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Examining the Adequacy of National Open Apprenticeship Scheme in Training Youth for Economic Empowerment in Nigeria

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Abstract: *Youth unemployment in Nigeria has become one of the most serious socio-economic problems confronting the country. It is based on this recognition that the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was established in 1986. The idea behind this is to train young people to acquire vocational/technical skills for self-employment. The objective of the NDE's vocational and technical skills acquisition is achieved via the National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS). In spite of this, the problem remained that the NOAS seems to be inadequate in training youth for self employment. In addition, it is not quite clear whether the scheme has adequately promoted the skills desired for the Nigerian youth. This paper examines the adequacy of the NOAS training system in preparing youth for self-employment in Nigeria. The objective of this study is to highlight the adequacy or otherwise of the NOAS training system. Therefore, using a sample of 278 beneficiaries, and using chi-square statistics, the study found out that the NOAS training system is adequate in ensuring youth economic empowerment in Nigeria. The paper therefore conclude that NOAS training is adequate in preparing youth for self reliance. The study recommends that the federal government of Nigeria should ensure that appropriate quantity of the required training facilities and resources are made available in order to ensure a greater of the unemployed youth are recruited into the scheme.*

Keywords: *Youth unemployment, Youth empowerment, Skills acquisition, National Open Apprenticeship Scheme*

I. Introduction

Youth unemployment in Nigeria has become one of the most serious socio-economic problems confronting the country. The magnitude of this problem can be appreciated if accurate data on the number of jobless young people roaming the streets of Nigerian cities, towns and villages is available. Unfortunately, accurate statistics on youth unemployment are lacking. Nevertheless, estimates by the International Labour Organization (ILO, 1999) in Sub-Saharan Africa show that unemployment affects between 15-20 percent of the work force; and out of these estimates, young people comprises 40 to 75 percent of the total number of the unemployed. Unemployment has affected youth in Nigeria from a broad spectrum of socio-economic groups. Given the lack of employment opportunities and consequently the uncertain future, young Nigerians are forced to engage in unorthodox livelihoods (such as; drug addiction, armed robbery, and armed militancy) sources while others engage in casual work which is highly irregular.

Another factor is the lack of employable skills due to inappropriate school curricula. Analysts have argued that in Africa generally, the skills that job seekers possess do not match the needs and demands of employers (Mcgrath, 1999; Kent and Mushi, 1995). The education system in Nigeria, with its liberal bias, indeed, over supplies the labour market with graduates that do not possess the skills needed by employers. Many graduates in Nigeria lack entrepreneurial skills to facilitate self-employment (National Directorate of Employment, 2011).

Therefore, there has been a strong recognition among policy makers in Nigeria that the absence of artisanal and vocational skills has been responsible for youth unemployment. It is based on this recognition that the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was established in 1986. The idea behind this is to train young people to acquire vocational/technical skills for self-employment. The objective of the NDE's vocational and technical skills acquisition is achieved via the National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS). The NOAS involves the use of master crafts men/women as training outlets for unskilled persons. The objective of NOAS is to equip and train beneficiaries in such a way that they would have acquired skills for self-employment (NDE, 2011).

In spite of this, the problem remained that the NOAS training seems inadequate in preparing youth for economic empowerment. In addition, it is not quite clear whether the scheme has adequately promoted the skills desired for the Nigerian youth. Besides, skills training and development require facilities and resources, which

must be made available in the appropriate quantity in order to ensure success. It would also appear that there are certain inherent problems within the operational framework or implementation of the NOAS.

The aim of this study is to critically examine the adequacy of the NOAS training system in preparing youth for self-employment in Nigeria with a view to highight the adequacy or otherwise of the training system. Against the backdrop of the objective of this study, the following hypothesis is postulated: that the NOAS training system is inadequate in preparing youth for self-employment in Nigeria.

Therefore, in order to achieve the objective of the study, this paper is divided into six sections including this introduction. Section two presents literature, section three describes the methodology, section four shows the results and discussion, while the last two sections concludes the study and provides recommendations.

II. Literature Review

The issues, problems, and the focus on youth became a world issue in 1965 when the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) adopted the Declaration on the Promotion among youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples; stressing the importance of the role of youth in today's world, especially, its potential contribution to development (UN, 1995). Since then, youth and their issues have attracted considerably attention.

A number of studies have been conducted both within and outside Nigeria on youth economic empowerment. For example; Ofor (2001) conducted a study on the evaluation of manpower development programme of National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS) in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, and report that the NOAS instructional methods and procedures are effective, and therefore, the expected vocational skills for self-reliance should be achieved. However, Ofor's study failed to indicate whether adequate manpower development had been achieved by the NOAS or not. Similarly, the study failed to show the level of commitment on the part of the beneficiaries, and the problems they faced at the end of the training.

Similarly, Johanson and Adams (2004) conducted a study on Jua Kali Voucher Programme in Kenya. Jua Kali voucher programme was established in 1997 as a pilot programme, under the auspices of the Micro and Small Enterprise Training and Technology Project. Under this programme, vouchers are issued to unemployed youth, who can personally select a training provider based on their needs and objectives, rather than having them chosen by a bureaucratic institution. Vouchers for training have been used for some time in the UK and more recently in Germany as well as other countries. The voucher programme intends to empower recipients with the capacity to buy training on the open market and thereby promote competition between private and public suppliers. The approach should improve the quality of training and bring down the costs, while at the same time ensuring a better match between the participant and the training course.

Furthermore, Pezzullo (2005) conducted a study on Entra 21 Programmes. Entra 21 is an initiative developed by the International Youth Foundation to prepare LAC youth, 16 to 29 years of age, for today's information-based economy. It has been widely implemented by local and central governments, NGOs, and local businesses to improve the employability of disadvantaged youths. The programme started in 2002 with the goal of providing skills training in information and communication technology to 12,000 young workers in a 3-year period and place at least 40 percent of them in employment (Pezzullo, 2005).

Entra 21 programmes are co-financed by the Multilateral Investment Fund of the Inter-American Development Bank. Other important partners in this endeavour are: Microsoft Corporation, Lucent Technologies Foundation, Merrill Lynch, and USAID. Grants have been awarded in 18 countries, namely Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Entra 21 Programmes support youths through well-designed and coordinated lectures and internships. They offer life-skills training and continuous tutoring; these are central features of the intervention and key determinants of its success. There is also a financial scheme to provide an incentive for youth to register in the programme. Programmes last two years on average, and target mainly unemployed/underemployed disadvantaged young people who have completed high school (or are in process of doing so). Gender is equally represented, as well as some minority groups (indigenous youths are particularly targeted by Entra 21 programs in Guatemala and Bolivia) (Pezzullo, 2005).

Evaluations in El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Peru, Panama, Colombia, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Brazil have shown positive "gross" impacts in employability of participants. Estimated job placement rates have ranged from 68 percent in Peru to 41 percent in Paraguay, with high satisfaction levels of employers and beneficiaries. Placement rates have been lower for women, especially in Panama, where 34 percent of female participants got a job, compared to 64 percent of male participants. On the other hand, in Sao Paulo, Brazil, both genders obtained the same placement rate (Pezzullo, 2005). Regarding earnings effects, evaluations by Pezzullo (2005) found that average monthly wages were at least as high as the minimum wage in Peru, Bolivia,

Dominican Republic, Panama, Paraguay and Brazil. Most youth attained a job in the formal sector with at least one or more benefits, such as paid vacations, one month bonus and health insurance.

In addition, Jaramillo (2006) conducted a study on the impact of Young Micro Entrepreneurs' Qualification Programme in Peru. The programme (Programa de Calificación de Jóvenes Creadores de Microempresas) is implemented by the Peruvian NGO Colectivo Integral de Desarrollo. It started in 1999 as an initiative to counteract the significant lack of entrepreneurial skills among young people in Peru. The objective of the programme is to improve earnings and quality of life of beneficiaries by pproviding assistance and training in the development of business plans and the creation of profitable businesses. The target population consists of economically disadvantaged young people, 15 to 25 years old, with entrepreneurial skills or owning a small and/or informal business (with less than a year of operation), and residing in the localities targeted by the programme.

In the study Jaramillo (2006) report the following impact estimates with experimental data four months after the end of the programme: (i) an increaseof 7.8 percentage points in the probability of having a business operating, and (ii) an 8 percent-increase on the beneficiaries' average income. Estimates from quasi-experimental data show: (i) an increase in almost 40 percentage points in the probability of the business to operate for more than a year, and (ii) increase inearnings by 40 percentage points. An important secondary effect was on the job generation capacity. Beneficiaries employ 17.3 percent more workers than the control group (interested but non-enrolled peers). Even though evaluations by Jaramillo (2006) have not produced cost-benefit estimates, the programme seems to yield positive net gains.

Similarly, Countries such as; China, United States of America (USA), the Great Britain, India, Kenya, Singapore, Malaysia, Nigeria are among the many others that have introduced deliberate programmes to train youths to acquire applied skills. For example; in China, high school and junior school students including the jobless are assigned work in line with what is called the three-in-one employment programme. The scheme is based on China's open hiring and selecting the best applicant policy of 1980 (United Nations Development Projects [UNDP], 2009). Under the policy, workers with no specialised training are apprenticed for a period of one to three years after entering the enterprise. The programme assisted tremendously in the country's (China) procurement of solutions to unemployment problem, shortage of skilled manpower and anti-social activities (UNDP, 2009).

Another example is the Trident Trust in the Great Britain. The Trident Trust is an existing British experiment linking worlds of work and of school. The Trust was conceived in 1970. Under the programme, young people between the ages of 15 and 16 are provided with personal experience during the school term. The purpose is to help develop their maturity and at the same time to persuade employers and society at large to value skills, experience and personal qualities rather than mad-rush for paper qualifications. Four years after the introduction of the Trident Trust, at the end of 1974, there were Trident Operations in eight areas of Britain, with 3,000 work opportunities on offer from hundreds of employers for several thousands of young men and women who had been through the scheme (UNDP, 2009).

Similarly, technical and vocational training in Kenya offers programmes that target those students who do not progress to higher levels of education. The aim is to provide the students with skills and competencies for engagement in wage employment or self-employment (Kiiru, Onsomu, and Wamalwa, 2009). In Kenya, these technical training programmes are known as Technical, Industrial, Vocational, and Entrepreneurship Training programmes (TIVET). The government of Kenya considers investments in TIVET a way to reduce unemployment and poverty. For example, the sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 on Education and Training Policy Framework as well as Vision 2030 blue print assert that the government is committed to reforming the TIVET sector with a view to ensuring relevance of the programmes offered and also the adequate supply of critical skills and competencies, for both local and global labour markets (Kiiru, Onsomu, and Wamalwa, 2009).

Research has shown that there are a number of potential benefits behind the push for TIVET. For example, up-to-date knowledge and skills contribute to higher productivity (Middleton, 2001). Other studies have also shown that skills acquired by one individual can have positive spill over effects on the productivity of other individuals so that social benefits of training exceed private benefits (Ziderman, 2003 in Kiiru, Onsomu, and Wamalwa, 2009). It is therefore the case that, high quality TIVET can complement entrepreneurship development programmes that aim to promote self-employment.

Another example is that of Denmark. In 1994 a labour market reform was implemented in Denmark. This reform aimed at increasing the number and the speed with which the long-term unemployed (with more than 6 months of unemployment) were activated. In 1996 a reform directed towards the unemployed, low-educated youth was implemented, the Youth Unemployment Programme (YUP), involving both a carrot and a stick. The aim of this reform was to improve the employment possibilities for unemployed, low-educated youth by motivating them to undertake an education (Filgen and Larsen, 2001).

Using YUP, young insured persons, less than 25 years, without any formal education beyond secondary school, who have been unemployed for minimum of 6 months during the last 9 months, are given an offer of 18

months specially designed vocational education. This is the carrot. This offer contains an incentive to undertake ordinary education or to find a job since unemployment benefits are cut by 50 percent while in the special education programme. This is the stick. Refusal to participate in the special education programmes is followed by a sanction; it will result in a total loss of unemployment benefits (Filgen and Larsen, 2001). This shows that the programme is designed such that the participants are well monitored and supervised by offering both incentives and sanction.

III. Methodology

The survey design is employed because we need to collect information from a representative sample of respondents involved in the NOAS training in Nigeria. In addition, the survey design is considered appropriate for this study because it permits the use of questionnaire items to obtain opinion of people about issues, as maintained by Gary (1981), survey design is one in which a group of people is studied by collecting and analysing data from a sample considered to be appropriate representative of the entire group. Depending on this, there are various sample size estimation methods (Tiruneh, 2006). Accordingly, Israel (1992) provide the formula for determining appropriate sample size of above 30 as:

$\mathbf{n = z^2pq \div d^2}$

where:
n = sample size
z = the standard normal deviation usually set at 1.96 which corresponds to the 95 per cent confidence interval
p = proportion in the target population estimated to have a particular characteristics
q =1-p
d = degree of accuracy usually set at 0.05 or occasionally at 0.01.
Source: Israel (1992)

Therefore, for the purpose of this study, p is defined .7, confidence level (z) 95%, and degree of accuracy (d) is ±5. That is to say the required sample size for this study is

$$n = (1.96)^2 (.7) (.3) \div 0.05^2 = 323 \text{ respondents}$$

Hence, in order to gather primary data for this study, 323 copies of the questionnaire were administered to a purposive sample of respondents. As stated by Neuman (2004), the purposive sample is used where the researcher wants to identify particular cases for investigation. Our main purpose in this study is to examine the adequacy of the NOAS training system in preparing youth for self-employment in Nigeria with a view to highight the sufficiency or otherwise of the training system. However, only 278 copies of the research instrument were reasonably and adequately compeleted, resulting in a 86% response rate.

Similarly, the study used both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary sources of data is obtained from structured questionnaires on a Likert's scale. In the instrument respondent were provided with a five-point Likert's scale. Section A of the reseacrch instrument sought to find the background information about the respondents such as nature of trade enrol, educational background, sex, age, and period of apprenticeship.

In section B of the research instrument, the respondents were provided with a five-point Likert's scale ranging from "Most adequate" (5) to "Most inadequate" (1). Furthermore, the analysis of data gathered for this study utilised both descriptive (specifically; mean, percentage, and ranking) and inferential (chi-square) statistics. The chi-square (χ^2) is defined as: $\chi^2 = \sum(O - E)^2 \div E$

Where:
O = oberved fequencies
E = expected frequencies
Source: Buglear (2005)

Furthermore, the chi-square is tested at 5% level of significance based on degree of freedom (df) = $(r - 1) \times (c - 1)$. Accordingly the df is defined as $(4-1) \times (5-1) = 12$. Therefore, the hypothesis is tested at 5% level of significance that has twelve degrees of freedom. In addition the null hypothesis is rejected if the computed value of chi-square is greater than critical value of the chi-square at the level of significance and chosen and the degree of freedom.

IV. Results and Discussion

Table 4.1: Descriptive statistics of NOAS beneficiaries with respect to adequacy of the NOAS apprenticeship training they received

Variable	Most adequate (5)	More adequate (4)	Adequate (3)	Most inadequate (2)	Inadequate (1)	Total
Training period	20	56	47	85	70	278
Trainer	15	67	60	58	78	278
Skills acquired	10	132	48	42	46	278
Training facilities	11	45	41	86	95	278

Source: Field survey, 2012

Table 4.1 depicts the responses of NOAS beneficiaries with regards to adequacy of the training they received. It can be seen from the Table that majority (85) of the respondents considers the training period for their chosen tarde as most inadequate. However, on aggregate basis 123 of the respondents considers the training period as adequate as against 155 respondents that considers the training period to be inadequate. Furthermore, in terms of the adequacy of the trainers, majority (142) of the respondents considers the trainers as adequate, while 136 of the respondents considers the trainers as inadequate.

In addition, from Table 4.1, it can be seen that majority (190) of the respondents considers the skills they acquired as adequate, only 88 of the respondents considers their acquired as inadequate, and this might be due to the inadequacy of the training period of their apprenticeship trade. Finally, from Table 4.1, it can be seen that majority (181) of the respondents considers the training facilities as inadequate.

Table 4.2: Means and ranking of NOAS beneficiaries' responses with respect to the adequacy NOAS training in Nigeria

Variable	Mean	Ranking
Training period	2.54	3
Trainer	2.58	2
Skills acquired	3.06	1
Training facilities	2.25	4

Source: Author's computation using field survey data, 2012

Table 4.2 above depicts the mean and ranking of NOAS beneficiaries responses with respect to the adequacy of the training they received. It can be seen from the table that in terms of the adequacy of the NOAS training, skills acquired is ranked highest (1^{st}), followed by adequacy of the trainers (2^{nd}). However, the NOAS beneficiaries ranked training low (4^{th}) in terms of the adequacy.

Table 4.3: Contingency table of NOAS beneficiaries' responses with respect to adequacy of NOAS training in Nigeria

Variable/responses	Most adequate	More adequate	Adequate	Most inadequate	Inadequate	Total
Training period	20	56	47	85	70	278
Trainer	15	67	60	58	78	278
Skills acquired	10	132	48	42	46	278
Training facilities	11	45	41	86	95	278
Total	56	300	196	271	289	1112

Source: Author's computation using field survey data, 2012

Table 4.4: Observed frequencies and expected frequencies of NOAS beneficiaries with respect to the adequacy of NOAS training in Nigeria

Variable/responses	Most adequate	More adequate	Adequate	Most inadequate	Inadequate
Training period	20 (14)	56 (75)	47 (49)	85 (67.75)	70 (72.25)
Trainer	15 (14)	67 (75)	60 (49)	58 (67.75)	78 (72.25)
Skills acquired	10 (14)	132 (75)	48 (49)	42 (67.75)	46 (72.25)
Training facilities	11 (14)	45 (75)	41 (49)	86 (67.75)	95 (72.25)

Source: Author's computation using field survey data, 2012

From table 4.4 above, the chi-square (X^2) is calculated using the formular ($X^2 = \sum (O - E)^2 \div E$) which produced result thus:

Table 4.5: Chi-square (X^2) computation using NOAS beneficiaries responses with respect to the adequacy of NOAS training in Nigeria

Variable/responses	Most adequate	More adequate	Adequate	Most inadequate	Inadequate	$\sum(O - E)^2 \div E$
Training period	20 (14)	56 (75)	47 (49)	85 (67.75)	70 (72.25)	21.30
Trainer	15 (14)	67 (75)	60 (49)	58 (67.75)	78 (72.25)	11.55
Skills acquired	10 (14)	132 (75)	48 (49)	42 (67.75)	46 (72.25)	120.56
Training facilities	11 (14)	45 (75)	41 (49)	86 (67.75)	95 (72.25)	26.03

$X^2 = 179.44$

Source: Author's computation using field survey data, 2012

Decision rule: reject the null hypothesis if the calculated chi-square is greater than the tabulated chi square at the the level of significance chosen (i.e. $X^2_{,\ 0.05,12} = 21.026$). Therefore, the null hypothesis

which states that the NOAS training system is inadequate in preparing youth for self-employment in Nigeria is rejected, since 179.44 > 21.026.

V. Findings

This study found the followings:

i. The NOAS training in terms of skill acquired is adequate.
ii. The NOAS training facilities are inadequate.

VI. Conclusion and recommendations

On the basis of the findings, it can be concluded that the administrative practices of youth empowerment scheme is superb and outstanding enough for full accomplishment of the objectives of the programme, and that NOAS training facilities are limited in relation to the training demand . The following recommendations aresuggested:

i. The management of NOAS should ensure the provision of appropriate quantity of training facilities (tools, equipments, materials, and machineries); and
ii. The management of NOAS should ensure that a greater number of unemployed youth are recruited into the scheme.

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