



Bridging Skills Gap for Sustainable Development. The Synergy of Community, Industry, Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET) and Government: A Case of Bulawayo Polytechnic

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Abstract

Synergistic partnerships facilitate tailored training programs addressing specific skills gaps and industry needs through collaborative efforts and resource sharing. This paper sought to examine the transformative potential of synergizing community involvement, industrial partnerships, TVET and government efforts to bridge the skills gap for sustainable development. The paper used a mixed method to take advantage of both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the research parameters. The study used both non-probability (purposive) and probability (stratified random) sampling techniques. Data was collected using questionnaire and interviews and presented on tables, pie chart, graphs and themes. The study revealed a complex interactions within the collaboration matrix of community, industry, TVET, and government in bridging the skills gap essential for sustainable development. In this matrix, the community plays a crucial role in linking stakeholders, recognizing skills needs, building partnerships, and enhancing training for sustainable development. This study emphasized the vital role of industry in workforce preparation and in aligning educational outcomes with market needs. It highlighted the significance of Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET) in providing relevant skills and training that catered to both local and global economic demands. Additionally, the assessment of government involvement revealed essential policy frameworks and support systems that facilitated effective collaboration among key stakeholders. By integrating insights from various sectors, the research aimed to create strategies that enhanced collaborative efforts, thereby addressing the skills gap and promoting sustainable development. To successfully bridge this gap, it was crucial to boost community engagement through dialogue platforms that pinpointed local needs. Strengthening partnerships between industry and educational institutions ensured that training programs met market requirements. Moreover, expanding and modernizing TVET programs, backed by government policies that encouraged collaboration, was essential. Promoting lifelong learning and knowledge sharing supported continuous skills development. Therefore, implementing robust monitoring and evaluation systems shall enable data-driven adjustments to improve collaborative initiatives.

Keywords: Collaboration, sustainable development, skills gap.

Introduction

Bridging the skills gap is essential for sustainable development, as emphasized by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, Sustainable Development Goal 4 underscores the importance of inclusive and equitable quality education, highlighting the necessity of addressing the skills gap for effective workforce participation. By improving access to quality technical and vocational education and training (TVET), SDG 4 aims to equip individuals with the relevant skills needed for employment and entrepreneurship. Closing this skills gap not only fosters economic growth but also enhances social inclusion and promotes sustainable development (Shabdin & Sulaiman, 2020)^[10].

To effectively tackle this challenge, collaboration among

community stakeholders, industry leaders, TVET institutions, and government is crucial. This synergy can drive sustainable economic growth and promote social equity. In pursuit of bridging the skills gap, Africa has embraced the Africa 2063 mantra, which aims to align educational and economic initiatives to meet the continent's future demands (Suparno, Pudjiarti, & Supeno, 2023)^[12].

Bridging the skills gap is vital for Africa's vision to transform into a powerhouse of economic growth, political stability, and social progress by 2063, as outlined by the African Union. This strategic framework emphasizes inclusive development, sustainable practices, and regional integration to improve the lives of all Africans. Key aspirations include fostering a prosperous, peaceful, and culturally vibrant society while addressing challenges such as poverty, inequality, and health

crises (Suparno, Pudjiarti & Joyo, 2023) ^[12].

In sync with the Africa 2063 vision, Zimbabwe introduced Vision 2030, which aims to transform the country into an upper-middle-income economy by 2030. This initiative places significant emphasis on bridging the skills gap by promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth, thereby improving the quality of life for citizens and enhancing national competitiveness. By equipping the workforce with relevant skills, Zimbabwe seeks to build a more resilient and dynamic economy (Mutasa, 2021). The education 5.0 is thus a tool that Zimbabwe believes will deal with appropriate skills to drive the development agenda.

Supported by National Development Strategies (NDS), Zimbabwe aims to create a cohesive approach that aligns community needs, industry demands, TVET institutions, and government initiatives (Ramli & Senin, 2021) ^[5]. The NDS provides a structured framework for integration and promotes partnerships that facilitate skill development essential for sustainable development. This collaboration not only drives economic growth but also enhances social equity and environmental sustainability, leading to thriving communities and a robust economy (Suparno, Pudjiarti & Joyo, 2023) ^[12]. Ultimately, the synergy between community, industry, TVET institutions, and government serves as a crucial solution to challenges related to unemployment, poverty, and underemployment.

To address the pressing need for improved skills development, the Zimbabwean cabinet approved the Zimbabwe National TVET Policy in 2023 (Mutasa, 2023). This comprehensive framework aims to align and unify learning coordination among various ministries, ensuring that the education system effectively supports wealth creation and entrepreneurship. By implementing these initiatives, the policy seeks to close the skills gap and promote sustainable development in Zimbabwe. This collaborative approach is vital for equipping individuals with the necessary skills to thrive in the job market, thereby enhancing economic growth and improving overall living standards within the country.

However, Zimbabwe's traditional education system has faced criticism for its inability to equip graduates with the practical skills and knowledge required in modern industries, resulting in a significant skills gap that hinders economic growth (Suparno, Pudjiarti & Joyo, 2023) ^[12]. Current skills development initiatives often suffer from inconsistent training quality, as many institutions lack qualified trainers and access to modern equipment (Ramli & Senin, 2021) ^[5]. Insufficient funding and outdated curricula further hamper effectiveness, while a lack of collaboration between training institutions and industry restricts internship opportunities. This ultimately fails to meet current market demands and enhance skill development (Asefer & Abidin, 2021) ^[1].

As economies evolve, there is an urgent need for individuals who possess not only academic knowledge but also technical and vocational skills that align with market demands and expectations. Despite the critical role of TVET in bridging this gap, many programs struggle to provide the hands-on training and real-world applications necessary for graduates to meet employer needs effectively. This misalignment hampers innovation, reduces productivity, and stifles economic development. In response, the Zimbabwe National TVET Policy has been introduced to standardize and enhance educational frameworks, though challenges remain in its implementation and effectiveness. Due to these challenges, stakeholders must collaborate to ensure that TVET programs are responsive to industry needs. Furthermore, due to the

rapid pace of technological advancements, continuous curriculum updates are essential to keep training relevant and effective.

Collaboration among community stakeholders, industry leaders, TVET institutions, and government is essential for unlocking economic potential and promoting sustainable development (World Economic Forum, 2020). Despite its importance, 60% of employers in developing countries report difficulties in finding qualified labor (Sánchez-García & Alwi, 2020) ^[8]. This skills gap is exacerbated by traditional education systems that fail to adapt to the evolving demands of the 21st-century labor market (Ramli & Senin, 2021) ^[5]. The lack of effective collaboration between communities and industries contributes to this misalignment, hindering both economic growth and sustainable development (Suparno, Pudjiarti & Joyo, 2023) ^[12].

To bridge the skills gap effectively, several strategies can be employed. One approach is to enhance partnerships between educational institutions and industries, ensuring that curricula align with real-world needs. This could involve regular consultations between educators and industry leaders to identify emerging skills and training requirements. Another important strategy is to increase investment in vocational training programs, as it can provide individuals with the hands-on experience necessary for success in the job market (Asefer & Abidin, 2021) ^[1].

Moreover, fostering a culture of lifelong learning within communities can empower individuals to continually develop their skills, adapting to changing market conditions. This can be supported by creating accessible training programs and initiatives that encourage participation from all segments of society. Government policies also play a crucial role in incentivizing businesses to engage in skill development and training initiatives, thereby creating a more skilled workforce. Therefore, bridging the skills gap is not merely an educational concern but a multifaceted challenge that requires the concerted efforts of communities, industries, educational institutions, and governments. By fostering collaboration and aligning educational outcomes with market needs, it is possible to create a more skilled workforce that contributes to sustainable development. As nations work towards achieving the SDGs, particularly Goal 4, addressing the skills gap will be fundamental in fostering economic growth, social equity, and overall development. Thus the paper sought to examine the transformative potential of synergizing community involvement, industrial partnerships, TVET and government efforts to bridge the skills gap for sustainable development.

Methodology

The researcher employed a mixed-method approach in this study, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research to effectively address the research question. This combination allowed for the detailed, contextual insights from qualitative data alongside the generalizable findings from quantitative data (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2018) ^[9].

The sampling techniques used included both non-probability (purposive) and probability (stratified random sampling) methods. Purposive sampling was applied to select participants from community and government departments, while stratified random sampling was used to gather respondents from industry and Bulawayo Polytechnic (TVET institution) in the Bulawayo Metropolitan Province.

To ensure comprehensive representation of traditional industries and TVET institutions, the researcher categorized industries into ten segments, sampling two respondents from

each category. Care was taken to maintain gender equality in the sample, resulting in a distribution where 50% of the respondents were male and 50% were female. In total, 20 respondents were selected to represent the industry.

This mixed-method approach not only enhances the depth of the findings but also ensures a balanced representation across different sectors and demographics, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the skills gap in the region.

Bulawayo Polytechnic comprises ten departments, and to ensure representation from each, the researcher employed stratified random sampling. This approach involved sampling two respondents from each department, resulting in a balanced sample with 50% female and 50% male participants. All respondents completed and returned the questionnaire. Stratified random sampling enhanced precision and reduced sampling bias, providing better representation of various subgroups within the population. This method allowed for analyzing variations within specific groups, yielding more accurate results compared to simple random sampling, particularly in diverse populations with distinct subgroups. For community and government participants, the researcher utilized purposive sampling. The purposive sample included 29 community participants and 10 representatives from relevant ministries. One participant was selected from each ward in the community, chosen for their relevant experiences or knowledge related to the study. Government participants were selected from ten ministries identified as having a direct role in addressing the skills gap nationally.

Purposive sampling enabled the researcher to select individuals with specific characteristics pertinent to the study's objectives (Creswell, 2013). This targeted approach ensured a sample rich in information and insights, facilitating a deeper understanding of collaborations among the community, industry, and TVET. By focusing on individuals with direct experience or expertise, purposive sampling provided more meaningful data and nuanced perspectives, which might have been overlooked in random sampling methods. This methodology ultimately enriched the study's findings regarding the interplay between community, industry, TVET, and government in addressing skills gaps.

Thus in total the researcher sampled 20 respondents from the industry and 20 from a local TVET institution, resulting in a total of 40 respondents who received questionnaires. Additionally, interviews were conducted with 29 participants from various wards in the Bulawayo Metropolitan Province and 10 participants from different government ministries, culminating in a total sample of 79 subjects.

The study utilized a combination of open-ended questions, closed-ended questions, unstructured interviews, and semi-structured interviews, carefully weighing the advantages and disadvantages of each instrument. Twenty questionnaires were distributed to respondents from both the industry and Bulawayo Polytechnic, with all questionnaires returned, ensuring a complete response rate. This approach allowed the researcher to gather data from a broad range of respondents, facilitating a diverse and representative sample. The scalability of this method enabled the researcher to reach a

wide audience, contributing to more valid findings. Closed-ended questions in the questionnaires facilitated standardized data collection, which ensured consistency in responses (Sheehan, 2021) ^[11]. This standardization made it easier to compare and analyze data across different respondents.

Findings

The research findings presented in this study, illuminate the critical interplay between community, industry, Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET), and government in addressing the skills gap. By examining the collaborative efforts among these key stakeholders, the study reveals how their synergy not only enhances skill development but also fosters sustainable economic growth and social cohesion. Through a comprehensive analysis of successful initiatives and strategies, this research highlights the potential for creating a more skilled workforce equipped to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving job market.

The Role of Community in the Community, Industry, VET and Government Collaboration Matrix in Relation to Bridging Skills Gap

When asked about the community's role in the collaboration matrix involving community, industry, vocational education and training (VET), and government to bridge the skills gap, 34 out of 39 interviewees emphasized the community's vital contribution to skills development. The community acts as a catalyst for learning and collaboration among individuals, educational institutions, and employers. By identifying local needs and skill gaps, community members offer valuable insights that shape the design of training programs and curricula, ensuring they remain relevant and effective. Community organizations frequently facilitate workshops, mentorship programs, and hands-on training opportunities, making skill acquisition more accessible to a diverse range of populations. This accessibility is crucial for fostering an inclusive environment where all individuals have the chance to enhance their skills. Furthermore, 36 out of 39 interviewees noted that the community plays a key role in fostering partnerships between VET providers and local industries. This collaboration aligns educational outcomes with the actual demands of the workforce, enhancing individual employability and addressing skill shortages in the region. By nurturing these partnerships, the community not only benefits individuals but also contributes significantly to the overall economic vitality of the area. Moreover, the community promotes a culture of lifelong learning, empowering individuals to continuously develop their skills and adapt to the evolving job market. This ongoing personal and professional growth is essential for navigating the challenges of today's dynamic work environment. Therefore, the community's active participation in skills development is crucial for creating a well-equipped workforce and fostering economic resilience. Through collaboration and support, the community enhances opportunities for individuals to thrive in their careers while contributing to the broader economic landscape.

The Role of Industry in the Community, Industry, TVET and Government Collaboration Matrix in Relation to Bridging Skills Gap

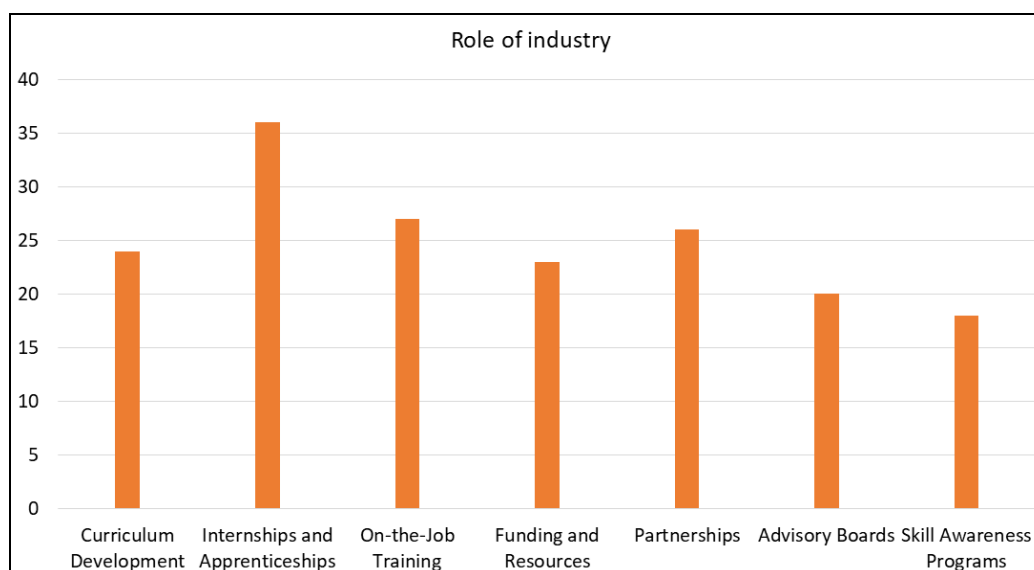


Fig 2: The role of industry in the community, industry, TVET and government collaboration matrix in relation to bridging skills gap

The responses illustrated in Figure 2 highlight the significant role that industry plays in bridging the skills gap through a variety of contributions. A notable 60% of participants indicated that industry involvement in curriculum development is crucial. By collaborating with educational institutions, industry professionals help ensure that training programs are aligned with current market needs, thereby enhancing the relevance of the education provided. Internships and apprenticeships emerged as another critical area, with 90% of respondents emphasizing their importance. These hands-on experiences allow students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings, facilitating a smoother transition into the workforce. Additionally, 68% of interviewees reported that on-the-job training is vital for equipping individuals with practical skills directly applicable to their roles.

Funding and resources are also essential, with 58% of participants acknowledging the industry's role in providing

financial support for training programs and initiatives. This backing not only helps sustain educational efforts but also enhances the quality of training offered. Furthermore, 65% of respondents highlighted the importance of industry partnerships, which foster collaboration between businesses and educational institutions, ensuring that training remains relevant and effective. Advisory boards, cited by 50% of interviewees, play a key role in guiding educational institutions on industry standards and expectations. These boards ensure that curricula remain updated and aligned with industry practices. Lastly, 45% of participants pointed out the significance of skill awareness programs, which educate individuals about the skills needed in various sectors, helping them to make informed career choices. Therefore, these contributions from industry are essential for addressing the skills gap and ensuring that the workforce is prepared to meet the demands of a rapidly changing job market.

The Role of TVET in the Community, Industry, TVET and Government Collaboration Matrix in Relation to Bridging Skills

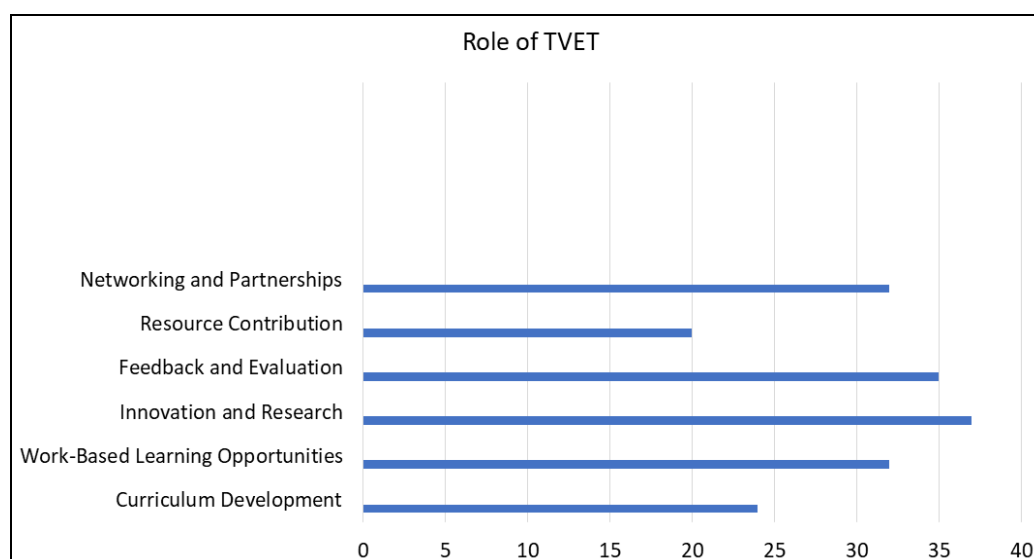


Fig 3: The role of TVET in the community, industry, TVET and government collaboration matrix in relation to bridging skills

The responses illustrated in Figure 3 highlight the significant role that industry plays in bridging the skills gap through a variety of contributions. A notable 60% of participants indicated that industry involvement in curriculum development is crucial. By collaborating with educational institutions, industry professionals help ensure that training programs are aligned with current market needs, thereby enhancing the relevance of the education provided. Internships and apprenticeships emerged as another critical area, with 90% of respondents emphasizing their importance. These hands-on experiences allow students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings, facilitating a smoother transition into the workforce. Additionally, 68% of interviewees reported that on-the-job training is vital for equipping individuals with practical skills directly applicable to their roles.

The Role Government in Community, Industry and TVET Collaboration Matrix

Interviewees underscored the significant role of government in addressing the skills gap through targeted policies and programs that enhance education and workforce development. Out of 39 participants, 29 emphasized this crucial function. Twenty-two interviewees highlighted that government investments in vocational training and higher education are essential for improving access to quality skills training that aligns with labor market demands and bolsters productivity.

Governments frequently partner with industry stakeholders to identify areas with need and develop effective training initiatives that equip individuals with necessary competencies. This collaboration ensures that training programs are aligned with current and future workforce needs. Furthermore, 25 participants noted that governments can support businesses by providing funding, resources, and incentives to create apprenticeships and internships. These initiatives are vital for fostering hands-on learning opportunities, enabling individuals to gain practical experience while enhancing their skills.

The collective insights from the interviewees emphasize the importance of government involvement in skills development. By facilitating access to education and promoting partnerships with industries, governments play a pivotal role in preparing the workforce to fit into the dynamic job market. This strategic approach not only benefits individual learners but also strengthens the economy by ensuring that businesses have access to a skilled labor pool.

Thus, the government's actions are crucial in bridging the skills gap through investments, collaborations, and support for training initiatives. By prioritizing education and workforce development, governments can foster an environment conducive to economic growth and resilience, ultimately benefiting both individuals and the broader community.

Discussion of Findings

The study reveals that the community plays a vital role in enhancing collaboration among stakeholders, including industry, vocational education and training (VET) providers, and government, to bridge the skills gap. Respondents highlighted various contributions, with (33) 83% emphasizing the importance of feedback and (38) 95% recognizing the value of lifelong learning, showcasing the community's active involvement in shaping educational programs. Notably, 34 out of 39 interviewees acknowledged the community as a catalyst for collaboration, indicating that local needs assessments significantly inform relevant training curricula.

Community organizations facilitate accessible skill acquisition through initiatives such as workshops and mentorship programs, which foster partnerships between TVET providers and industries. This synergy not only boosts employability but also enhances regional economic vitality. The findings align with Karim Hassan and Zakaria (2020) ^[4], who stress the importance of community involvement in educational program development. They argue that communities offer unique insights and resources, ensuring that education and training are tailored to the local needs. Furthermore, Asefer and Abidin (2021) ^[1] highlight that understanding local skill requirements is essential for effective vocational education. The study underscores the significance of community initiatives in facilitating skill development and strengthening connections between VET providers and industries. However, Brown (2016) cautions that communities may encounter power imbalances or conflicting interests, complicating collaborative efforts as a result of differing priorities among stakeholders, which can hinder the alignment of educational programs with actual labor market needs. Addressing these challenges is crucial for maximizing the community's role in bridging the skills gap and ensuring that educational programs remain relevant and effective in meeting local workforce demands. Overall, the research emphasizes the need for ongoing collaboration and community engagement in nurturing a skilled workforce that will inevitably drive the development agenda.

The analysis of the data indicates that industry plays a critical role in bridging the skills gap through significant contributions to skills development. Respondents highlighted several key areas of impact, including curriculum development, where (24) 60% of participants noted industry involvement, and internships/apprenticeships, which were emphasized by (36) 90% of interviewees. These figures demonstrate the active engagement of industry in aligning training programs with market demands, ensuring that educational institutions provide relevant and competency-focused curricula. One of the primary ways industry contributes to skills development is through collaboration with educational institutions. This partnership ensures that curricula are continually updated and aligned to reflect the latest trends and requirements on the job market. Interviewees stressed that industry collaboration leads to the creation of training programs that equip students with the requisite skills most sought after by employers. Internships and apprenticeships are particularly vital in this regard, as they provide essential hands-on experience that enhances job readiness for students. Participants noted that these opportunities allow students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings, making them more attractive candidates upon graduation. Additionally, funding and resources from industry play a critical role in supporting training initiatives. The research outcome revealed that 24 out of 39 interviewees indicated that financial contributions from industry facilitate access to advanced technologies and training equipment. This investment not only improves the quality of education but also helps institutions stay current with technological advancements.

This perspective aligns with the findings of Rawlinson and Dewhurst (2013) ^[6], who demonstrated that strong industry partnerships lead to the development of more relevant and current curricula which in turn addresses societal needs. Their research indicates that graduates who receive education aligned with industry standards are better prepared to enter the job market. This is the focus of the recently adopted

education 5.0 model. Similarly, Ismail and Abiddin (2014) ^[3] noted that curriculum design influenced by industry needs results in higher employability rates, ensuring that educational outcomes match market demands. Brown (2020) further suggested that students participating in such programs exhibit enhanced job readiness and practical skills, making them more appealing to employers.

Moreover, Suparno, Pudjiarti, and Joyo (2023) ^[12] emphasized that these initiatives not only bridge the skills gap but also facilitate smoother transitions from education to employment. However, some studies, such as those by Karim Hassan and Zakaria (2020) ^[4], highlight concerns about the prevalence of unpaid internships, which can exploit students and exacerbate social inequality. These experiences, while valuable, sometimes fail to provide meaningful learning opportunities, often relegating students to menial tasks rather than facilitating genuine skill development. Walker (2018) pointed out that the limited scope of these internships can hinder students' ability to gain comprehensive industry insights. Additionally, Harris (2017) cautioned that the specificity of skills gained through such programs can restrict adaptability across different industries. While these experiences may make graduates more employable in specific sectors, they might struggle to transition into other fields, thereby limiting their overall career prospects. This raises important questions about the balance between specialized training and the need for a more versatile skill set.

On the other hand, the analysis also indicates that Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is instrumental in bridging the skills gap through several key contributions, including curriculum development (24) (60%) and work-based learning opportunities (80%). Respondents identified the importance of feedback (88%) and partnerships (32) (80%) in ensuring that training aligns with labor market needs. With 24 out of 39 interviewees noting that TVET equips individuals with industry-specific skills, it becomes clear that graduates are better prepared for employment. Collaboration with employers allows TVET institutions to adapt curricula to current standards and technologies, effectively addressing skill shortages in various sectors. The focus on lifelong learning and upskilling was mentioned by 21 out of 39 interviewees, highlighting the need for workforce adaptability in changing economic conditions. The study's outcomes align with the findings of Rawlinson and Dewhurst (2013) ^[6] and Karim Hassan and Zakaria (2020) ^[4], which showed that TVET institutions that regularly update their curricula to meet industry needs produce more employable graduates. These studies emphasize that aligning education with employer expectations is essential for reducing unemployment rates among TVET graduates. The effectiveness of work-based learning is well-documented. Research by Firdaus, Mohamad, Mohammad, and Gunaratne (2020) ^[2] found that internships and apprenticeships significantly enhance graduates' readiness for the job market. Such practical training not only provides hands-on experience but also fosters a deeper understanding of industry standards, making graduates more appealing to potential employers. However, Shabdin and Sulaiman (2020) ^[10] caution that these findings may be context-specific, focusing on particular industries or regions, which can limit their generalizability. Curriculum alignment strategies that are effective in advanced economies may not necessarily translate well to developing economies with different industrial needs and infrastructure. This raises important questions about the universal applicability of the conclusions drawn from these studies.

The research findings highlight the vital role that the government plays in bridging the skills gap through various contributions. A significant (35) 88% of respondents emphasized the importance of government-established policies in promoting education and workforce development. Additionally, (34) 85% of participants noted the crucial role of certification standards in ensuring that training programs meet industry requirements. Out of 39 interviewees, 29 specifically highlighted government initiatives as instrumental in fostering a skilled workforce. Investments in vocational training and higher education were identified as essential for enhancing access to quality skills training. This was noted by 22 out of 39 participants, who underscored the importance of government funding in creating robust educational frameworks. Such investments not only improve the quality of training but also increase the availability of programs that are aligned with labor market demands. Collaboration with industry is another critical aspect of government involvement. By working closely with employers, governments can identify skill shortages and implement targeted training initiatives that address these gaps. This proactive approach ensures that educational programs are tailored to meet the specific needs of the job market. Furthermore, the provision of funding and incentives for apprenticeships, mentioned by 25 respondents, facilitates hands-on learning opportunities, equipping individuals with the competencies required for successful employment. These findings are supported by the research done by Firdaus, Mohamad, Mohammad, and Gunaratne (2020) ^[2], who demonstrated how effective policy frameworks in countries like Germany and Singapore have successfully aligned educational outcomes with industry needs. Their analysis underscores the significance of government action in creating a conducive environment for skills development. Similarly, Rawlinson and Dewhurst (2013) ^[6] emphasized that standardized certifications within the U.S. Information Technology sector have significantly enhanced workforce quality and employability. This highlights the importance of government regulations in ensuring that certifications remain relevant and reflect current industry standards. The study noted that 22 out of 39 participants recognized the positive impact of such investments, which have led to improved employment rates and overall workforce competence.

Lee (2018) further corroborated these findings, revealing that increased funding for vocational schools in South Korea resulted in a 30% rise in skilled workers entering the manufacturing sector. This demonstrates the direct link between government investment in education and the availability of a skilled labor force, which is critical for economic growth. Additionally, Sala (2011) ^[7] highlighted the benefits of university collaborations with industries, noting that such partnerships produce graduates who are better equipped to meet market demands. This synergy between academia and industry is essential for preparing students to navigate the complexities of the job market effectively. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the cautions raised by Sánchez-García and Alwi (2020) ^[8] regarding the dependency of these policy frameworks on contextual factors. Economic stability and cultural attitudes toward education significantly influence the effectiveness of government initiatives. In economies facing downturns, even robust policies may struggle to bridge skill gaps due to broader structural issues. This suggests that while government actions are vital, they must be adaptable and responsive to the unique challenges of each context. Thus, the research underscores the importance

of government involvement in bridging the skills gap through strategic policies, investments in education, and collaborative efforts with industry. By addressing skill shortages and promoting relevant training programs, governments can play a transformative role in preparing individuals for the demands of the labor market, ultimately contributing to sustainable economic growth and workforce development.

Conclusion

The collaborative efforts of the community, industry, TVET, and government are essential for enhancing skills development and addressing the gap. The community's active engagement, demonstrated by a commitment to lifelong learning and proactive feedback mechanisms, fosters an inclusive environment that strengthens collaboration. This engagement bridges the divide between educational institutions and local employers, tailoring training programs and enhancing accessibility for diverse individuals. The industry's role is equally important, particularly in providing practical experiences through internships and apprenticeships, which are crucial for workforce readiness. By collaborating with educational institutions on curriculum development, the industry ensures that training programs meet current market demands, improving employability outcomes. Furthermore, TVET plays a vital role in delivering targeted education and promoting lifelong learning, equipping individuals with skills for evolving job markets. Government support in policy formulation and resource allocation further reinforces this collaboration, creating a robust ecosystem that benefits individual employability and regional economic vitality.

Recommendations

To enhance community involvement in bridging skills gap, there is need to establish regular forums and workshops for dialogue among community members, educational institutions and industry stakeholders. Promotion of mentorship and volunteering will be valuable to foster collaboration. Industries should work with educational institutions on curriculum development and market insights to increase internships. TVET institutions need to strengthen partnerships with local industries and incorporate feedback, while governments should support collaboration and invest in TVET and come up with user friendly policies that encourage bridging skills gap for sustainable development through synergies of different stakeholders.

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