

Unemployment Reduction in Nigeria's Economy: The Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Option

WAMI, Kevin Chinweikpe Ph.D

Department of Adult Education & Community Development, Faculty of Education, Rivers State University, Nkpulu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

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ABSTRACT

This position paper examined the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) option in unemployment reduction in Nigeria's economy. The paper began by explaining the meaning of unemployment, highlighted the historical development of unemployment in Nigeria, analyzed the problems of unemployment in Nigeria's economy, examined the meaning of TVET, assessed the impact of TVET on unemployment in Nigeria's economy, and identified strategies for acquiring TVET and reducing unemployment in Nigeria's economy. The paper concluded that unemployment is one of the major causes of poverty in Nigeria's economy. It intensified in the greater parts of the 1970s. In the present circumstances, there are increased cases of kidnapping, prostitution, hired assassination, armed robbery, militancy and insurgency in the country. These problems of unemployment can be combated and reduced to the barest minimum through technical and vocational education and training, by the citizens acquiring basic skills and knowledge to be gainfully employed. The paper suggested among others that the government should establish and equip TVET institutions with modern state of the art facilities to enhance the acquisition of requisite skills for paid or self-employment; the government, financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, private individuals, and others should provide TVET graduates with micro credit loans to enable them establish micro businesses and become self-employed in their respective acquired skills in the country.

Keywords: Unemployment, Unemployment Reduction, TVET, Nigeria's Economy

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's economy has been in crises as the Federal Government has been battling militancy and insurgency in the country in recent times. The Niger Delta militants and the southern part of the country are blowing up oil facilities while Boko Haram and other insurgents in the north have taken up arms against the Nigerian state, causing colossal damage to the economy. Many people, including foreigners and locals, have blamed this state of unrest in the country on the inability of the Nigerian government to create job opportunities for the teeming population of the unemployed citizens. Unemployment is one of the major problems Nigeria is facing and the government must find a way to beat it if the desired level of development in the economy must be attained.

Prior to the industrial revolution, between the periods 1750 and 1830, the home and the apprenticeship system were major sources of acquiring technical skills and vocational education and training. Parents taught their children communicative, vocational and social skills to enable them cope and fit into the social and economic life of the society (Adiele, 2010). In most rural communities, children were brought up to take to whatever occupation their parents engaged in. In some cases, boys were sent to other masters as apprentices to learn various vocations and life etiquette. The boys were trained in various occupations amongst which, according to Mkpa (2015), are farming, trading, craft work, fishing, cattle rearing, wine tapping, traditional

medicine, black-smithing, and other training activities such as archery, tree climbing and wrestling depending on their geographical locations. The girls stayed at home to learn hair weaving, decoration of the body, dye production, and others from their mothers. This apprenticeship system that was home grown had little or no cases of unemployment.

Based on the prevailing circumstance, Nigeria has not only neglected the apprenticeship system but has equally not given Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) the attention it deserves, which should have given the unemployed the opportunity to acquire the requisite skills, for paid or self-employment. In the advanced economies of the world, TVET is taken seriously but is currently not given the required attention it deserves in Nigeria. If well developed, TVET would be an avenue for addressing some of the social and economic problems facing the country (Rufai, 2012). Oyadongha and Usman (2017) asserted that a sound practice of TVET seemed to be the secret behind the success of most of the developed nations of the world. Therefore, for Nigeria to overcome the problem of unemployment and become one of the greatest economies in the world, it must develop the capacity to transform its citizens into highly skilled and competent individuals. Nigeria should develop the appropriate knowledge and skill by strengthening the commitment to TVET.

In the light of the above facts therefore, this paper explains the meaning of unemployment; highlights the historical development of unemployment in Nigeria; analyzes the problems of unemployment in Nigeria's economy; examines the meaning of TVET; assesses the impact of TVET on unemployment in Nigeria's economy; and identifies the strategies for acquiring TVET and reducing unemployment in Nigeria's economy.

Meaning of Unemployment

Unemployment is synonymous with joblessness. The jobless could be found among the young, aged, males, females, the skilled and the unskilled across ethnic groupings. Hornby (2010) posited that unemployment is the state of not having a job. Anyanwuocha (2013) stated that:

The term unemployment could be used in relation to any of the factors of production which is idle and not being utilized for production. Unemployment of labour occurs in an economy if there are people who are capable of working and who are qualified by age, law, custom, and other factors to work, but who cannot find jobs (p.120).

Sunday and Mbanasor (2012) averred that unemployment is a condition in which people who are qualified and able to work are unable to find work. Wikipedia in Sunday and Mbanasor (2012) opined that unemployment occurs when people are without jobs and they have actively sought work within the past four weeks but are unable to find one in the economy. Ebong in Sunday and Mbanasor (2012) affirmed that unemployment means one being out of work, not being able to work or look for work through official or unofficial channels.

Historical Development of Unemployment in Nigeria

Prior to the introduction of money as a means of exchange, salaried jobs did not exist in Nigerian traditional societies as money was not in use. These societies with their distinct cultures lived off the land directly, and the land belonged to no particular individual but to the tribe. Every member of the tribe knew how to build shelter, make food and "everybody was his brother's-keeper (Agabi, 2014). When money was invented and these cultures moved to the cities, they began to depend on jobs to make money to buy food and shelter. In agreement with the above facts, Wikipedia (2009) affirmed that the recognition of unemployment occurred slowly as economies across the world industrialized and bureaucratized.

Unemployment in Nigeria intensified in the greater parts of the 1970s, as a result of the oil boom experienced in that era. The outrageous profits from the oil boom encouraged wasteful expenditures in the

public sector, dislocation of the employment factor and also distortion of the revenue bases for policy planning. Nigeria, since 1960 has initiated various fundamental economic and financial structural changes; however, these structural reforms have neither reduced considerably the high rate of unemployment nor yielded the desired significant and sustainable economic growth and development in the economy.

Problems of Unemployment in Nigeria's Economy

Unemployment is one of the causes of poverty in Nigeria's economy. The Federal Office of Statistics and the United Nations yearly report showed that by 1960, poverty in Nigeria was about 22%, by 1985 it had risen to 34% and 45% in 1991. by 1996 it was 50% and increased to about 80% in 1998 (Nwiyi, 2006). Ebong (2006) reiterated that the 2005 Central Bank of Nigeria's annual report indicated that:

The number of registered unemployed with the employment exchange offices increased by 1.3% to 317, 761, while the number of registered unemployed in the professional and executive cadre rose significantly by 444.5% to 22,553. Unfortunately, these figures are just a small representation of the situation since most unemployed are not registered (p.14).

Okoye and Okwelle (2014) revealed that data from Manpower Board of the Federal Bureau of Statistics show that proportion of the youth population in the country is 80 million out of the 140 million Nigerians obtained in the 2006 national population census conducted in the country. This figure (80 million) of youths represents 60% of the total population; and while 64 million (80%) of the 80 million are unemployed; 1.6 million of them are underemployed. The table below is a reflection of the percentage of unemployment in the Nigerian economy from the year 2008-2012

Table 1: Unemployment rate in Nigeria (2008 – 2012)

Year	Rate
2008	5.80%
2009	19.70%
2010	21.10%
2011	23.90%
2012	23.90%

Source: Adopted from Okoye and Okwelle (2014). Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as Intervention Mechanism for Global Competitiveness: Perspective from Nigeria. www.iiste.org.

Table I revealed that there was an increase in the percentage of unemployment from the year 2008 -2012 in Nigeria. Thus, with percentage of about 60% composed of youths, the percentage of unemployment in Nigeria must have increased correspondingly from 2012 – 2024.

In Nigeria, the problem of unemployment intensifies as the rate of unemployment in the economy increases. The Nigerian economy, experiencing a high percentage of unemployment is not using all of the resources, especially labour, available to it. Since the Nigerian economy is operating below its production possibility frontier, it could have higher output if all the workforce/active population were usefully employed. Nigeria, as a country needs to confront the problem of unemployment and reduce it to the barest minimum. This is because if people do not have disposable income, it is most likely that crime levels will increase. during a long period of unemployment, workers can lose their skills causing a loss of human capital. Being unemployed can also reduce the life expectancy of workers in the economy. In the present circumstance, there is high poverty level and increased cases of kidnapping, prostitution and insurgency in the country.

Nigeria is losing billions of naira to Oil theft occasioned by illegal oil bunkering. There is an increased rate of looting and killing in the North-East and North-Central Nigeria, and women trafficking is the order of the

day in an economy striving to become one of the largest economies in the world. High rate of unemployment encourages xenophobia and protectionism as workers in a country fear that foreigners are stealing their jobs. The popular phrase “Ghana Must Go” is a quick reminder of events that happened in Nigeria in 1980s when Ghanaians were asked to leave the country. In the very recent past, crises erupted in South Africa due to xenophobic attack on migrants (Nigerians inclusive) by aggrieved South Africans. The resultant effect of xenophobic attack on Nigerians in South Africa is the destruction of resources and consequent reduction of income from abroad.

The problem of unemployment is not peculiar to Nigeria alone; it is a global problem. Wikipedia (2009) noted more than 200 million people globally are out of work. Wikipedia reiterated that international statistics portray those industrial and service workers living in developing regions of the world account for about two-third of the unemployed population. Unemployment is a developmental problem facing developing economies; therefore, every developing country must strive to combat it with the provision of appropriate technical and vocational education and training, by the citizens acquiring the required basic skills and knowledge to be gainfully employed.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

The concept is composed of three distinct terms namely: technical, vocational education and training. It is pertinent therefore, to take a cursory examination of the component terms in order to have an in-depth understanding of the meaning of TVET. The Federal Republic of Nigeria in Ogbonnaya (2010) asserted that technical education is that aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. Dike in Sunday and Mbanasor (2012) posited that technical education is a planned programme of courses and learning experiences that begins with exploration of career options, support basic academic and life skills and enables achievement of high academic standards, leadership, preparation for industry-defined work, and advanced and continuing education. Sunday and Mbanasor (2012) opined that technical education is that aspect of education which leads to acquisition of practical and applied skills as a basic scientific knowledge. Technical education is concerned with qualitative technological human resources development directed towards a national pool of skilled and self-reliant craftsmen, technicians and technologists in technical and vocational fields.

Paiko in Wami (2020) averred that vocational education is the adult education programme set up for skill acquisition. Learners are trained on viable trades such as sewing, soap and pomade making, tie and dye, among others. This will enable them to be gainfully employed, earn wages and become employers of labour. Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) stated that vocational education is that aspect of education process that involves in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. Usoro in Sunday and Mbanasor (2012) asserted that vocational education is the total of those organized and purposeful experiences essential to career development in a trade, industrial or technical occupation. Oragwu (2013) noted that what is fundamental in vocational education is the acquisition of skills for occupational preparation.

Training is the process of learning the skills that you need to do a job (Hornby, 2010). McCormick and Tiffin in Oragwu (2013) described training as an activity generally intended to provide learning experience that will help people to perform more effectively in their present or future jobs. It is the systematic process of altering behaviour of employees in a direction to increase organizational goals (Ivanccinch & Glueck in Oragwu, 2013). Training may be used directly to increase the job skills of an individual or a group of individuals by teaching them to perform their tasks more efficiently and effectively (Arikaewuyo & Adegbeson, 2009).

It is deducible from the above assertions that TVET is concerned with the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, and scientific knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. Similarly, the National Centre for Educational Resource Development (2014), UNESCO and ILO in Shirley

(2015) opined that TVET is pertained to those aspects of educational process involving the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, general education, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic life. The Subsidy Re-investment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) (n-d) viewed TVET as one of the programmes designed to facilitate wealth creation and job creation through investment in technical vocational training for unskilled young Nigerians, as well as improving the training facilities required for delivering the trainings.

Agwi (2019) stated that TVET is education that enable individual to acquire practical skills as well as basic scientific knowledge that are now recognized as indispensable for meaningful participation in the world of work. Ayuba and Aliyu (2018) noted that TVET basically focuses on the enrichment of the capabilities that influence the effective, psychomotor or cognitive domains of individuals in readiness for entry into the world of work in order to satisfy their intrinsic and extrinsic value, work and aspiration such that local and national needs would be met. Ogendu in Bashiru (2017) maintained that TVET is an education training programme which encompasses knowledge, skills, competences, structural activities, capabilities and all other structural experiences acquired through formal on-the-job which is capable of enhancing the person to be self-independent by being a job creator. Ibe (2018) stated that TVET plays a significant role in developing human and social capital, promoting necessary skills, knowledge and expertise needed for more sustainable societies and economies.

Impact of TVET on Unemployment in Nigeria's Economy

The impact of TVET on unemployment in Nigeria's economy cannot be overemphasized. This is because most youths in Nigeria enroll in universities and other tertiary programmes without due attention to the career prospects. On graduation, many of them became unemployed because the skills acquired are dysfunctional and irrelevant skills and attitudes necessary for effective performance in the workplace. Nigeria can reduce unemployment through the training of youths in TVET institutions. This is because this kind of education is geared towards the production of educated man who can effectively work towards productivity using effective and psychomotor domains; hence can be self-employed (Sunday & mbanasor, 2012).

Globally, it is estimated that about 80% of the jobs undertaken by people require technical and vocational skills (FRN, 2008). In Nigeria, labour supply is characterized by an abundance of unemployed and underemployed workers, mostly in the agriculture and informal sectors. Low productivity, serious shortage of skilled workers and service sectors. TVET is needed to prevent waste of human resources. Improper employment can be largely avoided through vocational and technical training. According to Okoye and Okwelle (2104), if Nigerian graduates are adequately prepared through skills oriented academic system of TVET programmes, many skills outlets would be nurtured and developed in the students for paid jobs or self-gainful engagements. This would reduce the rate of search for government paid labour. Therefore, it is important to reposition TVET to turn out graduates with requisite skills and competencies to fill the gap in manpower need in order to arrest unemployment and its attendant poverty (Oyadongha & Usman, 2017).

Strategies for Acquiring TVET and Reducing Unemployment in Nigeria's Economy

There are various strategies that would enhance the acquisition of TVET and consequently reduce unemployment in Nigeria. Each of these strategies is discovered briefly below:

Establishment of TVET Institutions with Modern Facilities

The availability of TVET Institutions with modern facilities will enhance effective teaching and learning activities. With limitless resources, endless educational expansion would be possible (Abali & Suanukordo, 2015). Students are bound to learn more, work harder and enjoy hard work when facilities are enough and adequate than in the absence of such essential facilities. Similarly, teachers are highly motivated, more productive and more effective in the face of enhanced and adequate facilities (Obasi & Asodike, 2007). Well sited school buildings are important inputs into the educational system. They represent facilities, fields, fence

and uncultivated land of the school (Maduagwu & Nwogu, 2006), Thus, a simply dignified artistic exterior is suggestive of the purpose for which school building exist, make the scholars proud of their school and will have an impressive influence on their performance at school (Mirianhi in Nzepeueme, 2011). The presence of modern facilities in the TVET institutions would provide motivating conditions for learning and acquisition of technical and vocational skills and reduce unemployment in the country.

Adequate Funding of TVET Programmes

The adequate funding of TVET Programmes will enhance massive acquisition of skills that will create self-employment in Nigeria's economy. TVET training programmes such as functional literacy campaign programme, technical and vocational training programmes will make no impact on the Nigerian economy if they are inadequately funded. Therefore, government through the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) and other agencies can provide fund TVET programmes as a way of enhancing the acquisition of skills that will create self-employment and reduce unemployment in Nigeria's economy.

Provision of In-Service Training to TVET Teachers

Changes in technology brings about changes in techniques which render obsolete previous knowledge acquired. It therefore becomes imperative that teachers are retrained to keep them abreast with modern ways of teaching. Osuji in Sunday and Mbanasor (2012) asserted that the objectives of job creation and poverty reduction can only be realized through appropriate education that empowers the products of the education system with requisite skills and competencies to become self-employed. In-service training for TVET teachers would enhance students' acquisition of requisite skills for gainful employment. The use of advance technologies and production techniques require a workforce with a continually increasing level of skills. Hence, there is need for teachers training and retraining.

Provision of Micro-credit Loans to TVET Graduates

Graduates of TVET are trained to acquire entrepreneurship skills and mindset to establish their own businesses and be gainfully employed. But without finance their entrepreneurial skills cannot be put into use. The lack of savings and capital makes it difficult for many people to become self-employed and to undertake productive employment generating activities in an economy. It is therefore, pertinent that government, financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, private individuals etc., provide for graduate of TVET micro-credit loans, to put their required skills into practice use by establishing micro businesses and become self-employed in their respective acquired skills.

CONCLUSION

Unemployment is one of the major causes of poverty in Nigeria's economy. It intensifies in the greater parts of the 1970s. in the present circumstances, there are increased cases of kidnapping, prostitution, hired assassination, armed robbery, militancy and insurgency in the country. These problems of unemployment can be combated and reduced to the barest minimum through technical and vocational education and training (TVET), by the citizens acquiring the basic skills and knowledge to be gainfully employed. Nigeria needs TVET programmes designed to facilitate wealth creation and job creation through investments in technical vocational training for unskilled young Nigerians to reduce the wave of unemployment in the economy. The promotion of TVET programmes will lead to poverty alleviation, disciplined society, wealth generation and employment reduction.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the discussions and conclusion made so far, the writer suggested the following:

1. The government should establish and equip TVET institutions with modern state of the art facilities to enhance the acquisition of requisite skills for paid or self-employment.

2. The government through Industrial Training Fund (ITF) and other agencies should provide funds for TVET programmes in order to enhance the acquisition of skills and the reduction of unemployment in the country.
3. Teachers of TVET should update their knowledge through in-service training in order to be abreast with modern ways of teaching.
4. The government, financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, private individuals, and others should provide TVET graduates with micro-credit loans to enable them to establish micro businesses and become self-employed in their respective skills in the country.

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