

Technical and Vocational Education: A Panacea for Mitigating Youth Unemployment

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Abstract

This research paper seeks to explore the potential of technical and vocational education (TVE) as a means of reducing the endemic unemployment problem in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The study examined the historical context of TVE in the modern-day labour market and the challenges that exist in accessing and implementing TVE programmes. A qualitative research design was employed for this study, using interviews and document reviews as the primary data collection methods. The findings of the study highlighted the repositioning of TVE as a panacea to unemployment in Ekiti State, based on the historical context of the labour market and the challenges that hinder access and implementation of TVE programmes. This repositioning is seen as a way to increase the employability of the youths in Ekiti State and reduce the percentage of the unemployed population. The paper concludes by highlighting the importance of the full implementation of TVE programmes in the state, and how this can be achieved through the collaboration of the government, industry, and educational institutions to create a conducive environment for the effective utilization of TVE programmes. In addition, the paper suggests that the government should provide adequate resources and incentives to aid the implementation of TVET programmes.

Keywords: Technical, Vocational Education, Repositioning, Eradication, Unemployment

Introduction

Vocational and technical education can be described as any form of education whose purpose is to prepare a person(s) for employment in occupations or groups of occupations. Throughout the country, there is a growing awareness of the need for vocational and technical education. This improvement in societal perception and interest has culminated in demands for changes in content, organization, and delivery of vocational and technical curricula to reflect a new emphasis on technology. Vocational and technical education is aimed at developing not only practical skills but also attitudes and habits that make the recipient a creative, innovative, and resourceful person [1], [2].

[3] submitted that technical and vocational education remains the only imperative for economic development but all to no avail. He appraised different effects and policies towards economic development but all to no avail. He, however, identified some reasons for the desultory performance including inadequate infrastructure and facilities, a serious dearth of academic staff with cognate practical experience relevant to the training of students to meet the contemporary needs of industry and employers, wide disconnection between institutions and industry, weak support by industries to institutions' programmes, inadequate budgetary provision for TVET, absence of a national qualifications framework and inadequate regulatory and monitoring activities among others. He however proffered some coping measures which included redefinition of the status of

occupational training, rule of law, basic and secondary education, restructuring of tertiary education, and the need for improved budgetary allocation to the TVET in Nigeria ([4]

According to [5], unemployment has led to a tremendous increase in criminal activities and social vices in Nigeria. Also, unemployment and poverty are potential sources of political Instability in Nigeria for disenchanted, disgruntled, and revolutionary elements in the society. In another perspective, the unemployment rate in Nigeria increased to 23.90 percent in 2011 from 21.10 as reported by the National Bureau of Statistics. From 2006 until 2011, Nigeria's unemployment rate averaged 14.6 percent reaching an all-time high of 23.9 percent in December 2006. In Nigeria, the employment rate measures the number of people's activity looking force [6][7]–[9].

Consequent to the above, successive governments had made frantic efforts to institute policies and programmes towards ameliorating if not eradicating unemployment in Nigeria all to no avail. Hence, this paper is presented to look into repositioning technical and vocational education as a panacea to the unemployment saga in Nigeria.

The concept of vocational and technical education

Vocational and technical education is the acquisition of skills and techniques in a chosen occupation or profession to enable an individual to earn a living. The national policy on education [10] viewed vocational education as training or retraining programs, which are given in schools or classes under public supervision and control. Vocational education is a system of education that is predicated upon the teaching of skills and also demands the professional or expert use of hands. The teaching of skills in the formal sector existed in 2 types of institutions initially established in Nigeria, these are technical colleges and trade centers. Vocational and technical education is a continuous process of adaption of the minimum knowledge required.

(Lin, 2019; Olojuolawe, Fadila and Abdul Latif, 2019) states that vocational and technical education is result-oriented. It brings about technological advancement and aims to fit new manpower for those already qualified so that they can keep up with modern working methods.

Technical and vocational education (TVE) is that aspect of education that exposes the learner to the acquisition of demonstrable skills that could be transformed into economic benefits [5], [13]–[16][5], [13]–[16]. According to [2][2] TVE is that aspect of education that 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 the exploration of career options, supports basic academic and life skills, and enables the achievement of high academic standards, leadership, preparation for industry-defined work, and advanced and continuing education [17][17]. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) in the national policy on education describes TVE as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sector of economic and social life vocation and technical education can therefore be seen as the formal training of person to become technical skills and attitude suitable of such skills can be regarded as technical education [10][10]. The primary objective of all TVE programs is the acquisition of skills and attitudes for occupation or professional area the need to link training in TVE 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 TVE is its inclination toward the world of work and the emphasis of the curriculum on the acquisition of employable skills TVE delivery systems are therefore well placed to train the skilled workforce.

Concept of unemployment

Unemployment is a very complex phenomenon. It is quite very simple to notice but hard to define generally, Unemployment may imply a lack of employment. Thus, anyone who can work and is above a certain age limit and is unoccupied may be considered as beginning 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 [18][18]

The concept of 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. It is one of the problems that every responsible government is expected to check and regulate. The higher the poverty level and associated welfare challenges.

Unemployment is one of the development problems that face most developing economies in the 21st century [19][19]. Nigeria is not exempted 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 work, including people who have lost their jobs and those who have willingly left work [4], [19]–[22][4], [19]–[22]

Unemployment is a global trend, but occur mostly in developing countries of the world, with attendant social, economic political, and psychological implication therefore, massive youth unemployment in any country is a signal of a far more complicated problem [23][23]. Unemployment in Nigeria can be classified

Youth unemployment could be termed as numerous youth from diverse backgrounds willing and able to work, but cannot find any labour, it results in 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, [3][3].

Technical and Vocational Education and Training as a Panacea for Unemployment Eradication in Ekiti State

So far so good, it has been established that unemployment especially among the youths is gradually becoming a perennial problem in Ekiti state. Also, the essence of TVET can be summarized as any education or/and training that tends toward skills acquisition and entrepreneurship. What seems to be the problem in this respect in Ekiti state is that appropriate machinery is not put in place to ensure skill acquisition from the trainees and students on one side and quality skill disposal by the lecturer or teachers from the other side, in line with the maximum “Nemodat quod non-habit-meaning no one can give out what he does not possess. It has been observed that poor remuneration and lack of incentives on the side of the trainers and lecturers/teachers seem to cause discouragement in technical and vocational Education and Training [24][24].

A high level of unemployment and underemployment is one of the critical socio-economic problems facing Ekiti State. While the labour force grows, with an increasing proportion of youth, employment growth is insufficient to absorb labour market entrants. As a result, youth are especially affected by unemployment. Moreover, youths are more likely to be employed in jobs of low quality, working long hours for low wages, engaging in dangerous work, or receiving only short-term and/or informal employment arrangements. The inadequate employment situation of youth has several socio-economic, political, and moral consequences. This has given rise to a high level of poverty in Nigeria [25][25].

In most developing countries like Nigeria, governments and policymakers are increasingly finding it difficult to deal successfully with the problem of youth unemployment. This high level of unemployment can be attributed to a lack of adequate provision for job creation in the development plans, the ever-expanding educational growth, and a desperate desire on the part of the youth to acquire university education irrespective of course and course content. As a result, the number of skills acquired from the university appears dysfunctional and irrelevant (Okafor, 2011).

It is believed, that if the curriculum in the Nigerian educational system is geared toward vocational and technical training, it would go a long way in eradicating or at least alleviating among the youths. As it being done in other developing economies, especially in Asia is already mentioned, TVE should be introduced right from primary four down to secondary and tertiary institutions. There needs to be a clear distinction between conventional and specialized Universities like the University of Technology. For instance, conventional Universities are expected to specialize in research and science among others while the specialized ones should concentrate on skill acquisition and entrepreneurship (Industrialization) [26][26].

Essentially, a large number of students in polytechnics should come from technical colleges while the polytechnic product should form the larger population of universities of technology. Not less than 80% of the lecturers in the polytechnic, University of Technology, and NCE-Technical should make it a primary condition for promotion. Lecturers should be sponsored by foreign training and be made to come back to the country to display their skills. Ekiti State indeed can be transformed into a manufacturing nation through TVET.

Vocational and technical education has various dimensions with the capabilities to resolve the endemic unemployment issues confronting the nation if it receives the deserved attention [27], [28][27], [28]. The vocational areas are; Pre-Vocational Electives (Junior Secondary School (JSS) Level) 1. Agricultural Science 2. Business Studies 3. Home Economics 4. Local Crafts 5. Computer Education 6. Fine Arts (Culture and Creative Arts) 7. Music 8. Introductory Technology 5.2 Vocational Education Electives (Senior Secondary School (SSS) Level) 1. Agricultural Science 2. Applied Electricity 3. Book-keeping and Accounting 4. Building Construction 5. Auto Mechanics 6. Commerce 7. Computer Education 8. Electronics 9. Clothing and Textiles 10. Food and Nutrition 11. Home Management 12. Metal Work 13. Technical Drawing 14. Wood Work 15. Shorthand 16. Typewriting 17 Fine Arts [4], [29]–[34][4], [29]–[34].

The banishment of unemployment in Ekiti state may involve a change in industrial technique and policy regarding seasonal unemployment. Production techniques should suit the needs and means of the state. Labour inventive technology must be encouraged in place of capital-intensive technology. Seasonal unemployment is found in the agriculture sector and agro-based industries [35][35]. The measures to overcome this include;

- a) Agriculture Should have multiple cropping,
- b) Plantations, husbandry should be encouraged,
- c) Cottage industries should be encouraged.
 - i. Change in the education system: Educational patterns should be completely changed. Students who have a liking for higher studies should be admitted to colleges and universities. Emphasis should be given to vocational education. Qualified engineers should start their small units.
 - ii. Expansion of Employment exchanges: More employment exchanges should be opened. Information regarding employment opportunities should be given to people.

- iii. More assistance to self-employed people: More people in India are self-employed. They are engaged in agriculture, trade, cottage, small-scale industries, etc. These persons should be helped financially, providing raw materials and technical training.
- iv. Full and more productive employment: The main objective of the country's employment policy should be to increase employment opportunities and the productivity of labour. Govt. should adopt a policy that employs all people.
 - v. Increase in production: To increase employment, it is essential to increase production in the agriculture and industrial sectors. Development of small and cottage industries should be encouraged.
 - vi. More importance to employment programs: In five-year plans, more importance should be given to employment. Programmes like irrigation, and rural electrification can provide better employment to people.
 - vii. High rate of capital formation: The rate of capital formation in the country should be accelerated. Capital formation should be particularly encouraged in such activities that generate greater employment opportunities. The capital-output ratio should be kept low.
- viii. Industries in the co-operative sector: Industries in the co-operative sector should be encouraged. Kerala Govt. set up a textile mill covering 600 unemployed persons on a cooperative basis. This is a novel approach to fighting against unemployment. Different State Govt. should take necessary steps in this direction.
- ix. Decentralization of industrial activity: Decentralization of industrial activity is necessary to reduce unemployment. If industrial activities are centralized in one place, there will be fewer employment opportunities in underdeveloped areas. So Govt. should adopt such policies that encourage the decentralization of industrial activity.
- x. Population control: The growth of the population should be checked to solve unemployment, problems. Family planning programmes should be implemented widely and effectively.

Conclusion

This study has tried to find out how much Technical and Vocational Education has been ignored and how this neglect is affecting the overall education system and the Nigerian economy. The main problem is that there is a lack of qualified workers at the middle level. This is a big issue because these workers are important for a country's economic development. Another problem is that the country depends too much on importing goods instead of producing them locally. The government has tried different programs to reduce youth unemployment, but they haven't been successful. To reduce or get rid of unemployment in Ekiti State, we need to focus more on Technical and Vocational Education (TVE). We need a good and successful program for teaching technical skills to young people to create valuable job opportunities for them. Promoting the TVE programme will help create wealth, generate jobs, and provide a sustainable way of making a living.

Unemployment rate shows how underdeveloped an area is, and this can be reduced by focusing on repositioned TVE, as explained in this paper. Because Ekiti State needs to stimulate the development of industries, it is important to provide enough money for technical education and training. It is also necessary to create a practical education plan for gaining skills, starting businesses, and developing industries.

Recommendations

The task of TVE provision cannot be tackled by the government alone. The involvement of major Ekiti State stakeholders, complemented agencies, NGOs, Foundations, (etc.) will be essential if the goals and potentials of Nigerians are to be realized using TVE for job and employment creation. There is a need

for education reform in Ekiti State to right the wrongs of successive years of inconsistencies and confusion. Such reform must compare note with the success stories of other developed States that are now thriving in industrialization.

Innovating Science Education for Technical Entrepreneurship is a curriculum that can stand the test of time. There is a need to review the current challenges in the areas of production, technology, and industrialization. There should be a linkage between TVE institutions and industries by using some of the experienced supervisors as teachers. The industry-based training should be financed organized and delivered by public entities which is private sector driven.

The government should only come in when it comes to the regulatory aspect of the training, for example, to check the indiscriminate acts of some TVE providers. Government at various levels should through tertiary institutions institute both local and international training for the TVET practitioners to update and broaden their technical know-how. They should be sponsored under a bond that after their training, they will return to Nigeria to practice what they have learned.

Skill acquisition as a benchmark for both academic staff and students. This explains the fact that the promotion of staff should be rather attached to their skill acquisition and disposal to students. Also, the assessment of students should be geared towards their ability to display skills acquired especially in TVE. TVE lecturers moving to the rank of Professor should be made to undergo a mandatory one-year industrial attachment as a condition for their promotion. This will adequately match the lecturer with the industrial advancement in his/her chosen career.

Organization of exchange programmes with foreign institutions that are ahead of us in skill acquisition. This has been the norm in UTM, and they are doing very well.

The availability of infrastructure, adequate machines, tools, and equipment in the laboratories and workshops will strengthen the effective teaching and learning of technical and vocational education programmes.

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