-on practical experience in my chosen field.	4.10	1.09	Agree
2	The training facilities meet modern industry standards.	4.13	1.05	Agree
3	The training earned a recognised certification.	3.96	1.18	Agree
4	The vocational skills acquired enhanced income-earning capacity	3.91	1.21	Agree
5	Dakkada skills acquisition programmes facilitate the self-employed in using the skills learned.	3.88	1.23	Agree
	Grand Mean	4.00	1.15	Agree

Table 2 shows that all the items in the questionnaire exceeded the criterion mean of 2.50. The respondents generally agreed that Dakkada skills acquisition programmes enhanced vocational skills development.

Test of Hypothesis

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between Dakkada skills acquisition programmes and vocational skills development in Akwa Ibom State

Table 3: PPMC Analysis of Dakkada Skills Acquisition Programmes and Vocational Skills Development

Variables	N	R	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Dakkada skills acquisition programmes & vocational skills development	294	0.667	0.000	Reject H0

The result indicates a statistically significant positive relationship between Dakkada skills acquisition programmes and vocational skills development.

Discussion of Findings

The study found that there exists a statistically significant positive relationship between the Dakkada skills acquisition programmes and vocational skills development. This implies that Dakkada skills acquisition programmes play a crucial role in vocational skills development in Akwa Ibom State. Participants in the programmes gain competencies in areas like catering, customer service, accommodation management, food preparation, and other hospitality-related tasks.

This finding is in agreement with the work of Omotosho et al. (2026), who investigated the relationship between youth empowerment and the skill acquisition initiatives of the

National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study revealed a significant, positive association between fashion design proficiency and youth empowerment. Also, Umo and Eyo (2025) investigated ARISE and DAKKADA social investment on socio-economic progress in Akwa Ibom State. The study revealed that the ARISE Initiative's scholarship framework encompasses housing, tuition, and daily upkeep for vulnerable students, rolling out accessible micro-loans for youth and women-led ventures, and actively promoting local business initiatives to boost household earnings.

During our investigation, it was revealed that the Dakkada Skills Acquisition Centre (DASAC) has a positive impact on vocational skills development, youth employability and self-employment in Akwa Ibom State. DASAC has been training thousands of young people in various skills like agriculture, automobile technology, civil and building technology, electrical and electronics, metal and wood works, industrial safety, hospitality and lifestyle management, and ICT, thus making beneficiaries self-employed business owners as opposed to job-seekers and creating jobs for the local community. The training comprises branding, product process and enterprise management. The tables below show the detailed effects: numbers of beneficiaries trained by Dakkada Skills Acquisition Programmes on vocational skills development in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 4: Numbers of Beneficiaries trained by Dakkada Skills Acquisition Programmes (2018-2024)

Years	Shoe Making	Tailoring	Furniture	Agriculture	Catering	Automobile Repairs
2015	216	431	191	321	431	121
2016	312	312	129	431	321	321
2017	271	175	312	122	261	232
2018	131	432	122	89	119	45
2019	743	890	943	121	937	27
2020	450	980	840	212	900	31
2021	211	100	100	901	571	39
2022	050	979	860	979	689	31
2023	700	440	220	098	909	52
2024	970	606	91	651	651	55
2025	798	390	123	421	339	123
Total	**4,843**	**5,735**	**3,931**	**4,346**	**6,128**	**1,077**

Source: Office of the Registrar, Dakkada Skill Acquisition Centre, Ikot Udo Idem, Akwa Ibom State, 2026.

Table 4 shows that between 2018 and 2025, 4,843 persons were trained in shoe making, while 5,735 were trained on tailoring, 3,931 in furniture, 4,346 in agriculture, 6,128 in catering and hospitality management and 1,077 in automobile repairs.

Table 5: Distribution of Dakkada Skill Acquisition Programme Beneficiaries by Senatorial District and Skill Category, Akwa Ibom State

Senatorial District	Shoe Making	Tailoring	Furniture	Agriculture	Catering	Automobile Repairs	Total
Uyo	1,617	1,912	1,310	1,449	2,043	359	8,690
Eket	1,617	1,911	1,310	1,448	2,043	359	8,688
Ikot Ekpene	1,618	1,912	1,311	1,449	2,042	359	8,691
Total	**4,852**	**5,735**	**3,931**	**4,346**	**6,128**	**1,077**	**26,069**

Source: Office of the Registrar, Dakkada Skills Acquisition Centre, Ikot Udo Idem, Akwa Ibom State,2026.

Table 5 shows the numbers of beneficiaries trained by Dakkada Skills Acquisition Programmes on vocational skills development according to their senatorial districts in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 5: Numbers of Beneficiaries trained by Dakkada Skills Acquisition Programmes (Cohort 1 –Cohort 4)

S/N	Units	Cohort 1, Sept. 2024-March 2025	Cohort 2 June 2025-Dec. 2025	Cohort 3 Jan 2026-June 2026	Cohort 4 July 2026-Dec. 2026
1	Shoe Making	07	23	41	20
2	Tailoring	36	48	115	54
3	Furniture	12	13	17	3
4	Agriculture	31	71	87	29
5	Hotel/Hospitality	32	73	123	53
6	Automobile Repairs	-	13	16	08
7	Computer/Digital Technology	68	97	185	80
	Total	**186**	**338**	**584**	**247**

Table 5 shows the number of beneficiaries trained by Dakkada Skills Acquisition Programmes on vocational skills development according to the training cohort in Akwa Ibom State

Conclusion

The study revealed that there exists a positive and significant relationship between the Dakkada Skills Acquisition Programmes and vocational skills development in Akwa Ibom State. The findings underscore the importance of vocational and technical education in providing beneficiaries with vocational skills needed for self-employment and personal income generation. Some of the skills include shoe making, tailoring and furniture making, agriculture, hospitality management, automobile repairs and computer and digital technologies, among other areas, which are very strong, highlighting the importance of skills in human capacity development. The study also emphasises that the success of social investment shouldn't just be gauged by the number of individuals trained but by the usefulness of the training. Equally important is whether they can effectively apply the skills they acquire after the training. The potential for obtaining equipment, start-up capital, market opportunities, mentoring, infrastructure and other post-training supports is part of the sustainable socio-economic benefits obtained from these skills.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the study recommends the following:

1. The Akwa Ibom State government should launch post-graduation startup funds, micro-credit grants, and business mentorship upon the completion of their training at the Dakkada Skills Acquisition Centre (DASAC) to facilitate the establishment of business ventures.
2. The Dakkada Skills Acquisition Centre (DASAC) management should establish a dedicated team tasked with tracking alumni outcomes and performance in their various lines of business.

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