

**VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND EMPLOYABILITY OF YOUNG GRADUATES IN IREPODUN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, KWARA STATE****BY****SALAU, K. K. (Ph.D.):** Department of Educational Foundations, Kwara State  
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College of Education, Ilorin; E-mail: ojoadesanmi@gmail.com**Abstract**

*This research work investigates the impact of vocational and technical education on employability of young graduates in Irepodun Local Government Area, Kwara State. The sample consists of one hundred young graduates of vocational and technical education in Irepodun Local Government Area, Kwara State. The research design employed is descriptive research of survey type. A self-designed questionnaire titled "Vocational and Technical Education and Employability of Graduates Questionnaire (VTEEGQ)" was used to elicit useful information from the respondents. Four null hypotheses were postulated and chi-square statistical tool was used to test the hypotheses at t-value 7.815; 0.05 level of significance with 3 degrees of freedom. The findings reveal that there is significant impact of availability of vocational and technical education training equipment (cal.  $\chi^2 = 40.32$ ) and teaching methods adopted for vocational and technical education training (cal.  $\chi^2 = 28.33$ ) at t-value on employability of young graduates in Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State. On the basis of the findings of this study, recommendations made were that, government and management of tertiary institutions of learning that offer vocational and technical education should make sure that vocational and technical education training equipment and tools are available to impart necessary skill in the students so that they would be employable in the labour market.*

**Keywords:** *Vocation, Technical, Education, Employability, Graduates*

**Introduction**

In general, good educational policies are designed to reflect a nation's economic development aspirations, and are regularly reformed in response to the socioeconomic and developmental needs of the dynamic society. In the first case, where a nation seeks to achieve certain developmental milestones, its educational policy is often carefully designed to enable the achievement of such objectives by either borrowing from other success stories through comparative education, or by developing its own unique curriculum that allows a systematic achievement of its development goal.

Similarly, as in the second case, where national educational policies are designed to respond to changes in certain socio-economic development issues, such policies have to be custom-built to reflect the peculiar socio-economic problems confronting the society. The evolution of Nigeria's educational policies and reforms, since its pre-colonial through to the present day, appears to reflect this fact. During the pre-colonial era, the fragmented Nigerian societies designed their traditional system of education to provide what the society needed to function well. In those societies, therefore, education was fully functional, practical and was predominantly for vocational and technical skills. The choice of vocation was both demand-driven and supply-induced.

Therefore, such social problems as joblessness (and its attendant consequences), relative poverty, hunger, and the likes were at minimal because virtually all able-bodied members were gainfully engaged. In the colonial societies, however, the introduction of formal (Western) education initially sought to train personnel for the colonial administration. It could be seen broadly as vocational since its curriculum was designed targeting at certain jobs. During that era, therefore, education was functional and its supply was demand-driven. In fact, the educational system struggled to meet the demand for skilled personnel to take up new kinds of jobs that traditional vocational education could not supply. By its design, Technical and Vocational Education Training is meant to prepared graduates that are employable or can create employment. In fact, the major philosophy of vocational technical education from National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) is to give training and impart the necessary skills to individual who shall be self-reliant economically. It is however observed that in Nigeria, there are many young graduates of Vocational and Technical Education who are without employment. Hence, the researcher sought to investigate the impact of Vocational Technical Education on employability of young graduates in Nigeria.

It is observed, in Nigeria that, such social problems as joblessness (and its attendant consequences), relative poverty, hunger, and the likes are now at increase rate because majority of graduates from Nigerian tertiary institutions of learning are unemployable. Although the educational system in the country tries to change from one form to another and features policies that can help to achieve educational goals at different levels, but little or nothing has been achieved so far as regard education and employment. The non-correlation of the objectives of education and employment rate in Nigeria is seen in the incessant increase of Nigerian graduates but decrease in the available jobs. The truism that the standard of education in Nigeria is falling notwithstanding, education programmes have their part in the blame for employability problems confronting the young graduates. On the basis of these identified challenges, this study sets out to investigate the impact of Vocational and Technical Education on employability of young graduates in Nigeria, with a keen attention given to availability of training equipment in tertiary institutions of learning, impact of teaching methods, impact of adequacy of VTE teachers, and gender of the young graduates in Nigeria.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study intends to examine the impact of vocational and technical education on employability of young graduates in Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State. The purpose of this study therefore will include to:

- i. find out the extent to which availability of training equipment influence acquisition of employable skills by students in technical and vocational education and training institutions, and
- ii. look at the impact of teaching methods on acquisition of employable skills by students in technical and vocational education and training institutions.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were posed to steer the study to a coherent direction:

- i. To what extent does the availability of training equipment influence acquisition of employable skills by students in technical and vocational education and training institutions?
- ii. What is the impact of teaching methods on acquisition of employable skills by students in technical and vocational education and training institutions?

### **Research Hypotheses**

In an attempt to make this study more efficient, the following null hypotheses were postulated to guide the study to a logical conclusion:

- Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant impact of availability of vocational and technical education training equipment on employability of young graduates in Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State.

Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant impact of teaching methods adopted for Vocational and Technical Education Training on employability of young graduates in Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State.

## Literature Review

### Kirzner's Theory

This study is anchored on Kirzner's theory. The Kirzner's theory was first proposed by Kirzner (1979). It focuses on "vocational and technical alertness" to available, but as yet unnoticed opportunities. The essence of theory is that someone is endowed with the trait to recognize something others have failed to recognize; that there is an opportunity waiting to be exploited. Kirzner believes that this alertness is a trait successful entrepreneurs have. The uses of vocational and technical development to generate employment, economically empower the people, reduce poverty and propel economic growth. The economic policy direction encapsulated in the Nigeria Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) has vocational and technical development as its focal point. Vocational and Technical Education aims at equipping the youth and school leavers especially the graduates of Tertiary Institutions with skills to create jobs for them-selves and other people instead of hunting for non-existing jobs from the public sector. Later, Kirzner (1997) introduced the key concepts of "spontaneous learning", "alertness" and "entrepreneurial discovery". Vocational and Technical Education as a core Entrepreneurial discovery thus plays a role, as it is seen as gradually pushing back the boundaries of sheer ignorance, by increasing mutual awareness among market participants and thus, in turn, driving prices, output and input quantities and qualities toward the values consistent with equilibrium. Kirzner's view of vocational and technical education as part of entrepreneurship is based on what he called "spontaneous learning", as one gradually becomes aware of his entrepreneurial vision, he learns, and the state of mind that enables spontaneous learning to occur is "alertness". It is alertness that allows entrepreneurs to identify profitable exchange (or in other words, arbitrage) opportunities, corroborating the importance of the vocational and technical education's "information-transforming" function.

According to Kirzner, an improvement in the technique of production or a shift in preferences leads to change (disequilibrium) in the market where initially there was equilibrium. If there is equilibrium in the market there is nothing for the entrepreneur to do and no exchange and profit opportunities for them since everybody will be able to carry out his initially determined exchange plans. But whenever the change has occurred, some planned activities will not be realized. This theory is applied to the impact of vocational and technical education on employability of young graduates as it emphasizes on the available, but yet unnoticed opportunities. In line with the statement of Kirzner's theory, there should not be any graduate of vocational and technical education without employment since there are opportunities in the labour market. Moreover, the theory indicates that the graduates of vocational and technical education need to possess the right skill for employment.

### Concept of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

The term Technical and Vocational Education is a conjoined term made up of Technical Education (TE) and Vocational Education (VE). It is aspect of Nigerian educational system that provides room for vocational training, skill acquisition and adequate scientific competence. Many even in the academia have tried to classify this system of education under the banner: vocational education, technical education, vocational and technical education, technical and vocational education and training. In his efforts that draw a dichotomy, Moustafa (2019) postulates that, many educators hardly differentiate between the terms Technical and Vocational Education while society has been led to believe that Vocational Education is for those who are incapable of pursuing technical academic programmes. Against this background, Technical and Vocational Education has made slow progress from its earliest times to date in the developed countries. In a definition given by Salau (2017), Technical Vocational Education is a range of learning experiences which are relevant to the world of work. He stresses further that it is an

educational programme, which should be considered as part of general education and accorded the status thus.

### **Technical Skills and Employability Skills**

Technical skills in any type of industrial set-up either manufacturing or service industry is also important. Johannsen (2012) defined technical skills as the knowledge of techniques, practices, procedures, and methods of carrying out a specialized task and the skills to operate tools and equipment that are related to that task. Where students are lead to actual operating situation by practically utilizing the skills, competences and knowledge they acquired the process of education will be more efficient and effective.

This condition can only be accomplished where there is collaboration between the training institutes and also the industries. In the developed nations such as United States of America, Germany and Japan, the partnership between the training institutions and the industries have been integrated for decades. The curriculum must be organized in such a way that it allows for the evaluation of the learner's level of achievement in getting used to the exact operational conditions, in knowledge improvement and incapability to relate the theories and concepts they already learnt. Partnership between the formal and informal sectors, faculties, schools and industries, and business establishments in addition to collaboration expanding to integrate the learners is likely to develop in importance in the early part of the 21st century (Zakaria, Hussin, Noordin, Sawal & Zakaria, 2017). Apart from technical skills, employability skills are also very important in the 21st century.

Employability skills are the types of skills that assist the individual to carry out his job efficiently and effectively in the workplace. It is non-technical skills and could be termed to as; 'soft skills' or 'transferable skills' or 'generic skills'. The employability skills comprises of basic skills, resource skills, thinking skills, interactive skills, information skills, personal skills system and technology skills (Clarke & Graves, 2017). Employability skills are those necessary abilities that are essential for securing, maintaining, and performing efficiently on the job. These are the abilities or skills, approaches and activities that allow employees to relate to with their colleagues and managers to be able to come up with critical decisions. Unlike technical skills, employability skills are generic in nature rather than for specific jobs and therefore cuts across different types of industries, job levels and business sizes, from the new level employees to the most senior positions (Robinson & Garton, 2018).

Employability skills are set of vital skills inculcated in individuals to create useful labour force over time (Kazilan, Hamzah & Bakar, 2019). This can be compared with persons who have great attributes for instance a high sense of self-novelty, productivity, skilful, and competitiveness, a high sense of willpower, and creativity in tackling problems of the country as well as globalization in the present-day 21st century. Also, employability skills are essential in all occupations and also in training. Employability skills are skills that relate and cut across different types of jobs and life contexts. They are most at times referred to as necessary skills, key skills, life skills, key competencies, essential skills, core skills, and transferable skills. According to Robinson, et al., (2018) there is a great need for educated people with generic employability skills and specific technical skills. Employees in the 21st century require skills for example communication skills, analytical skills and problem-solving, organization and time management, decision-making and risk-taking, to be able to be employable in the labor force.

### **Review of Empirical Studies**

Idris and Mbudai (2016) investigated technical and vocational education: challenges towards youth's empowerment in Kano State-Nigeria. They asserted that Technical and Vocational Education System in Nigeria is designed to produce competent craftsmen for different sector of the economy who are expected to secure employment, become self-employed as well as employ others after graduation. According to them, so many models were employed towards the development of work-related knowledge, attitudes and skills, however, the development of skills for the training of such personnel have not been successful in

recent years. They conducted the research using qualitative method with ten participants interviewed (five principals and five heads of department) of technical colleges in Kano State. They employed content analysis technique in the analysis of data collected from the interviews. They found that the curriculum of Technical and Vocational Education is adequate in terms of content and also covers the skill element needed but it is lacking in terms of implementation towards achieving the desired national goals. According to them, the curriculum favours technical colleges to be operated as training institution for the graduates to further their education but not for employment as designed by the policy because of the fewer number of practical periods allocated for the trade subjects. Idris and Mbudai (2016) recommended the provision of adequate training facilities as well as training and re-training of teachers for effective skills development for employment.

In another study, Okolocha (2012) stressed that there is no gainsaying that education remains the key to sustainable development of any country. It was in realization of this that a National Policy on Education was formulated. The trend now in the society, according to Okolocha (2012), shows that the level of one's education does not have a significant effect on one's growth rather the effect is more pronounced on the level of skills possessed and the ability to apply the skills in the real world of work. Possession of requisite vocational technical education (VTE) skills and its applicability will help to implement complex growth inducing technologies and productivity enhances practices. The vocational technical education systems in most nations have undergone enormous change in recent time. This was as a result of new policies on VTE, which forced most countries of the world including Nigeria to turn around their traditional VTE policies and practices in line with the recent trend. Nigeria formulates viable policies but the implementation of such policies has been the major bane to VTE development. This paper critically reviews the micro and macro vocational technical education policies in Nigeria, their current challenges and the way forward.

Moreover, Masaruf (2019) investigated the role of vocational and technical education for improving national economy for sustainable development: Curriculum issues. They expressed that curriculum is based on the needs of the labour market and that government responds to the needs of Vocational and Technical Education through sufficient funding and provision of adequate facilities, equipment and resources. They recommended that there is need for further improvement on curriculum. Furthermore, Olakotan (2019) asserted that unemployment has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigeria thereby causing youths to roam the streets aimlessly. He addressed skill acquisition in vocational and technical education: a panacea to youth unemployment in Nigeria and discovered that preparation of skills begins when a recipient is still in the training institution and that products of vocational and technical institutions that are not equipped with necessary skills needed to function properly in the world of work are not employable. Therefore, he recommended among others that competent and qualified personnel should be made to train recipients of vocational and technical education and that vocational and technical education centres should be equipped with relevant and functional machines for the training of the recipients.

### **Methodology**

This paper utilised the descriptive design of survey type which mainly use research questionnaires. The population for this study consists of the young graduates of Vocational and Technical Education in Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State. These young graduates were sought for within the secretariat, schools that have participants in N-Power Volunteer Corps and other public offices within Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State. There are 301 Vocational and Technical Education graduates in Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State. This number serves as the population of the study. One hundred young graduates of Vocational and Technical Education in Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State were purposefully selected to participate in this study. The selection is based on the course that these young graduates studied in different recognized tertiary institutions in Nigeria. These selected young graduates served as the respondents to the research instrument. This paper primarily used the structured questionnaires to gather the needed information. The self-designed



questionnaire titled “Impact of Vocational Technical Education on Employability of Graduates Questionnaire (IVTEEGQ)” is divided into two sections. The first section contains the demographic profile of the young graduates and the second section shows the questions pertaining to the indicators such as availability of VTE training equipment, teaching method, adequacy of VTE teachers, and gender using the 4-point Likert Scale. Chi-square statistical tool was used to test the null hypotheses earlier postulated and the inferences were made to uphold or reject the hypotheses.

## Results

Two hypotheses were formulated and tested for this study. The hypotheses were tested using chi-square statistical method at 0.05 level of significance.

**Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant impact of availability of vocational and technical education training equipment on employability of young graduates in Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State**

**Table 1: Results of chi-square analysis on impact of availability of VTE training equipment on employability of young graduates**

Variables	Responses				Row total	Df	$\chi^2$ -cal	$\chi^2$ -table	Decision
	SA	A	D	SD					
Availability of equipment	35 (35.0)	33 (33.0)	6 (6.0)	6 (6.0)	80	3	40.32	7.815	Ho <sub>1</sub> is rejected
Employability of graduates	10 (10.0)	7 (7.0)	2 (10.0)	1 (9.0)	20				

Table 1 shows that the calculated chi-square value obtained 40.32 is greater than the critical value of 7.815 at 0.05 level of significance with 3 degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant impact of availability of vocational and technical education training equipment on employability of young graduates in Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State is therefore rejected. The implication of this rejection is that availability of vocational and technical education training equipment has significant effect on employability of young graduates of vocational and technical education in Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State. Thus, young graduates who had access to training equipment while in school had advantage of being employed than their counterpart who graduated from institutions of learning where the training equipment and tools are not available.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant impact of teaching methods adopted for Vocational and Technical Education Training on employability of young graduates in Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State**

**Table 2: Results of chi-square analysis on impact of teaching methods on employability of young graduates**

Variables	Responses				Row total	Df	$\chi^2$ -cal	$\chi^2$ -table	Decision
	SA	A	D	SD					
Teaching methods	50 (50.0)	32 (32.0)	3 (5.0)	5 (5.0)	90	3	28.33	7.815	Ho <sub>1</sub> is rejected
Employability of graduates	4 (4.0)	3 (3.0)	2 (2.0)	1 (1.0)	10				

Table 2 showed that the calculated chi-square value obtained is 28.33, which is greater than the critical value of 7.815 at 0.05 level of significance with 3 degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant impact of teaching methods adopted for Vocational and Technical Education Training on employability of young graduates in Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State is rejected. Therefore, teaching method adopted by the teachers of vocational and technical education significantly affects employability of young graduates in Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State. The implication of this is that, young graduates of vocational and technical education who were not taught through the adoption of the appropriate teaching methods would not be employable in the labour market.

### Conclusion

Going by the findings of this study, it can safely be concluded that availability of vocational and technical education training equipment significantly determines whether a graduate of vocational and technical education would acquire skills that would be of help in the labour market or not. Moreover, the teaching methods that vocational and technical educators adopted in school go a long way in determining the level at which young graduates acquire skills that would make them employable in the labour market. It is also clear from the findings of this study that adequacy or otherwise of vocational and technical educators is significant to employability of young graduates of vocational and technical education. Furthermore, the gender of graduates of vocational and technical education is also found to be a determinant of their employability as the female folks are found to be advantageous than the male folks in terms of employability. From the aforementioned, it is very glaring that availability of vocational and technical training equipment is an important issue that requires good attention of the government and management of our institutions of learning if the young graduates of vocational and technical education would be employable; and adoption of the appropriate teaching methods by the vocational and technical educators promotes acquisition of the required skills by the students and thereby foster employability of the young graduates.

### Recommendations

As a result of the outcome of the study, the following recommendations are made in order to ensure that, vocational and technical education prepared graduates who are employable in Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State.

- Government and management of tertiary institutions of learning that offer vocational and technical education should make sure that vocational and technical education training equipment and tools are

available to impart necessary skill in the students so that they would be employable in the labour market.

- ii. Vocational and Technical Educators should always adopt teaching methods that could help the students to acquire skills in vocational and technical fields. They should also encourage excursion as part of their teaching method so that the young graduates would be familiar with what exists in the labour market.

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