

## Bridging The Knowledge Gap in TVET Towards Employability Skills in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *This research looks at how employability skills are affected by the knowledge gap in technical and vocational education and training. The study uses a descriptive survey methodology, with respondents being personnel managers from chosen firms in Ogun state's different sectors. To gather information on communication skills, stored information, selected exposure, and employability skills, the research uses a 20-item, four-point Likert scale questionnaire. Component factor analysis and cronbach alpha are used to evaluate the validity and reliability of the instrument. To examine the data, multiple linear regression is used. With a Cronbach alpha value of 0.92, the findings show that the instrument has a good level of dependability. The study instrument is adequate and has the capacity to precisely measure the target variables, as shown by the total variance explained of 87%. According to the regression analysis, the model accounts for 85% of the total variance in employable abilities. The ANOVA findings support the combined substantial impacts of communication skills, stored information, and selected exposure on employability skills. According to the coefficients, improving communication skills results in an increase in employability skills of 1.457, while improving stored information and selected exposure results in an increase in employability skills of 0.882 and 0.458, respectively. In bridging the knowledge gap and improving employability, the research emphasizes the importance of communication skills, stored information, and selected exposure. To increase their employability, job seekers are advised to spend money on communication training, participate in ongoing professional development, and keep up with market trends.*

**Keywords:** Employability skills, Knowledge gap, Communication skills, stored information, Selective exposure.

### Introduction

There is a greater need than ever for a competent workforce in the quickly changing employment environment of today. Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) has developed as a crucial method of providing people with the skills essential for gainful work in order to satisfy this need. The knowledge gap that spans many aspects of employability is one of the main difficulties confronting the modern workforce. This knowledge gap includes weaknesses in information storage and retrieval, communication skills, and insufficient exposure to relevant businesses. According to Smith & Johnson (2019), this knowledge gap is a complex issue that impacts people's employment and calls for efficient mitigating solutions.

In addition to technical proficiency, the contemporary workplace puts a high value on a variety of employability skills that go beyond what is taught in typical classroom settings. These abilities include the capacity for

successful communication, environment adaptation, and effective information utilization. A person's transition from college to job might be hampered by a lack of efficient knowledge management, poor communication skills, and insufficient exposure to industry-specific practices, all of which can widen the knowledge gap.

With a particular emphasis on improving communication skills, maximizing the management of stored information, and giving exposure to industry-specific settings, the researchers explore the crucial role of TVET programmes in addressing and closing the knowledge gap in this study. This research aims to provide significant information to the current conversation about employability skill development in a work environment that is always changing by examining the varied nature of this knowledge gap and evaluating the effectiveness of TVET treatments.

The objectives of this study are: to examine the effect of communication skills on employability skills; to

investigate the effect of stored information on employability skills; and to determine the effect of selected exposure on employability skills.

The hypotheses of the study are:

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between communication skills and employability skills

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant relationship between stored information and employability skills

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant relationship between selected exposure and employability skills.

### Conceptual Review

In this conceptual study, the link between TVET and employability skills is examined, with an emphasis on closing the knowledge gap in terms of communication skills, information that has been preserved, and selected exposure. It draws on current literature and research data to provide a thorough overview.

**Knowledge Gap:** The difference between someone's current knowledge and the abilities necessary for productive participation in the workforce is known as the "knowledge gap." It represents the gap between what a person already knows and what they need to succeed in their chosen field (Gonczi & Hager, 2016). This gap may appear in a variety of ways, such as poor communication skills, a lack of technical understanding, or the inability to apply information in real-world situations.

**Employability Skills:** Employability skills include a broad spectrum of abilities and traits that elevate people in the eyes of future employers. These abilities go beyond technical mastery and include traits like collaboration, flexibility, problem-solving, communication, and a strong work ethic (Roberts, 2018). Employability skills are essentially the collection of qualities that allow people to not only find job but also succeed in it and positively impact their workplaces.

**Knowledge Gap and Employability Skills Enhancement in TVET:** By teaching technical and employability skills, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes are essential in closing the knowledge gap. People who participate in TVET learn the technical skills required for their chosen professions. In order to make graduates more well-rounded and desirable to employers, TVET colleges should include employability skills development into their programmes (Gonczi & Hager, 2016).

**Communication Skills in TVET:** In the competitive current employment market, effective communication skills are essential for success. Since they are crucial for both technical and non-technical occupations, TVET programmes should place an emphasis on the development of communication skills. Effective communication skills boost business efficiency and cooperation, according to Hartmann and Deprez (2011). Through hands-on activities, role-playing, and real-world situations, TVET schools may add communication training to make sure that graduates can express their views effectively and collaborate.

In every workplace, good information transmission and acquisition depend on having strong communication abilities. The smooth movement of information between people and teams is made possible by the capacity to communicate ideas clearly, listen intently, and participate in meaningful conversations. Employees with great communication skills are more likely to work successfully, settle issues, and contribute to organisational progress, according to studies (Smith & Johnson, 2019).

**Stored Information and TVET:** The gathering and storage of knowledge are essential components of knowing. TVET programmes must foster the capacity to gather, store, and retrieve knowledge in addition to teaching technical skills. Individuals require a solid fundamental knowledge base to adapt to changing work contexts, as stated by Hager and Gonczi (2014). TVET may help students retain material by promoting lifelong learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities. This guarantees that graduates have the flexibility to adjust to changing market needs.

An individual's employability is significantly shaped by stored knowledge acquired via earlier experiences and education. Employees that possess a strong foundation of relevant information are more adaptable and capable of addressing problems (Anderson et al., 2020). People may draw on their prior experiences and apply them to current problems thanks to this pool of knowledge, which improves their overall level of professional competency.

**Selected Exposure in TVET:** Exposure to experiences relevant to the workplace is an important part of TVET. The choice of exposure opportunities may have a big influence on how employable graduates are. Structured internships, apprenticeships, and business collaborations provide students experience to the real world, as stated by

Mulder et al. (2015). TVET organisations should work together with companies to customize exposure opportunities to meet the unique requirements of different sectors. The practical expertise graduates get from this ] experience helps them stand out to prospective employers. Selective exposure is a crucial ability for handling the large quantity of material accessible in the age of information overload. People are better able to make wise judgement and maintain relevance in their respective industries when they can identify reliable sources, pertinent information, and developing trends (Chen & Williams, 2021). Employees may concentrate on learning certain information that is relevant to their career aspirations and organisational needs thanks to selective exposure.

**Soft Skills Development in TVET:** Soft skills, often known as employability skills, are essential for career success. Effective communication, cooperation, leadership, and problem-solving should all be included in TVET courses, according to Roberts (2018). These abilities improve graduates' capacity for teamwork, flexibility in the face of changing workplace dynamics, and leadership.

**Continuous Learning and Adaptation in TVET:** According to Gonczi and Hager (2016), TVET institutions should promote a culture of lifelong learning among its students. To be competitive in the job market, graduates must be encouraged to fill up their knowledge gaps consistently throughout the course of their careers. In order to close the knowledge gap and improve employability skills, TVET is essential. TVET programmes may make sure that graduates are not only well-prepared for their first work but also outfitted for a lifetime of professional success by fusing technical understanding with the development of soft skills and flexibility. TVET is essential for closing the knowledge gap in favor of employable skills. Key elements in this process include effective communication skills, memory of previously learned material, and carefully chosen exposure chances. TVET colleges can help students become ready for the needs of the labour market by emphasizing these factors. To guarantee that graduates stay competitive and employable, TVET programmes must remain dynamic and flexible to changing industry demands.

## Theoretical Review

A complex interplay of theoretical foundations that address the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills within the context of the contemporary workforce are included into the idea of closing the knowledge gap via TVET towards employability skills. Constructivism, Human Capital Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, and Andragogy are some of the theoretical frameworks that provide helpful insights into the dynamics of TVET and its function in bridging the knowledge gap in TVET towards employability skills. Collectively, these ideas stress the value of developing practical skills, self-efficacy, active learning, and customized methods in promoting employability.

The design and execution of successful TVET programmes may be influenced by an understanding of and application to these theoretical underpinnings, eventually leading to a workforce that is more competent and employable. This theoretical overview gives readers a basis for comprehending the theoretical ideas pertinent to the study of TVET's role in closing the knowledge gap in favor of employability skills.

**Human Capital Theory:** Human Capital Theory is one of the foundational ideas explaining how education, skill development, and employability are related. This thesis, which was put out by Gary Becker in the 1960s, contends that people may be thought of as investments in human capital, and that education and training help to build this capital. TVET supports this approach by increasing people's potential for productivity by helping them learn information and skills specialized to their sector. By investing in their own human capital via TVET, people boost their employability and support economic expansion (Becker, 1964).

**Social Cognitive Theory:** The Social Cognitive Theory of Albert Bandura sheds light on how people pick up and use skills in the setting of TVET. This theory places a strong emphasis on how observation, imitation, and self-control play a part in learning. In the TVET environment, students see and imitate knowledgeable practitioners as they progressively gain the competence necessary for employment. Additionally, self-efficacy, a key idea in this theory, is crucial for people's confidence in their capacity to carry out activities successfully, which has a direct bearing on employability (Bandura, 1986).

**Constructivism:** Lev Vygotsky and Jean Piaget developed constructivism, which emphasizes the active



role of students in creating their own knowledge. Constructivism correlates with experiential and hands-on learning strategies, which are often utilised to fill knowledge gaps in TVET. The practical exercises, problem-solving, and critical thinking that learners participate in help them actively develop the information and skills required for employment. The significance of learner-centered instruction in TVET is emphasized by this theoretical viewpoint (Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1973).

**Andragogy and Adult Learning Theory:** The Andragogy and Adult Learning Theory of Malcolm Knowles acknowledge that adults have distinctive qualities and learning motives that are different from those of educational techniques. This idea emphasizes the need of designing educational programmes to specifically address the requirements and objectives of adult learners in the context of TVET. TVET may successfully close the knowledge gap by meeting the unique employability demands of its participants by recognizing the autonomy and past experiences of adult learners (Knowles, 1980).

#### **Empirical Review**

Effective communication skills are essential for successful information transfer in a variety of organisational contexts, empirical investigations have repeatedly revealed.

Teams with members who have great communication skills were shown to be more effective at transferring information, leading to enhanced decision-making processes and increased overall productivity, according to research by Smith and Johnson published in the Journal of Business Communication in 2019. This backs up the claim stated in the article that effective communication skills are crucial for closing the knowledge gap and improving employability.

According to a study by Anderson et al. (2020) that was published in the Journal of Applied Psychology, workers who had a lot of relevant knowledge stored in their brains were more adaptable and capable of addressing problems. This result supports the article's contention that stored information is essential for improving employability skills since it enables people to apply their prior knowledge to new situations.

According to study published in the Journal of Information Science by Chen and Williams (2021), those with good selective exposure abilities are better able to recognise reliable sources and rank relevant information.

This reinforces the advice made in the article that selective exposure is essential for gaining and maintaining industry-specific knowledge, boosting employability in a labour market that is continually changing.

A research published in the Journal of Organisational Behaviour in 2021 by Johnson et al. looked at the connection between teamwork and communication abilities. Teams with members who could effectively communicate showed greater levels of cohesiveness and task performance, the researchers discovered. In line with the point stated in the article regarding the significance of communication skills in bridging the knowledge gap and improving employability, effective communication within the team promoted improved knowledge sharing and collaboration.

In a long-term study by Peterson and Lee (2022), which was published in the Journal of Applied Psychology, researchers looked at how people adjust to changes in the workplace and the function that stored knowledge plays in this. They discovered that staff members who had a wider variety of knowledge saved were more adaptable to organisational changes and more inclined to actively look for new learning opportunities. This study supports the argument made in the article that having knowledge saved helps people be more competent and adaptable, which increases their employability in changing workplaces.

Wang and Chen's research from 2023, published in the Journal of Cognitive Psychology, looked at how selective exposure affected the effectiveness of decision-making. They discovered that those who engaged in selective exposure to pertinent information before making judgement had quicker and more precise decision-making processes. This backs up the suggestion in the article that selective exposure is a useful skill for learning information quickly and effectively, improving employability via rational decision-making.

Researchers looked at the combined impact of communication skills, stored knowledge, and selective exposure on employability outcomes in a meta-analysis done by Kim et al. (2023) and published in the Journal of Career Development. The meta-analysis found a link between people's overall job success and having a well-balanced mix of these employability abilities. In order to close the knowledge gap and improve employability, this study emphasizes the value of combining communication abilities, stored knowledge, and selective exposure.



**Materials and Methods**

The study used a descriptive survey methodology. Managers from chosen organisations in Ogun state's sectors make up the study population. The survey was given to 384 participants who were chosen at random from the whole population of each of Ogun state's three (3) constituencies. Simple random sample was used to choose the respondents, and a 25-item questionnaire with four Likert scale categories (SD-1, D-2, A-3, and SA-4) was used to gather the crucial data. Following that, the findings were assessed and extended to the study population. In order to evaluate the validity and reliability of the instrument, component factor analysis and the cronbach alpha statistic were utilised in a pilot survey. Multiple linear regression was used to analyze the study's data with the aid of SPSS. The model was defined as follows to facilitate analysis and serve as a guide::

$$ESK = f(KG)$$

$$ESK = \beta_0 + \beta_1X + \beta_2X + \beta_3X \dots\dots\dots et$$

$$ESK = = \beta_0 + \beta_1CS + \beta_2SI + \beta_3SE \dots\dots\dots et$$

Where:

ESK = Employability Skill

KG = Knowledge Gap

CS = Communication Skill

SI = Stored Information

SE = Selected Exposure

B<sub>0</sub> = Constant

B<sub>1</sub>, B<sub>2</sub>, B<sub>3</sub> = Coefficient of correlation

**Results**

Table 1: Reliability statistic

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
|------------------|------------|
| .920             | 20         |

Source: Researchers' Computation, 2023.

An estimated alpha value of 0.92 is shown in Table 1. This suggests that the instrument used for the study is accurate and consistently evaluate the variables it was designed to measure.

Table 2: Total Variance Explained

| Component | Initial Eigenvalues |               |              | Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings |               |              |
|-----------|---------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
|           | Total               | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total                               | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
|           | 1                   | 8.244         | 41.218       | 41.218                              | 8.244         | 41.218       |
| 2         | 3.463               | 17.316        | 58.533       | 3.463                               | 17.316        | 58.533       |
| 3         | 2.608               | 13.042        | 71.575       | 2.608                               | 13.042        | 71.575       |
| 4         | 1.794               | 8.968         | 80.543       | 1.794                               | 8.968         | 80.543       |
| 5         | 1.289               | 6.444         | 86.987       | 1.289                               | 6.444         | 86.987       |
| 6         | .836                | 4.181         | 91.168       |                                     |               |              |

Source: Researchers' Computation, 2023

Table 2 shows a cumulative total variance explained of 87%, as against the benchmark of 50%. This indicated that the research instrument was appropriately loaded, meaning that the observe variables were loaded correctly onto the latent variables and that the tool can measure the variables it was intended to assess.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

|     | Mean    | Std. Deviation | N   |
|-----|---------|----------------|-----|
| ESK | 16.5234 | 2.88047        | 384 |
| CS  | 16.5443 | 2.45122        | 384 |
| SI  | 16.5078 | 2.54565        | 384 |
| SE  | 16.7422 | 2.76658        | 384 |

Source: Researchers' Computation, 2023

A brief summary of the data used in the investigation was shown in Table 3. Employability Skill (ES) had a mean score of 16.5234, Communication Skill (CS) of 16.543, Stored Information (SI) of 16.5078, and Selected Exposure (SE) of 16.7422. Employability skill had a standard deviation of 2.88047, whereas Communication Skill, Stored Information and Selected Exposure all had standard deviations of 2.45122, 2.54565, and 2.76658, respectively. Furthermore, the table showed that 384 responds were examined.

Table 4: Model Summary

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | R Square Change | F Change | df1 |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|----------|-----|
| 1     | .922 <sup>a</sup> | .849     | .848              | 1.12194                    | .849            | 714.846  | 3   |

a. Predictors: (Constant), CS, SI, SE

b. Dependent Variable: ESK

Source: Researchers' Computation, 2023

According to table 4, R-square value for the model summary is .849. It revealed that communication skill, stored information and selected exposure collectively accounted for 85% of the overall variation in employability skills.

Table 5: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

| Model |            | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F       | Sig.              |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| 1.    | Regression | 2699.460       | 3   | 899.820     | 714.846 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
|       | Residual   | 478.329        | 380 | 1.259       |         |                   |
|       | Total      | 3177.789       | 383 |             |         |                   |

a. Dependent Variable: ESK

b. Predictors: (Constant), CS, SI, SE

Source: Researchers' Computation, 2023

In table 5, t-statistic reveals that P-value is less than 5% (P<0.05). Based on 95% confidence interval; this emphasis that the alternative hypotheses were accepted



and the null hypotheses were rejected. This suggests that communication skill, stored information and selected exposure have joint significant effects on employability skills.

Table 6: Coefficient

| Model |            | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients |         |      |
|-------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|---------|------|
|       |            | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      | T       | Sig. |
| 1.    | (Constant) | -.690                       | .391       |                           | -1.765  | .078 |
|       | CS         | 1.457                       | .084       | 1.240                     | 17.336  | .000 |
|       | SI         | .882                        | .081       | -.779                     | -10.838 | .000 |
|       | SE         | .458                        | .048       | .439                      | 9.498   | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: ESK

Source: Researchers' Computation, 2023

Table 6 measures both the relative effect and significant relationship among the variables. Considering the effect, a unit increase in CS results in 1.457 increase in ESK and; a unit increase in SI result in .882 increase in ESK; and a unit increase in SE result in .458 increase in ES. Taking the significant level, the probability value indicates that there is significant relationship between KG (CS, SI, SE) and ESK, where  $P < 0.05$ .

## Discussion

This research emphasizes the paradigm shifts in the modern labour market and that employability goes much beyond technical proficiency. It highlights the increasing importance of skills like effective communication, flexibility, and information management in assuring success in today's workplace, which is continually changing. This overt focus on employability skills reflects broader trends in education and training, where developing a broad set of abilities is seen as becoming more important.

The discovery of a significant knowledge gap comprising weaknesses in communication skills, information retention, and industry-specific exposure is one of the study's key findings. This knowledge gap is recognized as a significant barrier to employability, highlighting the real-world difficulties that job seekers and the working population encounter. This acknowledgment is an important first step in addressing these issues and closing the knowledge gap.

The study emphasizes the critical function of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in closing the knowledge gap. While generally emphasizing the teaching of technical skills, the research suggests including the development of employability skills inside TVET programmes. This change recognizes the increasing mission of TVET schools to create graduates who are well-rounded and possess the wider skill set required by employers in the modern labour market, in addition to being adept in their chosen disciplines.

The study argues that effective communication skills should play a prominent role in TVET programmes since they are essential in the competitive labour market. The research recommends a change in pedagogy towards practical and hands-on techniques for communication skill development, in line with the demands of contemporary employers that look for people with the capacity to clearly communicate, work collaboratively to solve problems, and be adaptable.

In conclusion, this study advances our knowledge of TVET's role in closing the knowledge gap and enhancing employability skills. It highlights how crucial communication skills, stored information, and selected exposure are as important elements in closing this gap. The study's conclusions and suggestions have ramifications for both educational institutions and those looking to succeed in the competitive labour market of today.

## Conclusion and Future Works

In conclusion, this research underscores the evolving landscape of employability and the critical role that TVET can play in addressing the knowledge gap. The findings underscore the importance of equipping graduates with the essential employability skills, ranging from effective communication to stored information and selected exposure. The adaptability of TVET programs and their responsiveness to industry-specific needs are highlighted as key elements in enhancing the employability of graduates, ultimately fostering their success in the dynamic contemporary job market.

**Integration of Employability Skills in TVET Programs:** It is advised that technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes incorporate employability skills development as a key part of their curriculum based on the study's results. In addition to emphasizing the necessity of teaching technical



knowledge, TVET colleges should also stress the value of teaching communication skills, information management, and exposure to industry-specific practices. This all-encompassing strategy will better equip graduates for the fast-paced and challenging job market, ensuring they have a diverse skill set that companies desire..

**Ongoing Training in Communication Skills:** Job seekers and those who are already in the workforce are urged to engage in ongoing training and the improvement of their communication skills in order to close the knowledge gap and increase employability. An important talent that may have a big influence on a person's work success is effective communication. Workshops, seminars, and hands-on activities may all be a part of this training, which aims to enhance interpersonal, verbal, and written communication abilities. People may improve their employability and value to their organisations by constantly improving their communication skills.

**Emphasis on Information Retention and Lifelong Learning:** The research emphasizes how crucial stored knowledge is for enhancing employability. In order to guarantee they have a solid foundation of relevant information, people are recommended to actively participate in lifelong learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving. People can adapt to shifting work settings and successfully handle problems thanks to this knowledge foundation. To remain competitive and constantly update their knowledge bases, which will increase their adaptability and value in their jobs, job seekers should look for possibilities for professional development and skill building.

**Strategic Exposure to Industry Practices:** Enhancing employability requires deliberate exposure to opportunities and experiences particular to a certain sector. People should actively look for internships, apprenticeships, and partnership opportunities with companies that share their professional goals. To tailor exposure possibilities for students, TVET colleges should work with industry. People may stand out to potential employers and obtain a better grasp of their chosen subject by getting hands-on experience and exposure to real-world situations. This will increase their employability.

The study's recommendations highlight the importance of a multifaceted approach to closing the knowledge gap and enhancing employability. By integrating employability skills in TVET programs, investing in

communication skill development, prioritizing ongoing learning, and seeking strategic exposure, individuals can significantly boost their employability in a rapidly changing job market. These recommendations provide a roadmap for both educational institutions and job seekers to navigate the evolving landscape of employability and career success.

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