

**TECHNICAL SKILLS ACQUISITION, JOB CREATION STRATEGIES AND
EMPLOYABILITY OF TECHNICAL COLLEGE GRADUATES IN OYO STATE,
NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The inability of youths to secure employment opportunities appears to have become a national challenge. The increasing rate of unemployment could increase the risk of social and economic vices such as poverty, prostitution, armed robbery, kidnapping and insurgency. Continuous increase in youth unemployment raises the question of effectiveness in the technical skills and job creation strategies acquired by youths who enrol in NDE technical training centres and Government Technical Colleges. Previous studies on technical skills acquisition considered the quality of instructors, adequacy of funding, job avenues and government policy factors with little emphasis on employability of the youths after training. Hence, this study assessed the technical skills acquisition, job creation strategies and employability of technical college graduates in Oyo State, Nigeria. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Population of the study consisted of the 3,525 youths enrolled for technical training between 2009 and 2013 in the five Government Technical Colleges and 225 non-formal Vocational Training Centres affiliated to the National Directorate of Employment in Oyo State. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson product moment correlation and multiple regression at 0.05 level of significance, while qualitative data were content analysed. Youths trained from technical skills acquisition centres appear more competent and reliable on employment than youths trained in government technical colleges. Graduates of NDE technical training centres have better customer retention skills than graduates of government technical colleges. Less emphasis should be placed on production of graduates who have paper qualifications without technical skills for employment or job creation.

Background to the Study

Prior to the Industrial Revolution, the apprenticeship system and the home were the principal sources of technical skills acquisition and job creation strategies. Today, technical skills acquisition and job creation strategies are learnt through apprenticeship or mentorship. Under the British colonial government, vocational education in Nigeria was initially developed with active participation of bodies such as the RSA and City & Guilds. These bodies became the regulatory bodies, saddled with the responsibilities of setting examinations and offering certificates in technical skills acquisition and vocational training trades. Recently, it seems that technical skills acquisition has not been given prominence in government efforts towards provision of adequate employment opportunities to the youths in Nigeria. Most of the primary and secondary school graduates who are expected to proceed to vocational training institutions appear to be seeking admission to universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. Fanimu and Oyebade (2012) emphasized that with a high population and numerous universities in Nigeria turning out thousands of graduates every year, there may be no ready market willing to employ the graduates.

Education is perceived to be a tool for transforming people into productive members of the society, thereby making the populace self reliant. Hornby (2010) described education as a process of training and instruction of people in schools and colleges, which is designed to give knowledge and develop skills. According to Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (1991) page 396, to educate, is "to train by formal instruction and supervised practice, especially in a skill, trade or profession". Various developed countries of the world design their educational philosophy and policies towards self reliance of its citizens.

Beginning in the 1950s some nations of the world including all African nations, were referred to as developing nations or Third World Nations (TWNs) whereas most Western and some Eastern Nations were referred to as developed nations or Technologically Advanced Nations (TANs). The most distinguishing features for these classifications were probably industrialization and general socio-economic status. While the TWNs are pre-industrial and poor societies, the TANs are post-industrial and rich societies.

The TANs had been enjoying economic boom from the eighteenth century. The 1950s and 1960s were specifically called

"Golden Ages" of capitalism. The Golden age was characterized by full employment, high productivity and low inflation. The TWNs have never enjoyed any economic boom characterized by full employment, high productivity and low inflation (Ogbimi 1999).

Mass unemployment has indeed become a global menace today. The Group of eight most industrial nations, the G8, consistently hold meetings and devote a lot of time to tackling the problem of unemployment in their nations (Ogbimi 1999).

Nigeria, like many other African nations, has been facing the co-existent problems of mass unemployment, low productivity and high inflation for more than fifty years. Nigeria has also been facing the problems of high crime rate, mass poverty, high indebtedness and high debt accumulation tendency, brain drain, decaying infrastructure and severe problems of power supply.

Many Nigerians believe that unemployment is the most important problem confronting Nigeria today. The incidence of high crime rate in Nigeria, cultism in tertiary institutions, pervasive corruption, prevalent poverty and insecurity in the nation and other undesirable developments are believed to be the consequences of the mass unemployment problem and the attendant hopelessness in the society.

The National Policy on Education (2004) clearly states the objectives of the Federal Government of Nigeria towards the establishment and development of entrepreneurial, technical and vocational training institutions. Section 3 Articles 33 and 34 of the NPE (2004) under the title "Post-Basic Education and Career Development" states thus:

Post Basic Education is the education children receive after successful completion of nine years of basic education and passing the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). It includes: (i) senior secondary education, (ii) higher school; and (iii) continuing education given in Vocational Enterprise Institutions to either basic education graduates who are not proceeding to senior secondary schools, or Senior Secondary graduates that are not proceeding to the tertiary level.

The objectives of Post Basic Education and Career Development (PBECD) are to:

- a. provide holders of the Basic Education Certificate with opportunity for education of a higher level, irrespective of gender, social status, religious or ethnic background;
- b. offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, opportunities and future roles;
- c. provide trained manpower in the applied science, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades;
- d. provide entrepreneurial, technical and vocational job-specific skills for self-reliance, and for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development;
- e. develop and promote Nigerian languages, art and culture in the context of world's cultural heritage;
- f. inspire students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence;
- g. foster patriotism and national unity, with an emphasis on the common ties in spite of our diversity;
- h. raise morally upright and well adjusted individuals who can think independently and rationally, respect the views and feelings of others and appreciate the dignity of labour

Educational policy is a collection of laws and rules that govern the operation of educational systems. (Fasola 2014). The policy cited above indicates that technical training targets self-reliance and self-employment.

Vocational Education is any form of education whose primary purpose is to prepare persons for employment in recognized occupations. It has also been explained as the sum total of all educational experiences systematically organized and presented by an institution to enable the learner acquire basic productive and practical skills (Oharisi, 2007). Vocational Education, also called Career and Technical Education, prepares students for jobs and careers that are based on mostly manual or practical activities (Ajokporise, 2010). The term does not apply to the development of professions acquired via tertiary institutions. Vocational education is low on theoretical or academic activity and is generally related to learning a specific trade or occupation. It is sometimes referred to as technical education, as the learner directly develops skills in a particular trade that promotes considerable self-employment.

Public and private efforts have been made to develop technical skills acquisition and vocational education in Nigeria from colonial era to post-colonial regimes in Nigeria. Despite these efforts, the rate of unemployment is very high in the country. According to Dike (2008), the neglect of vocational education is robbing the nation of the contribution which their graduates would have made on the economy. The educational activities of tertiary institutions in Nigeria may not be focusing on acquisition of job skills. Tertiary education in developed countries equips students with marketable job skills, which increase their ability to secure employment opportunities or create their own small businesses.

Statement of the Problem

Job creation strategies and skills acquisition seem to have undermined in the developmental plans of Nigeria. Educational projections might be focusing majorly on learning of theories and their practice. These lead to the production of graduates from tertiary institutions without job skills. Hence the problem of unemployment continues to increase. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2012), unemployment rate in Nigeria increased to 23.90 percent in 2011 from 21.10 percent in 2010. From 2006 until 2011 unemployment rate in Nigeria averaged 14.6 percent, reaching an all time high of 23.90 per cent in December 2011 and a low record of 5.3 percent in 2006.

The inability of youths to secure employment opportunities makes them vulnerable, as they also constitute social miscreants. Hence this study investigated the technical skills acquisition, job creation strategies and employability of technical college graduates in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The objective of this study is to investigate the Technical Skills Acquisition, Job Creation Strategies and Employability of Technical College Graduates in Oyo State, Nigeria. The study is also expected to make suggestions and recommendations, which will enhance positive management of technical institutions. The recommendations are expected to improve the self employment capacity of graduates of government technical colleges and NDE technical training centres.

Specifically, the study:

- a. assessed the Technical Skills Acquisition, Job Creation Strategies and Employability of Technical College Graduates in Oyo State, by finding the rate of employment among youths who enrolled and successfully completed their technical skills acquisition and those who were able to set up their own businesses or secured paid employment;
- b. determined whether the graduates of NDE technical centres are better than graduates of government technical colleges in their ability to secure employment opportunities.

Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses formulated to guide the study. They are listed below.

- H0₁:** There is no significant relationship between technical skills acquisition, job creation strategies and employability of technical college graduates in Oyo State
- H0₂:** There is no significant difference between the graduates of NDE technical training centres and graduates of government technical colleges in their ability to secure employment opportunities.

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted to study the technical skills acquisition, job creation strategies and employability of technical college graduates in Oyo State. Descriptive survey are those studies which aim at collecting data on and describing in a systematic manner, the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. These studies are only interested in describing certain variables in relation to the population. (Nworgu B. G. 1991). Frankel and Wallen (2003) also defined a descriptive survey as the method that involves asking a large group questions about a particular issue. The purpose of descriptive research is to describe systematically the facts, qualities or characteristics of a given population, event, or area of interest as factually and accurately as possible to answer the questions asked by the problem under investigation.

In this study, the researcher considered the technical skills acquisition, job creation strategies and employability of technical college graduates in Oyo State.

The researcher found out the employment status of youths who completed technical training, by comparing the total number of youths trained in the technical colleges sampled, with the total number of youths who successfully got employment or became self-employed.

Population of the Study

Table 1: Population of Youths enrolled between 2009 and 2013 and the percentage sampled.

Year	Population	Sample	Percentage
2009	1675	655	39
2010	750	338	45
2011	500	285	57
2012	300	188	62
2013	300	162	54
Total	3,525	1628	46

Source: National Directorate of Employment Office, Ibadan, Oyo State.

The researcher sampled 1628 youths out of a total number of 3525 youths that enrolled for vocational training between 2009 and 2013. The number of youths sampled was 46% of the total population. The youths were identified according to their vocational trade areas after which the sampling was conducted. Fig..1 shows the Population of Youths enrolled between 2009 and 2013 and the percentage sampled.

Research Question: Are the graduates of NDE technical training centres better than graduates of government technical colleges in their ability to secure employment opportunities?

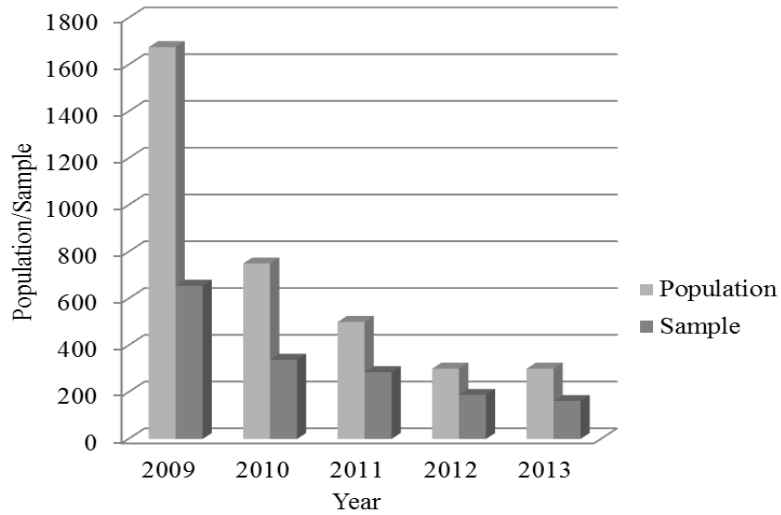


Fig. 1 Population of Youths enrolled between 2009 and 2013 and the percentage sampled.

Table 2: Pearson correlation indicating the difference between graduates of NDE technical training centres and graduates of government technical colleges in their ability to secure employment opportunities

I		RGTI	CCS	CRS	ASE
RGTI	R	1	.429	.321	.281
	Sig.		.000	.000	.000
	N	280	280	280	280
CCS	R	.429	1	.220	.043
	Sig.	.000		.000	.004
	N	280	280	280	280
CRS	R	.321	.220	1	-.185
	Sig.	.000	.000		.002
	N	280	280	280	280
ASE	R	.281	.043	-.185	1
	Sig.	.000	.004	.002	
	N	280	280	280	280

Significant at $P < 0.05$

LEGEND: **R:** Pearson Correlation, **Sig:** Significant level, **I:** Indicators, **N:** Total number, **RGTI:** Reliability of Graduates of NDE Technical Institutions, **CCS:** Customer Care Skills, **CRS:** Customer Retention Skills, **ASE:** Ability to Secure Employment

Table 2 indicates that there is positive and significant relationship between the Reliability of Graduates of NDE Technical Institutions and their ability to secure employment ($r=.28$, $p<0.05$). Furthermore, there is a weak, but positive and significant relationship between Customer Care Skills possessed by graduates of Technical Institutions and their ability to secure employment ($r=0.43$, $p<0.05$). However, the table shows that there is a negative and significant relationship between Customer Retention Skills and their ability to secure employment ($r = -.19$, $p<0.05$). These significant results indicate that graduates of NDE technical training centres are better than graduates of government technical colleges in their ability to secure employment opportunities.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between technical skills acquisition, job creation strategies and employability of technical college graduates in Oyo State

TABLE 3: Summary of regression analysis showing the relationship between technical skills acquisition, job creation strategies and employability of technical college graduates in Oyo State

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
.515	.265	.261	.723

TABLE 4: ANOVA table for Regression

Source of variance	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P	Remarks
Regression	210.717	5	42.143	80.720	.000*	Significant
Residual	585.267	1121	.522			
Total	795.984	1126				

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

From tables 3 and 4, the vocational training has a positive multiple correlation with youth employment ($R = .515$). This shows that vocational training enhances youth self-employment. Also the R Square value of .265 indicates that 26.5% of the variance that enhance self-employment is accounted for by the adequate implementation of the vocational training. The remaining 73.5% is accounted for by other factors like curricula of the vocational technical training, infrastructural facilities, and acquired vocational skills. Table 4 indicates that Adjusted R Square of .261 is significant ($F_{(5,1121)} = 80.72$; $R=.52$) . Therefore hypothesis one was rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the graduates of NDE technical training centres and graduates of government technical colleges in their ability to secure employment opportunities.

TABLE 5: Summary of the regression analysis of the difference between graduates of NDE technical training centres and graduates of government technical colleges in their ability to secure employment

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
.595	.354	.347	.324

TABLE 6: ANOVA of the regression

Source of variance	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P	Remarks
Regression	15.839	3	5.280	50.316	.000*	Significant
Residual	28.961	276	.105			
Total	44.800	279				

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

Tables 5 and 6 show that graduates of NDE technical training centres are better than graduates of government technical colleges ($R = .595$). Also the R Square value of .354 implies that 35.4% of total factors that leads to ability to get employment are accounted for by their qualities. The remaining 64.6% is accounted for by other factors like quality of infrastructural materials and equipment available. Table 6 at ($p < 0.05$), implies that there is significant difference between the quality graduates of NDE technical training centres and graduates of government technical colleges. Hence, hypothesis two was rejected.

Discussion of Results

The findings of this study confirmed that unemployed youths should pursue vocational skills acquisition that could empower them to build up their capacity to become employable. The vocational skills learnt could also enable them to set up their own businesses. Fanimu and Oyebade (2012) also emphasized that the high population and numerous universities in Nigeria turning out thousands of graduates every year, should be encouraged to acquire marketable job skills.

This study also established that youths who successfully completed technical skills training have very high percentage rate of employment. This result agrees with the explanation that Vocational Education is any form of education whose primary purpose is to prepare persons for employment in recognized occupations. (Oharisi, 2007). Oharisi also explained that as the sum total of all educational experiences systematically organized and presented by an institution to enable the learner acquire basic productive and practical skills.

Vocational Education, also called Career and Technical Education, prepares students for jobs and careers that are based on mostly manual or practical activities (Ajokporise, 2010). According to Ajokporise, vocational education is low on theoretical or academic activity and is generally related to learning a specific trade or occupation. The conclusion of this study that unemployed youths should pursue technical skills acquisition that could empower them to build up their capacity to become employable, confirmed the assertion of Ajokporise.

Summary of Findings

The following are the detailed findings that emanated from the study.

- a. There is significant relationship between technical skills training and youth employability.
- b. Youths who successfully completed technical skills training have very high percentage rate of employment.
- c. Youths trained from technical skills acquisition centres appear more competent and reliable on employment than youths trained in government technical colleges.
- d. Graduates of NDE technical training centres have better customer retention skills than graduates of government technical colleges.

Conclusion

- a. The findings also confirmed that the quality of service delivery exhibited by graduates of vocational training institutions is better and more customer friendly than the services provided by graduates of government technical colleges.
- b. The population of male gender dominates vocational training institutions. The female gender seems to shy away from learning vocational training skills.
- c. The unemployed youths should pursue vocational skills acquisition that could empower them to build up their capacity to become employable. The vocational skills also enable them to set up their own businesses.

Recommendations

- a. Less emphasis should be placed on production of graduates who have paper qualifications without technical skills for employment or job creation. The study showed that most employers of labour had only secondary school certificate before setting up their businesses.
- b. Youths who are female should be encouraged to undergo vocational training in order to acquire job creation and self-employment skills.
- c. Graduates of senior secondary schools and tertiary institutions who are unemployed could acquire technical skills in vocational

institutions, in order to enable them learn job creation strategies.

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