AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.16 (1), September-December, 2025 https://ajemates.org

INFLUENCE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ON YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN BIASE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This research work investigated the Impact of Vocational Education on Youth Unemployment and Community Development in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study, three research questions guided the study. The population of the study was 630 youth participants in four registered vocational education centers in the study area. The sample for the study was 126 respondents selected through proportionate random sampling technique and a researcher design questionnaire titled "Impact of Vocational Education on Youth Unemployment and Community Development Questionnaire (IVEYUCDQ) was used for data collection. Data collected was analyzed using mean statistics. The study revealed that vocational education skills have a significant impact on youths that can provide alternative employment opportunities to serve as catalyst for growth, reduce high rate of poverty and promote community development in the country. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that government should make provision for soft loan for youth's empowerment programmes and create adequate employment opportunities for them.

Keywords: Vocational Education, Youth, Empowerment, Community, Development

Introduction

Vocational education is education that prepares people for a skilled craft. Vocational education can also be seen as that type of education given to an individual to prepare that individual to be gainfully employed or self-employed with requisite skill. Vocation education according to National Policy on Education (2013) refer to "those aspects of the educational process involving practical skills, attitude, understanding and knowledge relating to occupation in various sectors of economic and social life". Vocational education skills in the context of this study include: domestic skills (catering, soap making, hairdressing, fashion design), technical skills (welding, plumbering, aluminum works, electrical installation, photography and video services), and computer skills (computer operations, repairs and programming. Similarly, UNRDCO in Uddin (2013) defines vocational education as education that is design for learners to

acquire the knowledge, skill and competencies specific to a particular occupation or trade or class of occupation or trades. Moreover, vocational education is the provision of materials, activities and teaching that designed to prepare people to function at a specific level in specific roles in the context of usually paid employment Lucas, Spencer and Claxton, cited in (Onyenemezu 2021). In line with the above Allawadi (2017) submitted some examples by the UN addresses the period when mandatory schooling ends until the age of 24. Adebayo (2013) depicts youths' unemployment as the clustering of youths consisting of hertogeous background, ready and competent to work but cannot find the kind of job they are trained to do in their area of expertise. Afolabi in Onyenemezu and Needom (2021) viewed that negative impression on technical and vocational education, total neglect of agricultural sector, poor education planning. lack of job search skills, lack of information and vocational studies, lack of work experience and lack of durable government policies are the causes of young peoples employment. It is a fact that the wheel of development of any nation lies on how productive and viable its youths and graduates are.

Parents, teachers and government have the primary obligation of ensuring that youths are empowered by training them in formal or non-formal education to become active leaders of tomorrow. Akinpelu in Dokubo and Dokubo (2016) observed that vocational education can empower individuals in the following areas:

1. It free them from all shackles in the way of their authentic self-development.
2. It makes them self-reliant and self-confident
3. It releases the person's power and energy to act.
4. It enables them to read the world, reflect on what they have read and impose meaning on their environmental reality.
5. It restores their humanity, their self-recipient of other people's altruism.
6. It takes them beyond the mechanical or technical mastery of a written word to quality of awareness, crucial reflection and a changed consciousness and view of his existential situation.

The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) identified the vision of vocational and technical education in as follows:

1. To provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agriculture. industrial, commercial and economic development.
2. To provide trained manpower in applied science, technology and commerce particularly at sub-professional grades.
3. To provide people who can apply scientific knowledge to solve environmental problems for the use of convenience of man.
4. To give an introduction to professional studies in engineering and other technologies.
5. To give training and impart the necessary skills leading to the provision of craftman. technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant and
6. To enable our young and women to have an intelligent understanding of

the increasing complexity of technology.

However, Onyenemezu (2021) observed that Nigeria has a youth population of 80 million representing 60% of the entire population of the nation and that 64 million of them are unemployed while 1.6 of the youth were unemployed. Globally, youths are known to be between the ages of 25 and 35 years, which population makes up the most active, labour force. The youths in this study include both graduates and drop-out from formal school system. Oboqua, (2024) reported that Nigeria's youths unemployment rate was estimated at 5.13%, with a higher rate of unemployment among women compared to men. Onyenemezu and Needom (2021) recorded that graduate unemployment rate of resident in both rural and urban, areas rise from 25.6% in 2003 to 42.7% in 2011 (Onyenemezu, 2021).

The problem of unemployment among the youths has led to high rate of crimes such as violence, criminal acts, cultism, prostitution, kidnapping, banditry, abduction, terrorism undertaken by youths in attempts to meet their basic needs. Ajufo (2013) reported that unemployment has become a major problem harassing the lives of Nigerian youths. The crimes arising from there have led to palpable fear among the populace and have negatively affected the social economic and political life of the country overtime (Adebayo, 2013). Corroborating the above, Akande (2014) observed that several factors may be blamed for prevalence of youths' unemployment in Nigeria which include high population youths' rate, deficient school curricula. poor teachers training, lack of vibrant industries to absorb graduates, flacked and inconsistent public policies on employment, inadequate information and data, lack of effective planning and poor funding. In the same vein, Mkpugbe and Igberadja (2016) viewed that shortage of qualified educators and inadequate training facilities are constants to vocational skills development in Nigeria.

Federal government through the various policies and programmes have made effort to curb the menace of youth's unemployment. Some of these policies and programmes include, Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), National Directorate of Employment (NDE). Movement for Youth Actualization International (MYAI), national economic empowerment and development strategy (NEEDS), Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agencies (SMEDA), National Accelerated Poverty Reduction Programme (NAPRP), Better Life Programme (BLP), Loan Guarantee Scheme (LGS), Agricultural Sector Employment Programme (ASEP) Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YOUEIN), Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), Youth Empowerment and Development Initiative (YEDI), National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and N-Power Programme (Oboqua, 2024). Apart from the national efforts, Cross River State government in July 2024, collaborated with the industry training fund (ITF) and European Union (EU) through the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) inviting interested youths to undertake 3-6 months vocational training under her technical, vocational and

agricultural training Oboqua, (2024). interestingly, the problem accompanying youths' unemployment can be addressed through adequate provision of vocational education skills for youth in order to equip them, with basic skills and knowledge that will reposition their thinking and make them contribute their own quota to the promotion of community development.

The concept of community development is as old as man both in principles and practice. Various authorities have defined it from different perspectives based on their experiences and areas of specification. However, it can be defined from three perspectives, as a process, as a movement and a field of study. Adekola (2016) views community development as an instrument that processes the capacity to rapidly respond to development issues of individuals and communities. United Nations in Onyenemezu and Needom, (2021) defined community development as a process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of government authorities, to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of community, to integrate those communities into life of the nation and to enable them contribute fully to national progress.

Anyanwu in Adekola (2016) summarized the objectives of community development as follows:

1. To educate and motivate the people for self-help.
2. To develop responsible local leadership.
3. To inculcate among community members a sense of spirit consciousness and citizenship. 4. To introduce and strengthen democracy at the grass root level through the creation and revitalization of institutions designed to serve instruments for local leadership
5. To initiate a self-generative and self-sustaining and enduring process of growth.
6. To enable people establish and maintain cooperative and harmonious relationships.
7. To bring about gradual and self-chosen change in the life of a community with a minimum stress and disruption.

The above objective of community development is laudable and capable of making the lives of people in the community become better. Vocational education is therefore required in achieving these objectives because it is only when citizens are engaged in their chosen vocation that they can be relevant in community development delivery which will enhance national development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of vocational education on youth unemployment and community development in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify the type of vocational skills needed by youths in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State.
2. Find out the effects of youth unemployment on community development in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State.

3. Ascertain the factors militating against developing vocational skills on youth for community development in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the type of vocational skills needed by youths in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State?
2. What are the effects of youth unemployment on community development in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State?
4. What are the factors militating against developing vocational skills on youth for community development in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State?

Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design and the population consisted of 630 youth participants in five registered vocational and technical training centers in the area of study. The sample comprised 126 youth participants in five vocational and technical training centers in the area of study. The sample size represents 20% of the population of the study and was selected through proportionate sampling technique. The use of 20% was in line with the view of Isangedghi, 2012 who affirms that 5% and above sample size may be selected from a large population. The instrument used for collecting data from respondents was researchers designed items 17 item questionnaire titled: Impact of Vocational Education Youth Unemployment for Community Development Questionnaire (IVEYUCDQ). It was divided into two sections (sections A and B). Section A sought the opinion of the respondents on their background information while section B was structured on a modified 4-point Likert scale types of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree to elicit responses from the respondents. The instrument was validated by three experts, two from the department of Continuing Education and Development Studies and one expert from Measurement Evaluation Unit to ensure both content and face validity. Their corrections were used to modify the final copy of the instrument before administration to the respondents.

Presentation of Results

Research Questions 1: What are the types of vocational education skills needed by the youth for community development in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State?

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Table 1: Analysis on the types of vocational education sills needed by the youth for promotion of community development

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	Remark
1	Fashion design is needed for the youth to be self-employed and promotion of community development	52	36	28	10	3.03	Agree
2	Automobile repairs are needed for the youth to be self-employed and promotion of community development	39	44	16	27	2.75	Agree
3	Hair dressing is needed for the youth to be self-employed and promotion of the community development	46	51	23	6	3.11	Agree
4	Computer and media skills are needed for the youth to be self-employed and promotion of community development	29	47	30	20	2.67	Agree
5	Shoe making and painting are needed for the youth to be self-employed and promotion of community development	63	34	10	19	3.12	Agree
	Grand mean					**2.94**	

Response in table 1 indicated that items 1,2,3,4 and 5 with mean score of 3.03, 2.75, 3.11, 2.67 and 3.12 respectively with a grand mean of 2.94 shows that respondents agreed to all statements. The result implies that the listed were among the vocational skills needed by the youth in the area of study.

Research Question 2: What are the effects of youth unemployment on community development in the area of study?

Table 2: Analysis on the effects of youth unemployment on community development

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	Remark
1	Youth unemployment has created tension and hatred between the rich and the poor	45	53	25	3	3.11	Agree
2	Lack of employment opportunities has resulted to communal clashes and violent agitation from the youth	36	43	20	27	2.71	Agree
3	Youth unemployment has changed the mindset of the youth, causing them to venture into all manner of crimes.	64	32	11	19	3.12	Agree
4	Unemployment has increased political unrest among the youth.	55	61	4	6	3.31	Agree
5	Unemployment has increased the level of poverty and morbidity among the youth	46	29	20	31	2.71	Agree
	Grand mean					**2.99**	

Responses in Table 2 showed that respondents generally agree to statement items 1,2,3,4 and 5 with mean scores of 3.11, 2.71, 3.12, 3.31 and 2.71 respectively and a grand mean of 2.99. this implies that youth unemployment has affected

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community development negatively in the area of study.

Research Question 3: What are the factors militating against developing vocational education among unemployed youth for promotion of community development?

Table 3: Analysis on factors militating against developing vocational education among unemployed youth for promotion of community development

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	Remark
1	Poor funding has affected developing vocational education	67	30	15	14	3.20	Agree
2	Inadequate facilities in training centres have affected developing vocational education.	39	54	23	10		Agree
3	Poor societal attitude to vocational and technical education remains a problem	26	49	31	20		Agree
4	Lack of trained and professional instructors at the learning centers remains another problem.	21	54	40	11		Agree
5	Inadequate awareness creation and poor knowledge among the youth is another factor	22	39	50	15		Agree
	Grand mean					**2.81**	

Responses on Table 3 showed that respondents agreed to statement items 1 2 3 4 and 5 agreed with a grand mean of 2.81. this showed that all the items were considered as factors militating against vocational education among youth for promotion of community development.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from the study show that fashion design, painting, automobile repairs, hair dressing, computer and media skills and shoemaking are vocational skills needed by youth for the promotion of community development. This finding is in tandem with that of Uddin (2013) who reported that some examples of vocational skills were barbing, fashion design, painting, automobile repairs, information technology, media skills, metal works and welding, and plumbing, and that technical and vocational education plays a significant role in reducing poverty as well as equipping and making youths to be self-employed, reliable and employable for promotion of community development.

Findings also indicate that youth unemployment has created tension and hatred between the rich and poor and lack of employment opportunities has resulted to communal and violent clashes and agitation from the youths, change the mindset of the youth and causing them venture into all manner of crimes, and increase political unrest in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State. The finding corroborates with those of Ajufo (2013) and Adebayo (2013) that unemployment has become a major problem causing violent, crimes like kidnapping, banditry, abduction which have impacted negatively on the socio-economic and political life of community members. Similarly, the finding of Afolabi (2013) supported the findings of the present study which revealed that increase in crime

rate, civil unrest and internal aggression rise of insurgent groups and increase in cybercrime are the negative effects of youth unemployment.

Finally, findings from this study suggests that poor funding, inadequate facilities, poor societal attitude towards vocational and technical education are some factors militating against vocational education among youth for promotion of community development. The findings of Oboqua, (2024) revealed that lack of qualified vocational teachers, poor funding, inadequate equipment are facilities: poor attitudes of youth are the factors militating against the contribution of vocational education on youth unemployment, for promotion of community development. Similarly, the findings of Mkpughe and Igberadja (2016) conform with the present findings which revealed that shortage of qualified educators and inadequate training facilities are the constraints to vocational skill development for promotion of community development.

Conclusion

Vocational education has been clearly observed here as solution to the endemic problem of poverty, hunger and graduate unemployment. When the youth are provided with the right skill. they explore all the necessary opportunities around them and participate actively in community development. The development of vocational education will go a long way in creating employment and give youth the opportunity to develop their skills and talents and empower them to be job creators and not job seekers through the provision of necessary skills to raise their output, income and wealth in their various communities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government should as much as possible made adequate provision of employment opportunities for the unemployed youth.
2. All responsible and relevant stakeholders should create an avenue where resources personnel will educate on the youths on the need to acquire vocational education.
3. Communities and relevant agencies should encourage the unemployed youths with affordable sill acquisition programmes to enable them participate effectively in community development activities/
4. Training institutions of vocational and technical education should as much as possible expose youths to new skills from time to time in order to keep them in pace with the modern skills. They should also withdraw outdated instructional equipment and facilities and bring in appropriate and modernized instructional materials that will enhance vocational education of youth.

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