
Technical Education and Youths Unemployment in Bayelsa State

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to examine the concept of technical education, youths unemployment, causes and consequences. The descriptive survey research design was used in the study. The population for the study comprises of 150 professionals in Bayelsa State. Two research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance. No sampling technique was used because the whole population of the study was used. A questionnaire titled: Technical Education and Youths Unemployment (TEAYU) was used for data collection. The instrument was face-validated by three experts and the internal consistency determined using Cronbach Alpha procedure which yield a reliability co-efficient of 0.76. The data collected were analysed using mean, standard deviation and Chi-square statistics. The findings reveal among others that: Nigeria economy cannot develop until apprenticeship is encouraged among the youths through technical education in the school. Based on these findings the study among others recommended that apprenticeship should be encourage among youths as a pathway for alleviating poverty.

KEYWORDS: Technical Education, Youth, Unemployment

Introduction

Unemployment is one of the most serious problems facing Nigeria like many other countries in the world. Nigeria is becoming a predominantly youth society with high rate of unemployment. The development of youth is critical to economic survival and vibrancy of any nation. In order for a country to achieve her development aspiration, the youths need to have access to education that will enable them to enhance their standard of living and gain competitive skills that will be in high demand in the labour market. The changing nature of work today is placing increased pressure on the youths to acquire technical education skills. With the youths among the big losers of the recent economic crisis, technical education is often seen as the silver bullet to the problem of youth joblessness.

It is a fact that no country can develop without quality technical education (Ajaegbu, 2012). The development of any nation is critical to the economic survival and vibrancy of that nation. This holds particularly true for developing nation like Nigeria who is still grappling with chronic factors like unemployment and underemployment among the youths which have kept her in the perpetual bondage of economic frustration. The youth needs exposure in practical work experience in order to be proficient in their chosen career and be useful to them and contribute to

economic growth. Technical education affords individual the chance to acquire practical knowledge and requisite skill training needed in the job market for immediate self-employment (Ajaegbu, 2012). Adebambo (2007) stated that youth participation in technical education plays an instrumental role in the technological advancement and economic sustainability of many nations. Despite its contributions, Nigeria as a nation appears not to have given this aspect of education the attention it desires. This is viewed as one of the reasons for the nation's under-development. Technical education can open doors for economic and socially rewarding jobs and can help the development of small informal sectors business that could cater for youth unemployment and lead to economic development of a nation. Developing job related competencies among the youth is recognized as critical to progress in solving youth unemployment and economic development.

Technical education is that aspect of education that exposes the learner to acquisition of demonstrable skills that could be transformed into economic benefits (Akerere, 2007). According to Dike(2009), Technical education is that aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. It is a planned program of courses and learning experiences that begins with exploration of career options, supports basic academic and life skills, and enables achievement of high academic standards, leadership, preparation for industry-defined work, and advanced and continuing education (Maclean and Wilson, 2009). The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) sees Technical education as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life'. Technical education can therefore be seen as the formal training of persons to become technicians in different occupations. Thus any education that is geared towards teaching technical skills and attitudes suitable to such skills can be regarded as technical education.

The National Policy also enumerated the objectives of technical education in Nigeria as follows:

- a. To provide trained manpower in applied science, technology and commerce particularly at sub-professional grades;
- b. To provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commerce and economic development;
- c. To provide people who can apply specific knowledge to the improvement and solution of environmental problems for the use and convenience of man;
- d. To give an introduction of professional studies in engineering and other technologies;
- e. To give training and impart the skill leading to the production of craftsmen, technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant and
- f. To enable our young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.

The above goals are intended to make technical education more practical, functional and job oriented. If all these goals were to be properly implemented, they could bring about the desired technological development.

The need to link training in Technical education to employment either self or paid employment is at the base of all the best practices and approaches observed throughout the world. One of the most significant aspects of Technical education is its inclination towards the world of work and the emphasis of the curriculum on the acquisition of employable skills (Anyadike, 2012). Technical education delivery systems are therefore; well placed to train the skilled workforces that the nation needs to create employment for the youths and emerge out of poverty.

Concept of Youth Unemployment

Unemployment is a very complex phenomenon. It is quite very simple to notice but hard to define. Generally, unemployment may imply lack of employment. Thus, anyone who is able to work and above certain age limit and is unoccupied may be considered as being unemployed for that period. Normally, the term unemployment implies a condition of joblessness. Unemployment refers to a phenomenon where people who are willing and capable of working are unable to find suitable paid work.

The concept unemployment has been defined as a condition in which people who are willing to work at the normal wage rate are unable to find jobs (Akintoye, 2008). It is one of the problems which every responsible government is expected to check and regulate. The higher the unemployment level in an economy the higher would be the poverty level and associated welfare challenges. Unemployment is one of the developmental problems that face most developing economy in the 21st century; Nigeria is not an exception from this phenomenon. In recent times, the definition of unemployment is said to be more encompassing, the unemployed is a member of the economically energetic population, who are without work but available and seeking for work, including people who have lost their jobs and those who have willingly left work. (Akintoye, 2008).

Unemployment is a global trend, but occurs mostly in developing countries of the world, with attendant social, economic, political, and psychological implications. Therefore, massive youth unemployment in any country is a signal of far more complicated problems (Okafor, 2011). Unemployment in Nigeria can be classified into two categories: the older unemployed who lost their jobs as a result of retrenchment, redundancy or bankruptcy; and the younger unemployed, most of who have never being employed (Oyebade, 2013).

Youth unemployment, could be termed as numerous youths from diverse background, willing and able to work, but cannot find any. When the supply of labor surpasses the demand for labour, it results to joblessness and unemployment. Given the lack of sufficient employment opportunities in the formal sector, youths may be forced to engage in casual work and other unorthodox sources of livelihood, thus leading to underemployment. Youth unemployment has been increasing because most youths lack relevant marketable skills.

Causes of Youth Unemployment

Youth unemployment has been skyrocketing in Nigeria. The principal causes of youth unemployment have been classified by several scholars (Alanana, 2003;Ayinde, 2008;Anyadike,

Ukah and Emeh, 2012). The increase in population is one of the causes of unemployment in Nigeria; 140,431,790 as per 2006 census and is projected to be over 180 million by 2020 if the annual growth rate of 3.2% continues. While the population increases, the number of industries growth is dwindling and if nothing serious is done, both population and unemployment will continue to rise.

The youths lack the relevant skills required by employers' as well as for self-employment. The curriculum in our technical education institutions is said to be obsolete and the graduates of such institutions are deficient in terms of employability skills. Some scholars and commentators have maintained that as far as the formal sector is concerned, the average Nigeria graduate is not employable and, therefore, does not possess the skills required by the employers of labor for a formal employment. Often, this is attributed to the Nigeria's education system, with its liberal bias. Education is essentially an instrument of excellence for national stability and development. Education is a dynamic process that changes with the needs and aspirations of the society. For education to be functional there must be constant and careful evaluation and re-evaluation of the educational system. Emaikwu (2012) affirms that evaluation is a systematic process of judging the worth, desirability, effectiveness, or adequacy of something according to definite criteria and purpose. The course contents of most educational institutions in Nigeria lack contents that would enable graduates to acquire technical as well as entrepreneurial skills to become job creators rather than job seekers (Okafor, 2011). Institutions of higher learning in Nigeria have concentrated more on theoretical and abstract instructional deliveries, focusing only on cognitive development and consequently turning out no entrepreneurial skilled graduates into labour markets.

Another factor responsible for unemployment in Nigeria is the lack of employable skills due to inappropriate school curriculum which has contributed to the rising youth unemployment. Analysis has argued that in Nigeria generally, the skills that job seekers possess do not match with the needs and demands of employers (Mcgrath, 2011). According to him, the educational system in Nigeria has its liberal bias which indeed, over supplies the labour market with graduates who do not possess the skills required by employers. Many graduates in Nigeria lack entrepreneurial skills to facilitate self-employment.

The cause of youth unemployment is also as a result of public negative attitude towards technical education as education for the low status (Nwokomah, 2005). This stems from the low image of 'blue-collar' jobs which technical education offers. Before and after independence, the Nigerian education system prepared students for basic "white collar" jobs. Over time, the paucity of jobs led to high unemployment rate and also a high level of poverty in the society (Moja, 2000; Ebong and Leigha, 2006). The Nigerian society wrongly believes that those who are not academically inclined study technical education subjects. It is because of this reason that most parents are not willing to encourage their wards to study technical education subjects. The fact remains that most parents are apt to want an academic education for their children, whether or not graduates increasingly finds it difficult to get jobs or not. They do not want their children to go to schools for the purpose of becoming bricklayers, carpenters, mechanics (Nwokomah, 2005). The urge for certificates and degrees in preference to technical vocational skills stems from the fact that when it comes to political appointments, leadership positions and decision making, graduates with degree certificates in different fields are favoured most than their counterparts with technical vocational skills.

Consequences of Youth Unemployment

Unemployment of youths has several implications; it has adverse psychological, social, occupational and financial consequences on them (Shadare and Tunde, 2012). Unemployment has serious impacts both on their present living conditions and their attitude in the future and on the society in which they are supposed to be part. Youth unemployment literally devastates them morally and ruptures the ties and relationship they form.

Unemployment among youth serves as trigger to violent conflicts and a threat to national security. The exclusion of large population of youth either graduates or secondary school leavers, skilled and unskilled from attaining the level of development increase the risks of violence and insecurity. These youths may become viable tools for exploitation, hired as political thugs or militia as well as ethno-religious crusaders against perceived injustice. Gofwan, Goshi and Dogara(2015), stressed that a good number of graduates in Nigeria are roaming the street. According to them, these youths have become problem to themselves and everybody in the society. They also maintain that Nigerians abroad feel extremely sad and restless for what unemployment and other socio economic vices have turned Nigeria into. To Egunjobi (2007), many social problems such as prostitution, robbery, alcoholism, domestic violence, social, religious and civil unrest and suicide to mention but few, become more severe in times of high unemployment. This contributes threats to national security and development because youths are not positively engaged in the productive process through suitable and adequate employment so as to become assets for national security and development, their energies and potentials are not harnessed to enhance national security and to positively contribute to socio-economic development.

Unemployment have also multiplied the number of aggrieved youths and resulted in the emergence of area boys' and Almajiris who target the very society that alienated them.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria people go to school with the belief that education will enable them participate in the society. But from the look of things, full participation in Nigerian society requires technical education at all levels of our educational system, which will recognize the different skills and abilities and give an equal opportunity to all students to prepare for work.

Overtime, there has been a dwindling level of employment in the country and among the youth specifically. It has been noted that technical education has not been embraced by the youths, and this is as a result of one problem or the other. Youth employment can be increased throughout the country, but some factors will militate against attaining it most especially because there are a lot of graduates and under-graduates in the streets seeking for jobs without relevance skills and trainings.

However, very little can be said to have been done in terms of research on youth employment development and self-reliance as it is evident in some researches. Little analysis has been done on the potential benefits of technical education and this has not been enough to help improve the rate of employment among youths in the society.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine Technical Education and youth unemployment. Specifically, the study sought to:

- 1) determine the challenges of Technical Education
- 2) determine the prospects of Technical Education

Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated to guide the study:

- a. What are the challenges of technical education?
- b. What are the prospects of technical education?

Null Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the responses of professionals on the challenges of technical education

HO₂: There is no significant difference in the responses of professionals on the prospects of technical education.

Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study, and was carried out in Bayelsa State. The population for the study consisted of 150 professionals. The sample also consisted of all the 150 professionals in the State. The whole population was used for the study because of the small number. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. The instrument was face validated by three experts, two in the departments of Industrial Technology and one in Science Education. Cronbach Alpha reliability co-efficient method was used to determine the reliability estimate of the instrument. The internal consistency was obtained and the index was found to be 0.76. Mean, standard deviation and chi-square was used to analyze the data collected

Results

The results are presented in tables based on the research questions and hypotheses.

Research Question One

What are the challenges of technical education?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses of Professionals on Challenges of Technical Education

S/N	Items	N	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Lack of financial support	150	3.35	0.69	Agree
2	Lack of facilities	150	3.27	0.88	Agree
3	Lack of experts in the area	150	3.13	0.77	Agree
4	Lack of career guidance	150	2.73	0.97	Agree
5	Lack of employment security	150	2.43	0.91	Disagree
	Grand Mean	150	2.98	0.39	Agree

As shown in table 1, the respondents agree to all the items except lack of employment security. It can be inferred from the results that the respondents agreed to lack of financial support, lack of facilities, lack of experts in the area, lack of career guidance and disagree on lack of employment security.

Research Question Two

What are the prospects of technical education?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses of Professionals on Prospects of Technical Education

S/N	Items	N	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
6	Serves as a means of preparing for occupational fields	150	2.69	0.98	Agree
7	Serves as an integral part of general education	150	2.25	1.02	Disagree
8	Serves as an aspect of lifelong learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship	150	2.65	1.21	Agree
9	Serves as an instrument for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development	150	3.67	0.47	Agree
10	Serves as a method of facilitating poverty alleviation	150	3.23	0.90	Agree
	Grand Mean	150	2.90	0.56	Agree

As shown in table 2, the respondents agree to all the items except serves as an integral part of general education. It can be inferred from the results that the respondents agreed to serves as a means of preparing for occupational fields, serves as an aspect of lifelong learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship, serves as an instrument for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development, serves as a method of facilitating poverty alleviation and disagree on serves as an integral part of general education

Discussion of Findings

The findings on the challenges of technical education indicated a significant difference. The findings could be attributed to the fact that the sector is faced with lack of inadequate facilities, lack of experts in the area, lack of career guidance and disagree on lack of employment security and financial constraints. This finding of the study is in line with that of Akaninwor (2010), who opined that technological backwardness in the country could be traced to lack of infrastructure and equipment for technical education.

The findings on the prospects of technical education indicated a significant difference. The findings could be attributed to the fact that technical education serves as a means of preparing individuals for occupational fields, lifelong learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship and serves as a method of facilitating poverty alleviation. The finding of the study is in line with that of Ajaegbu (2012), and opined that technical education is a potent means for fast-tracking technological progress, citizens' capacities, economic growth and national development.

Conclusion

There is a high level of youth unemployment in Bayelsa State and Nigeria as a whole. According to research findings and statistical data, despite the initiatives of the government in coming up with several programmes to reduce the level of youth unemployment which has failed to yield the desired result. In order to eradicate or reduce the level of unemployment in Nigeria greater emphasis must be placed on technical education. No meaningful youth employment programme can be achieved without efficient and effective technical education program. The promotion of Technical Education program will lead to wealth creation, employment generation and sustainable livelihood in Bayelsa State

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in order to mitigate or reduce the level of youth unemployment in Nigeria through technical education:

- 1) Bayelsa State government should partner with international agencies, NGOs, and foundations in order to ensure the goals and potentials of Nigerians are realized using technical education for job and employment creation.
- 2) There should be linkage between technical education institutions and industries by using some of the experienced supervisors as teachers. The industry based training should be financed and organized and delivered by public entities which is a private sector driven. The government should only come in when it comes to regulatory aspect of the training, for example to check the indiscriminate acts of some technical education providers.
- 3) The society needs re-orientation in order to change their wrong perception about technical education. In advanced nations, individuals with technical skills and experience in relevant fields are highly respected.

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