



EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TETFUND-SPONSORED ACADEMIC STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN SELECTED POLYTECHNICS IN NORTH-CENTRAL NIGERIA

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International Journal of Science and Research Archive, 2026, 20(02), 656–663

Publication history: Received on 12 July 2026; revised on 24 August 2026; accepted on 26 August 2026

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/ijrsra.2026.20.2.1658>

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ABSTRACT

The Tertiary Education Trust Fund Academic Staff Training and Development intervention was established to enhance the capacity of academic staff in Nigerian tertiary institutions through local and foreign training programmes. This study assessed the performance of beneficiaries, adequacy of training curricula, and coping strategies adopted by scholars in selected polytechnics in North-Central Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was adopted, and data were collected from 187 respondents using a structured questionnaire. Frequencies and percentages were used for data analysis. The findings revealed that both local and foreign training programmes positively influenced academic staff performance. Foreign-trained beneficiaries demonstrated stronger competencies in promoting students' use of websites and digital learning resources, indicating greater exposure to technology-enhanced learning and global best practices. However, locally trained beneficiaries recorded higher overall performance ratings, suggesting greater contextual relevance of acquired skills. The training curriculum was generally considered adequate, with 58.3% of respondents rating it as adequate or very adequate. Academic preparation was the most common coping strategy (59.8%), followed by support networks (25.7%), while employment opportunities were the least utilized (2.4%). The study concludes that TETFund-sponsored training significantly improved academic staff development and effectiveness. Sustained investment, periodic curriculum review and institutional support are recommended to maximize effectiveness.

Keywords: TETFund, Academic Staff Training, Performance, Curriculum Adequacy, Professional Development

1 INTRODUCTION

Human capital development remains one of the most critical determinants of institutional effectiveness and national development. In higher education, academic staff constitute the core drivers of teaching, research, innovation, and community service. Consequently, investment in academic staff capacity development has become a strategic priority for governments and educational institutions worldwide (UNESCO, 2023).

In Nigeria, the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) established the Academic Staff Training and Development (AST&D) intervention programme to improve the quality of teaching, research productivity, and institutional competitiveness through sponsorship of academic staff for postgraduate studies, professional training, conferences, and

research activities both locally and internationally. The intervention seeks to address shortages of highly qualified academic personnel while enhancing institutional capacity for knowledge generation and dissemination (TETFund, 2024).

Despite the substantial investments made through TETFund, concerns remain regarding the effectiveness of training programmes in achieving desired performance outcomes. Questions have been raised regarding the relevance of training curricula, the extent to which acquired competencies translate into improved teaching effectiveness, and the challenges encountered by beneficiaries during their training programmes. Existing studies have reported that the impact of staff development programmes depends not only on knowledge acquisition but also on contextual relevance, institutional support, and opportunities for practical application (Ng *et al.*, 2024; Rahman & Yusuf, 2025).

Furthermore, scholars undergoing advanced training often encounter financial, academic, social, and environmental challenges that necessitate the adoption of coping mechanisms. Effective coping strategies have been associated with improved academic performance, psychological well-being, and successful programme completion (Waterhouse *et al.*, 2024). Understanding these strategies is therefore important for designing interventions that support scholars throughout their training period.

Although several studies have examined TETFund interventions in Nigerian universities, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the combined assessment of training outcomes, curriculum adequacy, performance ratings, and coping strategies among beneficiaries in polytechnics, particularly in North-Central Nigeria. This study therefore assessed the performance of trained academic staff, evaluated the adequacy of training curricula, and examined coping strategies adopted by beneficiaries of TETFund-sponsored training programmes in selected polytechnics within the region.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic staff training and development are central to improving teaching quality, research productivity, curriculum delivery and institutional performance in higher education. In Nigerian tertiary institutions, the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) has become a major intervention agency supporting academic staff capacity building through local and foreign postgraduate training, conferences, research grants and institutional development programmes. Recent studies indicate that staff development programmes improve lecturers' subject knowledge, classroom management, research competence and teaching effectiveness. For example, Zafi (2025) found that TETFund intervention enhanced staff training and development in North-Central Nigerian universities, while Ezekwe (2024) reported a positive relationship between TETFund academic staff training and effective teaching in South-East Nigerian public universities.

Academic staff development is also important because modern higher education requires lecturers to possess digital, pedagogical, research and innovation competencies. Menon (2024) argued that academic development should not only focus on technical training but also on teaching improvement, postgraduate supervision, research productivity and career progression. Similarly, recent evidence shows that professional development strengthens teaching practices and student learning when training is well-designed, context-sensitive and linked to institutional needs.

In relation to local and foreign training, foreign training may expose academic staff to advanced research facilities, international collaboration, improved digital learning methods and broader academic networks. However, local training may be more cost-effective and contextually relevant to national education needs. The effectiveness of either training type depends on programme quality, funding adequacy, institutional support, scholar commitment and reintegration after completion. Studies on TETFund interventions suggest that sponsorship has contributed to staff qualification upgrading, improved teaching capacity and increased research output, although challenges such as delayed funding, inadequate monitoring, poor institutional coordination and return-migration issues may reduce full benefits.

Despite the growing literature on TETFund interventions, many existing studies focus mainly on universities, while less attention has been given to polytechnics, especially in North-Central Nigeria. There is also limited comparative evidence on how local and foreign TETFund-sponsored training differ in relation to teaching effectiveness, research performance, curriculum delivery and institutional development. This gap justifies the present study.

2.1 Theoretical frame work

This study is anchored on Human Capital Theory and supported by the Kirkpatrick Training Evaluation Model.

2.1.1 Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory, associated with Schultz and Becker, explains education and training as investments that improve workers' knowledge, skills, productivity and economic value. In higher education, academic staffs are institutional

human capital; therefore, investment in their postgraduate training, research exposure and professional development is expected to improve teaching quality, research productivity and student learning outcomes. Recent discussions of human capital in higher education emphasize that staff training contributes to institutional competitiveness, innovation and national development.

Applied to this study, TETFund-sponsored training represents an investment in the human capital of academic staff. The expected outcomes include improved pedagogical competence, research capacity, curriculum innovation, digital literacy and institutional performance. Therefore, the theory supports the assumption that well-funded academic staff development should produce measurable improvements in staff performance.

2.1.2 Kirkpatrick Training Evaluation Model

The Kirkpatrick model evaluates training at four levels: reaction, learning, behavior and results. In this study, the model is useful for assessing whether beneficiaries valued the training, acquired new knowledge and skills, applied the training in teaching and research, and contributed to wider institutional outcomes. Although the model has limitations in complex higher education settings, it remains useful for linking training inputs to observable performance outcomes. The model can be adapted as follows: Reaction refers to scholars' satisfaction with local or foreign training. Learning refers to knowledge, research skills and pedagogical competencies acquired.

Behavior refers to application of acquired skills in teaching, supervision, research and curriculum delivery. Results refer to improved academic performance, student engagement, publications, grants and institutional development.

3 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to assess the impact of TETFund-sponsored academic staff training programmes in selected polytechnics in North-Central Nigeria. Data were collected from 187 respondents comprising training beneficiaries and relevant stakeholders using a structured questionnaire. The instrument was validated by experts and administered through institutional contacts. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, and results were presented in tables for interpretation. Ethical standards of voluntary participation, confidentiality, and informed consent were observed throughout the study.

4 RESULTS

Table 1 presents respondents' assessment of the performance of academic staff that benefited from local and foreign TETFund-sponsored training programmes. The findings indicate that both categories of training positively influenced teaching effectiveness, although differences were observed across specific performance indicators.

For the item *"encourage students to find information from websites,"* foreign-trained staff received higher ratings than locally trained staff. Only 6.1% of respondents rated locally trained staff as Very Good, compared with 38.8% for foreign-trained staff.

Similarly, for *"encourages students to use presentation software,"* both locally and foreign-trained staff received favourable ratings, with the majority of respondents rating their performance as Good.

The findings further revealed differences in overall performance ratings. Locally trained staffs were rated more favourably than foreign-trained staff, with 59.2% of respondents rating locally trained staff as Very Good compared to 10.2% for foreign-trained staff.

Overall, the results suggest that foreign-trained staff performed better in technology-related teaching practices, while locally trained staff demonstrated stronger overall teaching performance.

Table 2 presents respondents' assessment of the adequacy of curricula utilized in TETFund-sponsored academic staff training programmes across beneficiaries in selected polytechnics in North-Central Nigeria. The findings indicate that respondents generally perceived the curricula as adequate for achieving the objectives of academic staff development.

Overall, the majority of respondents rated the curriculum as Adequate (36.4%), followed by Fair (22.5%) and Very Adequate (21.9%). In contrast, 18.2% and 1.1% of respondents rated the curriculum as Inadequate and Very Inadequate, respectively. These results indicate that more than half of the respondents viewed the curriculum positively.

Institutional variations were observed in the responses. Federal Polytechnic Nasarawa recorded the highest number of responses (53; 28.3% of the total sample), with the majority rating the curriculum as Adequate or Very Adequate. Similarly, Federal Polytechnic Bida recorded substantial positive ratings, with 17 respondents indicating Adequate and 12 indicating Very Adequate. Across the institutions surveyed, positive ratings generally exceeded negative ratings, suggesting a favourable assessment of curriculum adequacy.

Table 3 presents the coping strategies adopted by beneficiaries of TETFund-sponsored academic staff training programmes across different programme categories. The findings reveal that academic preparation was the most frequently adopted coping strategy, accounting for 149 responses (59.8%) of the total responses. Support networks constituted the second most utilized strategy, with 64 responses (25.7%). Safety measures and financial planning accounted for 16 (6.4%) and 14 (5.6%) responses, respectively, while employment opportunities recorded the lowest frequency with only 6 responses (2.4%).

Table 1: Summary of Performance Ratings

S/N	Performance Item	Nature	Fair	Good	Very Good	Total Responses
1	Encourages students to find information from websites	Local	25	21	3	49
		Foreign	5	25	19	49
2	Encourages students to use presentation software	Local	4	31	14	49
		Foreign	5	31	13	49
3	General performance assessment	Local	6	14	29	49
		Foreign	16	28	5	49

Survey study, March 2025

Table 2: Summary of Curriculum Ratings

Institution	Very Inadequate	Inadequate	Fair	Adequate	Very Adequate	Total Responses	N / Table Total
Benue State Polytechnic, Ugbokolo	0 (0.214)	4 (0.036)	4 (0.054)	8 (0.073)	4 (0.034)	20	0.107
Federal Polytechnic, Bida	0 (0.481)	7 (0.171)	9 (0.121)	17 (0.025)	12 (0.461)	45	0.241
Federal Polytechnic, Nasarawa	0 (0.567)	10 (0.014)	12 (0.001)	17 (0.268)	14 (0.487)	53	0.283
Federal Polytechnic, Idah	0 (0.193)	4 (0.162)	7 (2.163)	6 (0.045)	1 (2.200)	18	0.096
Federal Polytechnic, Offa	2 (6.504)	7 (0.011)	8 (0.012)	12 (0.157)	8 (0.002)	37	0.198
Plateau State Polytechnic, BarkinLadi	0 (0.150)	2 (0.117)	2 (0.416)	8 (1.662)	2 (0.373)	14	0.075
Total	2 (0.011)	34 (0.182)	42 (0.225)	68 (0.364)	41 (0.219)	187	1.000

Survey study, March 2025

Across programme categories, PGD scholars recorded the highest number of responses (85; 34.1%), followed by Master's degree scholars (56; 22.5%), Doctorate degree scholars (50; 20.1%), Post-doctorate scholars (46; 18.5%), and other programme categories (12; 4.8%). The results generally indicate that respondents relied more on academic and

social support strategies than on financial or employment-related approaches in managing the challenges associated with their training programmes.

Table 3: Summary of Coping Strategies by Program Type

Strategy	PGD	Master's Degree	Doctorate Degree	Post-Doctorate Degree	Others	Total (N)	N / Table Total
Financial Planning	6 (0.312)	7 (4.711)	0 (2.811)	0 (2.586)	1 (0.157)	14	0.056
Academic Preparation	61 (2.020)	38 (0.602)	18 (4.749)	22 (1.109)	10 (1.107)	149	0.598
Support Networks	10 (6.425)	7 (3.798)	25 (11.484)	22 (8.759)	0 (3.084)	64	0.257
Employment Opportunities	1 (0.536)	0 (1.349)	5 (11.955)	0 (1.108)	0 (0.289)	6	0.024
Safety Measures	7 (0.433)	4 (0.045)	2 (0.458)	2 (0.309)	1 (0.068)	16	0.064
Total Responses	85 (0.341)	56 (0.225)	50 (0.201)	46 (0.185)	12 (0.048)	249	1.000

Survey study, March 2025

5 DISCUSSION

The higher ratings recorded (Table 1) for foreign-trained staff in encouraging students to obtain information from websites may be attributed to greater exposure to digital technologies, online learning platforms, and global best practices in teaching and learning. International training programmes often emphasize the integration of information and communication technologies into instructional delivery. This finding agrees with Kayyali (2024), who reported that digital literacy competencies acquired through advanced training enhance educators' ability to promote independent learning and information-seeking behaviour among students. Similarly, Barrios-del-Ángel et al. (2026) found that lecturers with strong digital competencies are more likely to integrate web-based learning resources into classroom instruction.

The favourable ratings received by both locally and foreign-trained staff in encouraging students to use presentation software indicate that both forms of training contribute to the adoption of instructional technologies. Effective use of presentation tools has been associated with improved classroom interaction, student engagement, and learning outcomes. Mardiana et al. (2024) observed that lecturers with higher digital literacy skills are more effective in utilizing educational technologies to support teaching, while Zhang (2025) reported that proficiency in digital teaching tools positively influences instructional effectiveness.

The superior overall performance ratings recorded for locally trained staff suggest that local training programmes may be more closely aligned with the realities and challenges of the Nigerian tertiary education system. Training that reflects local institutional needs is often easier to apply in practice, thereby enhancing teaching effectiveness. This finding supports the assertion of Ng et al. (2024) that the effectiveness of staff development programmes depends on the extent to which acquired knowledge and skills can be applied within the participants' work environment. Rahman and Yusuf (2025) further emphasized that organizational support and contextual relevance significantly influence the successful transfer of training outcomes into workplace performance.

The findings therefore indicate that foreign training programmes are particularly effective in strengthening digital literacy and technology integration, whereas local training programmes appear to contribute more directly to overall teaching effectiveness. This suggests that a balanced combination of local and international staff development opportunities may provide the most effective strategy for enhancing academic staff performance and improving the quality of higher education.

The predominance of Adequate and Very Adequate ratings (Table 2) suggests that the curricula utilized in TETFund-sponsored training programmes were generally considered suitable for enhancing academic staff competencies and achieving the objectives of staff development. The positive assessment may be attributed to the relevance of the curriculum content, its alignment with contemporary academic requirements, and its capacity to strengthen teaching, research, and professional skills. This finding supports the position of UNESCO (2023), which emphasized that effective

professional development curricula should align with institutional goals, emerging knowledge demands, and workplace competencies.

The positive ratings recorded in institutions such as Federal Polytechnic Nasarawa and Federal Polytechnic Bida further indicate that beneficiaries perceived the curriculum as sufficiently robust to support academic and professional growth. The finding agrees with Osiesi (2025), who reported that well-structured staff development curricula contribute significantly to improved teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and institutional performance.

The relatively low proportion of respondents who rated the curriculum as Inadequate or Very Inadequate suggests that only a small number of participants perceived gaps in curriculum content or delivery. Such perceptions may reflect differences in disciplinary needs, institutional expectations, or individual training experiences. Nevertheless, the overall positive evaluation indicates that the curriculum largely met participants' expectations and training requirements.

According to OECD (2023), training curricula that integrate disciplinary knowledge, research competencies, practical applications, and emerging professional skills are more likely to produce meaningful learning outcomes and sustainable capacity development. The findings of this study therefore suggest that the TETFund-sponsored training curriculum has been largely effective in supporting academic staff development across the selected polytechnics.

Overall, the results underscore the importance of maintaining curriculum relevance through periodic review and updating to reflect evolving academic, technological, and professional demands. Continuous curriculum improvement will ensure that future beneficiaries acquire the competencies required to enhance teaching quality, research productivity, and institutional development.

The predominance of academic preparation (Table 3) as the principal coping strategy suggests that scholars relied heavily on intensive study habits, research preparation, academic planning, and self-discipline to navigate the demands of their training programmes. This finding highlights the importance of self-regulated learning and academic resilience in postgraduate education. The result agrees with Waterhouse et al. (2024), who reported that postgraduate students commonly adopt study-oriented and academically focused coping mechanisms to manage educational stress and improve learning outcomes.

Support networks emerged as the second most utilized coping strategy, indicating the important role of supervisors, colleagues, family members, and institutional support systems in facilitating academic success. Strong social support has been shown to enhance psychological well-being, reduce stress, and improve academic adjustment among scholars. This finding corroborates the report of Joseph and Thomas (2023), who found that supportive academic and social environments significantly improve students' capacity to adapt to the challenges of advanced studies.

The relatively low utilization of safety measures suggests that many respondents operated within environments perceived as relatively secure. Nevertheless, safety awareness remains important, particularly for scholars studying outside their familiar environments. Smith et al. (2023) noted that personal security and environmental safety contribute positively to students' psychological comfort and academic concentration.

Financial planning accounted for a relatively small proportion of responses, although its importance remains significant in managing scholarship resources and reducing financial stress. The finding supports the observations of Ezekwe et al. (2023), who identified financial challenges and delays in sponsorship disbursement as factors affecting the academic progress of beneficiaries of staff development programmes.

Employment opportunities were the least utilized coping strategy, suggesting that most scholars devoted their attention to academic activities rather than income-generating engagements. The low utilization may be attributed to the intensive nature of postgraduate studies and institutional regulations that limit participation in full-time employment during sponsored programmes. However, the slightly higher occurrence among doctoral scholars may reflect involvement in research assistantships, consultancy services, and academic collaborations. This observation is consistent with Russell et al. (2024), who reported that some postgraduate students engage in limited academic employment primarily to supplement their professional experience and financial resources.

The higher number of responses recorded among PGD and Master's degree scholars may reflect their greater need for academic adaptation and adjustment compared with doctoral and post-doctoral scholars, who often possess more advanced research experience and stronger academic coping capacities. Overall, the findings demonstrate that beneficiaries relied predominantly on academic and social coping mechanisms rather than economic or employment-based strategies. This underscores the need for institutions and sponsorship agencies to strengthen academic mentoring programmes, counseling services, peer-support systems, and timely financial assistance to enhance scholars' well-being and training outcomes.

Implications for academic development practice

The findings imply that TETFund Academic Staff Training and Development should be viewed as a structured academic development intervention rather than only a sponsorship programme. This is consistent with Gibbs and Coffey (2004), who reported that training of university teachers, improved teaching skills, approaches to teaching and students' approaches to learning.

The stronger digital competence of foreign-trained beneficiaries suggests the need to strengthen technology-enhanced learning in local training programmes. This supports Boud and Brew (2013), who argued that academic development should be embedded in everyday academic practice and linked to professional work.

The higher overall performance of locally trained beneficiaries indicates that academic development programmes should be context-sensitive. Training should reflect local institutional realities, students' learning needs and the specific demands of Nigerian polytechnics.

The finding that 58.3% of respondents rated the curriculum as adequate or very adequate implies that periodic curriculum review is necessary. Such review should include digital pedagogy, student-centred learning, research supervision, innovation, entrepreneurship and community engagement.

The dominance of academic preparation and support networks as coping strategies shows that institutions should provide mentoring, peer support, pre-departure orientation and post-training monitoring. This agrees with Roxå and Mårtensson (2015), who emphasized the importance of academic microcultures and informal learning networks in shaping teaching and professional practice.

6 CONCLUSION

The study established that TETFund-sponsored training programmes have positively contributed to the professional development and performance of academic staff in selected polytechnics in North-Central Nigeria. Foreign training enhanced digital literacy and technology integration, while local training demonstrated greater relevance to institutional needs and overall teaching effectiveness. The curriculum was generally considered adequate, and scholars predominantly relied on academic preparation and support networks to overcome training-related challenges. Continuous investment in staff development, curriculum improvement, and institutional support mechanisms is essential for sustaining the benefits of the programme.

STATEMENTS ON COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

Acknowledgments

The authors acknowledge TETFund and Mr. Aye Gabriel for their contributions towards successful completion and publication of the research.

Funding Source

This research was funded through the Institution-Based Research (IBR) Intervention of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), Nigeria, and implemented through the Directorate of Research and Development, Federal Polytechnic Idah.

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this research.

Statement of ethical approval

The study complied with all relevant research ethics requirements and obtained the necessary ethical approvals. The corresponding reference numbers are Ref. **No.** TETF/DR&D/CE/POLY/IDAH/IBR/2025/VOL.I and Ref. **No.** FPI/REC/ADM. 306/55/ 2026

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