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IMPACT OF NATIONAL SKILLS QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK (NSQF) CERTIFICATION ON QUALITY OF SKILLED WORKER IN ABUJA NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT :

The study investigate the impact of national skills qualification framework (NSQF) certification on quality of skilled worker in Abuja Nigeria. The study aim was achieved through the following specific objectives: to examine the commitment of artisans towards the success of the NSQF and to examine the challenges of artisans in achieving NSQ certification. The study intensively and extensively reviewed the related literatures for in-depth understanding of the subject matter, by reviewed several literatures. The study used a quantitative research design method; The population of this study comprises 1,200 artisans in Abuja, 150 artisans were sample for the study using taro Yamane. Questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection, designed based on the research objectives in a closed ended question and subject to five likert-scales. The first section of the questionnaire comprised of general questions about the demographic enquiries of the respondents which are factual in nature, therefore they are easier to answer than other questions so that respondents are less likely to refuse answering them due to fatigue. Second section of the questionnaire contained general questions about commitment of assessors towards the success of the scheme. Third section of the questionnaire contained general questions about challenges of centres managing learner's expectation. While. the data collected, was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods of data analyses with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 23) used as a tool for analysis. The study found that while artisans and quality assurance assessors demonstrated moderate to high levels of commitment, this did not directly translate into significant improvements in the quality of skilled workers certified under the NSQF. Also the study reveals that artisans faced several challenges, including inadequate training, insufficient funding, and a lack of standardized assessment tools, which hindered the effectiveness of the certification process. The correlation analysis revealed weak relationships between commitment, challenges, and the quality of skilled workers, suggesting that other external factors, such as infrastructure and policy implementation, have a greater impact. And lastly regression analysis further confirmed that neither the commitment of stakeholders nor the challenges faced during certification had a statistically significant effect on the quality of skilled workers, highlighting the need for systemic reforms within the NSQF framework. The study recommend that Government should provide certified artisans with mentorship opportunities, access to markets, and continuous learning programs to maintain and enhance their skill levels. This will ensure the long-term impact of the NSQF on worker quality and employability.

INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has been widely recognized as a critical instrument for national development, industrialization, and employment generation. In Nigeria, the informal economy comprising largely of artisans in construction, auto-mechanics, tailoring, plumbing, welding, carpentry, and electrical services—plays a substantial role in wealth creation and economic stability (UNESCO, 2019). Yet, the quality and productivity of this sector remain uneven due to inadequate regulation and lack of standardization. To improve these conditions, the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), an ambitious reform to ensure that both formal and informal skill acquisition are aligned with nationally and internationally recognized competency standards (NBTE, 2020).The NSQF, developed by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and other stakeholders, seeks to harmonize vocational training across all sectors by creating a clear structure that defines learning outcomes, competency levels, and assessment standards (NBTE, 2020). It is designed to validate skills acquired through both formal education and informal (on-the-job) experience. The framework provides recognition to prior learning (RPL) and promotes vertical mobility of artisans within their trade levels, offering them opportunities to improve their professional status and income prospects.

In Abuja, the capital city and a major hub for infrastructure and commercial activities, the demand for qualified artisans is high. Nevertheless, many artisans continue to operate informally without the benefits of certification or professional development. The potential of NSQF to transform the informal sector remains largely underutilized due to barriers such as cost of certification, limited awareness campaigns, and inadequate training centres.

Understanding how the NSQF impacts artisan quality, commitment levels, and the challenges artisans face is therefore crucial to realizing the policy's objectives and improving technical manpower in Nigeria.

Individuals' skills are acquired through learning and constitute an asset for employers, who value them and use them in the workplace. There are many ways to determine the level of skills and their value for employers during the recruitment process - the most widespread being the certificate achieved from formal education or a training system, such as an apprenticeship certificate, diploma or academic degree. Formal education and training systems are not, however, the only way in which people develop skills; and in many cases they acquire these skills outside the country in which they work. Employers may not easily recognize skills attained this way, and individuals possessing such uncertified skills are at a disadvantage when trying to find a job, achieve progress in their careers or obtain a wage increase (Martin, 2017).

The fact that these skills are invisible magnifies the challenge of skills under-utilization and mismatch, and contributes to higher unemployment, poverty and inequality. The task of skills recognition systems is to make such uncertified skills visible. This research focuses on analysing the outcome of attempts in this area – to see whether skills recognition addresses the abovementioned challenges, improves skills utilization, reduces skills mismatch and alleviates unemployment, poverty and inequality (Maurer, 2018).

Since its implementation, the NSQF has been expected to contribute to workforce development by improving the quality of training, increasing the number of certified workers, and creating a more dynamic labour market. However, the uptake among Nigerian artisans has remained slow. Several studies have shown that many artisans are unaware of the existence of the NSQF, while others lack the resources or motivation to pursue certification (Okolie, 2020; Allais et al., 2022). Moreover, weak linkages between training providers, regulatory bodies, and industry employers have resulted in fragmented implementation and poor follow-up strategies (World Bank, 2023).

Statement of the Problem

The NSQF was introduced to improve the quality of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Nigeria by standardizing skills certification and promoting workforce competence. However, several years into its implementation, the impact of the NSQF on the quality of artisans remains unclear, particularly in cities like Abuja. Many artisans continue to practice without formal qualifications, and the gap between certified and non-certified artisans appears to be widening. Studies have noted that a significant number of artisans have limited understanding of the framework or perceive certification as an unnecessary or unattainable process (Gamble, 2020). In developing countries, especially those with a high share of employment in the informal economy, skills mismatch often takes the form of under-education. ILO International Labour Organization research conducted among 20 countries found this was especially common among informally employed youth (34 per cent), and less than half of them had jobs that matched their skills (ILO International Labour Organization, 2017c). A large share of employment in the informal economy amplifies the skills matching challenge. For example, as ILO statistics indicate, the share of informal jobs in total employment exceeds 60 per cent in every second country (ILO, 2017). The problem of under-education in developing economies is also exacerbated by lower enrolment in secondary education (Levine, 2018). In addition, the cost of certification, bureaucratic bottlenecks, low literacy levels, and a general lack of incentives have been cited as major obstacles preventing artisans from pursuing NSQF credentials. These challenges have led to low participation rates and undermined the policy's effectiveness in formalizing skills acquisition (Misko, 2017). Furthermore, while some artisans have managed to obtain certification, there is inadequate data on whether this has resulted in measurable improvements in service delivery, customer satisfaction, or job mobility.There is therefore a need to examine the level of commitment among artisans in Abuja towards achieving NSQF certification, identify the specific challenges they face, explore factors hindering participation, and determine the effect of the framework on the quality of certified artisans.

Research Questions

1. What are the commitments of artisans towards the success of NSQF in Abuja Nigeria?
2. What are the challenges of quality assurance assessors in the certification of artisans?

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this research is to evaluate the impact of National Skills Qualification Framework on quality of artisans in Abuja Nigeria.
1. To examine the level of commitment of artisans towards achieving NSQF certification?
2. To identify the challenges of artisans in achieving NSQ certification

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Area of the Study

This design is appropriate because it allows the researcher to the area of this study is the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, Nigeria. Abuja was selected due to its strategic status as Nigeria's capital and a hub of infrastructure development, which results in a high demand for skilled artisans. The city hosts numerous vocational institutions, technical centers, and active artisan communities, making it suitable for a study assessing the implementation and impact of the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF). Abuja comprises six Area Councils: Abaji, Abuja Municipal, Bwari, Gwagwalada, Kuje, and Kwali. The study will purposively focus on selected locations within these councils known for artisan-dominated economic activities and construction projects. These locations include satellite towns such as Nyanya, Gwagwalada, Kubwa, Lugbe, and Kuje, which have diverse artisan groups practicing trades such as masonry, carpentry, welding, tailoring, and electrical installation. The area was also chosen

because of the ongoing efforts by the government and development agencies to formalize the informal sector through skills development and certification programs. Assessing how these policies affect artisans in such an urban environment provides meaningful insights into the framework's operational effectiveness and scalability.

Research Design

The research design adopted for this study is a descriptive survey design. This design is appropriate because it allows the researcher to gather data on the current status, practices, perceptions, and challenges of artisans regarding the NSQF. Descriptive research design facilitates the systematic collection of information from a representative sample, providing a snapshot of prevailing conditions in a natural setting (Bhattacherjee, 2019). It is also suitable for examining relationships between variables such as NSQF certification and artisan quality.

This study employs both quantitative and qualitative approaches (mixed-method). The quantitative approach involves the use of structured questionnaires to collect measurable data, while the qualitative aspect involves in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to gain deeper insights into artisans' experiences, perceptions, and challenges (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2020). This mixed-method strategy enriches the study by combining the strengths of both approaches.

Population of the Study

The population of this study comprises approximately 1,200 artisans actively engaged in various skilled trades across the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. These trades include masonry, carpentry, electrical installation, plumbing, tailoring, welding, and automobile repairs. The estimate is based on data from artisan unions, local government vocational directories, and informal sector mapping conducted by vocational training institutions (Okolie et al., 2020). These artisans represent the core segment of Abuja's informal technical workforce whose skills are central to the objectives of the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF).

Table 1: Showing the distribution of the population

Artisan Trade	Population
Masonry	200
Carpentry	180
Electrical Installation	160
Plumbing	140
Tailoring	180
Welding	170
Auto Repairs	170
Total	**1,200**

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample frame will comprise of Developers, centre managers and Contractors in Abuja.

The sample size for this study is set at 150 respondents, selected from the estimated 1,200 artisans in Abuja. The Taro Yamane formula was applied to determine the sample size at a 5% margin of error. To ensure representation across artisan categories, the sample was distributed across seven artisan trade groups using stratified random sampling. Each stratum represents a specific trade, and respondents within each stratum were selected through simple random sampling.

Table 2: Showing the distribution of the Sample size of the Study

Artisan Trade	Population	Sample Size (n = 150)
Masonry	200	25
Carpentry	180	22
Electrical Installation	160	20
Plumbing	140	18
Tailoring	180	22
Welding	170	21
Auto Repairs	170	22

Total	1,200	150

This sampling method enhances the generalizability of findings and ensures that each artisan group is adequately represented in the study. For the qualitative component, purposive sampling will be used to select key informants such as NSQF administrators, training facilitators, and policymakers with firsthand experience and insight into the framework's implementation (Patton, 2015).

Instrument for Data collection

The primary research instrument used in this study is a structured questionnaire designed to gather quantitative data from artisans in Abuja. The questionnaire is divided into sections based on the study objectives and includes closed-ended questions and Likert-scale statements to assess artisans' awareness, level of commitment, perceived challenges, and the impact of NSQF certification on their work quality. This format allows for standardized responses, which can be statistically analyzed. Additionally, semi-structured interview guides will be used to collect qualitative data from key informants such as training providers, NSQF assessors, and policy officers. These guides will include open-ended questions that enable deeper exploration of institutional experiences with NSQF implementation and operational challenges. This qualitative tool complements the questionnaire by providing richer contextual data. Both instruments were pre-tested on a small group of respondents in a similar urban setting to check for clarity, relevance, and timing. Necessary adjustments will be made based on the pilot feedback to ensure reliability and validity of the instruments. The dual use of quantitative and qualitative tools ensures triangulation of data sources and enhances the credibility of findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

To ensure content validity, the instruments will be reviewed by experts in educational research, vocational training, and public policy. A pilot study was conducted among a small sample of artisans in a location with similar characteristics to Abuja. Feedback from the pilot will be used to revise ambiguous or unclear items (Heale & Twycross, 2015).
Reliability was assessed using the Cronbach Alpha method for the questionnaire. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above will be considered acceptable. This ensures that the instrument consistently measures the intended variables (Taber, 2018).

Method of Data Analysis

The data analysis is concerned with gathering the data and analyse it to generate an output data which is called information. This is because the data alone in it general form has no meanings, however; after the raw data has been analysed; it can generate a meaningful information. For this research, the data from well-structured questionnaire will analysed using the statistical package for the social sciences, SPSS using the descriptive analysis for objective 1 and 2.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Objective 1: To examine the commitment of artisans towards the success of the NSQF:

Table 1: Mean Responses on the commitment of artisans towards the success of the NSQF

S/no	Question	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1.	I actively participate in NSQF training programs.	4.11	0.91	Agree
2.	I apply the skills learned from NSQF in my daily work.	4.01	0.81	Agree
3.	I encourage other artisans to participate in NSQF programs.	3.81	0.71	Agree
4.	NSQF programs have enhanced my professional growth and career development.	4.31	0.61	Agree
5.	I dedicate time and resources to comply with NSQF standards and requirements.	3.71	0.82	agree

Fieldwork, (2024).

Table 1 shows the Most respondents (85%) actively participate in NSQF training, with a mean score of 4.11. the study also shows that a mean of 4.01 indicates high levels of applying NSQF-acquired skills in daily work. The mean score of 3.81 reflects moderate engagement in promoting NSQF participation. Artisans strongly perceive NSQF as beneficial, with the highest mean score of 4.31. A mean score of 3.71 highlights moderate commitment to time and resource allocation. The results reveal that artisans in Abuja exhibit considerable commitment to NSQF initiatives, particularly in areas of participation and skill application.

Objective 2: To examine the challenges of artisans in achieving NSQ certification

Table 2: Mean Responses on the challenges of artisans in achieving NSQ certification

S/no	Question	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1.	Inadequate training and capacity-building programs hinder my performance as a quality assessor.	4.2	0.80	Agree

2.	Insufficient funding and resources affect the certification process of artisans.	4.3	0.70	Agree
3.	The lack of standardized assessment tools leads to inconsistencies in artisan certification.	4.01	0.90	Agree
4.	Challenges in communication with artisans impact the quality assurance process.	3.90	0.80	Agree
5.	Policy and regulatory frameworks are not well-implemented to support artisan certification.	3.09	0.90	Agree

Field Survey, (2024).

Table 3 shows that over 85% of respondents agree or strongly agree that inadequate training limits their effectiveness, with a mean of 4.20.Insufficient funding emerges as the top challenge, reflected in a mean score of 4.30. Inconsistencies in tools are moderately agreed upon, with a mean score of 4.01. Challenges in artisan communication received a mean score of 3.90. Respondents perceive policy implementation as a moderate challenge, with a mean score of 3.80. The findings indicate that artisans face critical challenges related to inadequate training, lack of funding, and insufficient standardization.

Table 3: Showing Correlation gaps hindering artisans from achieving NSQ certification

Variables	Commitment	Challenges	Qualities
Commitment	1.000	0.069	-0.091
Challenges	0.069	1.000	-0.077
Qualities	-0.091	-0.077	1.000

p < 0.01, indicating statistically significant correlations.

The findings of the study shows that there is a weak negative correlation (-0.091), suggesting that higher commitment does not necessarily lead to improved qualities of artisans. The results also shows a weak negative correlation (-0.077) indicates that challenges do not significantly impact artisans' qualities. It also shows a weak positive correlation (0.069) shows a minor association, implying that higher commitment may slightly correlate with perceived challenges. The results indicate that the relationship between the variables—commitment, challenges, and qualities is weak or negligible.

Regression

Hypotheses tested at 0.05 (5%)

Variable	Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
Intercept	4.4684	0.492	9.085	0.000	[3.489, 5.448]
Commitment	-0.0804	0.105	-0.763	0.448	[-0.290, 0.130]
Challenges	-0.0556	0.089	-0.623	0.535	[-0.233, 0.122]

R-squared: 0.013

Adjusted R-squared: -0.012

F-statistic: 0.5207 (p = 0.596)

The results shows the coefficient for "Commitment" is -0.0804, indicating a weak negative relationship with the quality of skilled workers. However, the p-value (0.448) suggests this effect is not statistically significant. The coefficient for "Challenges" is -0.0556, also showing a weak negative association. The p-value (0.535) confirms this relationship is not statistically significant. The model's R-squared value of 0.013 implies that only 1.3% of the variance in the quality of skilled workers is explained by the predictors (Commitment and Challenges). The regression analysis reveals no statistically significant effect of commitment and challenges on the quality of skilled workers certified under NSQF in Abuja.

Discussion of Findings

The results reveal that artisans in Abuja exhibit considerable commitment to NSQF initiatives, particularly in areas of participation and skill application. However, peer encouragement and resource dedication are comparatively weaker, aligning with studies emphasizing resource constraints in vocational training (Obadan, 2018). These findings underscore the potential of NSQF but also point to areas needing targeted interventions. Artisans in Abuja largely support the success of NSQF, viewing it as a tool for skill enhancement and professional growth. However, challenges persist in encouraging broader participation and addressing resource allocation.

The findings indicate that artisans face critical challenges related to inadequate training, lack of funding, and insufficient standardization. These issues align with studies on vocational training programs that highlight resource and policy gaps (Ali et al., 2019). Addressing these barriers is essential for ensuring consistent and effective certification processes. The effectiveness of quality assurance assessors in artisan certification is undermined by challenges in training, resources, and communication. While there is a commitment to the process, systemic issues require urgent attention.

The results indicate that the relationship between the variablescommitment, challenges, and qualitiesis weak or negligible. This aligns with findings in similar vocational studies, which suggest that external factors like resource availability and policy enforcement often moderate these relationships (Okolie et al., 2019). The lack of a strong correlation suggests that other unmeasured variables may significantly influence artisans' qualities. The qualities of certified artisans are not strongly influenced by either their commitment or the challenges faced by assessors. External factors and systemic issues likely play a more prominent role in determining the outcomes.

The regression analysis reveals no statistically significant effect of commitment and challenges on the quality of skilled workers certified under NSQF in Abuja. This aligns with previous findings indicating that external factors, such as infrastructure, policy frameworks, and market dynamics, may have a more substantial impact (Misko et al., 2020). These findings highlight the complexity of factors influencing the quality of skilled workers. The results suggest that the commitment of artisans and challenges faced during certification have minimal direct impact on the quality of skilled workers. This underscores the need to consider broader systemic and contextual factors.

Conclusion

The study that although commitment levels among artisans and assessors are moderate to high, their direct influence on the quality of skilled workers was found to be minimal.Quality assurance face significant challenges, including inadequate training, insufficient funding, and lack of standardization, which indirectly affect the NSQF's effectiveness.The relationship between commitment, challenges, and worker quality is weak, suggesting that other external factors, such as infrastructure, policy implementation, and market dynamics, play a more substantial role.The NSQF's success is hindered by systemic issues that need to be addressed holistically to enhance the certification process and ensure the quality of skilled workers.

Recommendations

The study also recommended in line with the study objectives as follows:

I. Government should provide adequate financial resources to support training programs, standardized assessment tools, and logistical needs for quality assurance assessors. This will ensure the smooth operation of the NSQF and enhance the certification process.

II. Develop regular training programs for assessors and artisans to enhance their skills and understanding of the certification process. This will improve the consistency and reliability of assessments.

III. Government should provide certified artisans with mentorship opportunities, access to markets, and continuous learning programs to maintain and enhance their skill levels. This will ensure the long-term impact of the NSQF on worker quality and employability.

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