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TALENT MANAGEMENT AND SKILLS ACQUISITION IN TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: AN ANTIDOTE TO THE UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Unemployment is a situation in which individuals who are active and able to work are unable to find gainful employment or are underemployed. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2022), the unemployment rate in Nigeria increased to 33.30% in the fourth quarter of 2020 from 27.10% in the second quarter of the same year. Considering this, this study investigated talent management, skills acquisition process, and employment creation goals of trainings at skill acquisition centers of technical and vocational colleges in Ondo state. Four research questions were raised to guide the study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The study population comprises all staff and students of the seven (7) technical and vocational colleges in Ondo State. The sample consisted of 190 respondents. Multistage sampling techniques were used. Simple random sampling techniques were used to select 5 technical and vocational college skill acquisition centers in the study area. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 28 students and 10 teachers from each of the selected technical and vocational college skill acquisition centers in the study area. The questionnaire was used to

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elicit responses from the participants. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings of the study showed that there was effective management of the talents and skills of the students of vocational and technical education, there was a moderately low level of facilities available for training and talent acquisition, the available facilities were put to maximum use, and job creation was central goal at the skill acquisition centers. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the government and other stakeholders should improve facility provision and that lecturers should give more attention to vocational and technical college students' practical skills for job creation and survival in the world of work.

INTRODUCTION

Unemployment can be seen as a global phenomenon, a situation that has deepened the Nigerian economy. Unemployment in Nigeria is the rate of labor force that is available to be engaged in active work but is unable to find gainful employment. The Lumen Learning Course describes unemployment as joblessness, a situation that occurs when an individual is without work but desires to work and actively looks for a job (Nwokeji, et al. 2021). Unemployment has a significant negative impact on the individual, society, and economy as a whole. The impact of unemployment on the individual ranges from less income, health problems, to mental health challenges. The impact of unemployment on society is high poverty rate, low-quality housing, limited access to public transportation, and underfunded school. Unemployment also brings about less contribution in relation to goods and services sold and produced. Moreover, an individual's less purchasing power brings about joblessness for others who produced (Kumar, 2024; Joy et al., 2024). The remedy to unemployment in Nigeria can be through skilled human capital in the area of talent management and skill acquisition in technical and vocational education, which might bring about employment for the individual and also create jobs for others.

Education is seen as the foundation upon which any nation's development stands. This can also be said of technical and vocational training centers. According to Fan et al. (2024). Technical and vocational education is a type of education that aids in providing occupation-related knowledge and skills in all sectors of the economy through formal, non-formal, and informal learning methods. Education is designed to produce skilled individuals and manage the talent required in the labor market. In other words, it is a factory for the production of the skills needed for the development of the nation. According to Sofoluwe (2015) and UNESCO and Omajawu (2024), the role of technical and vocational education includes eliminating unemployment by equipping youth and adults with saleable skills and talent, sustenance of the national economy and technological development, and production of national economic prosperity. Technical and vocational education has a great benefit to the country in that it helps in producing skilled workers who can be self-employed and employers of labor. It also has the potential to bridge the gap between the poor and the rich (Mirabel, et al. 2022).

According to Gallardo-Gallardo, (2018), Talent is an exceptional inborn ability, especially in a particular activity. It is a type of ability that does not require formal training. Talent is related to how well an individual performs a particular task or job (Nilsson & Ellstrom, 2012). Technical and vocational education has the responsibility of identifying talented individuals, supporting, building, and nurturing them to achieve their desired potentials. Talent management is important in technical and vocational education as it might help in sharpening and giving the individual focus and might reduce the company's workload when hiring such talented individuals.

A skill is the ability to perform a task or perform a job and achieve the desired goal within a given time. According to Alvarez et al. (2019), skill is the ability to perform a task expertly as a result of consistency, which is related to physical and manipulative processes, while skill acquisition is the process through which a person acquires the mastery of the basics of a task with the aim of rendering service to meet personal needs or for financial freedom. Skill acquisition programs may cover varied areas, starting from hair making, tailoring, carpentry, metal work electrical and electronics. Effective training in the acquisition of skills might contribute to the nation's technological excellence and economic self-reliance. The unemployment rate in the country might also be reduced drastically if people are given adequate vocational training in skills. There are several ways of inculcating skills in technical and vocational education, but the major way is through the impartation of numeracy and literacy, as well as practical ways of using tools and equipment that are in good condition.

Basic education in numeracy and literacy is core to technical and vocational education training as this will enable the individual to read instructions, repair and maintain equipment in the area of safety of the individual and other workers and also to communicate and negotiate with colleagues. According to the UNESCO-UNEVOC (An International Center for Technical and Vocational Education and Training) (2006), literacy education should be core to technical and vocational education in addition to acquiring skills. Also, technical and vocational education is primarily practical and requires sophisticated tools and equipment to create effective learning. All this is important if technical and vocational education is to respond to the country's unemployment problem and bring a lasting solution. This paper investigated talent management and skills acquisition in technical and vocational education: an antidote to unemployment in Nigeria.

Technical and vocational education training centers have the responsibility of inculcating skills, abilities, and knowledge in learners to enable them to be self-reliant, self-sufficient, and independent, which will also make them employers of labor. Technical and vocational education training provides learners with a considerable level of competence in practical skills and sound scientific knowledge needed for skilled manpower, which will have a ripple effect of reducing or curbing the unemployment rate in the country which has rose to 33.30 percent in the fourth quarter of 2020 from 27.10 percent in the second quarter of the same year. The training of students on technologically related subjects will not only reduce the unemployment rate but also help promote the economy and overall national productivity. Therefore, this study investigated talent management and skills acquisition in technical and vocational education: an antidote to unemployment in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigated the talent management process and job/employment creation goals of technical and vocational education to reduce unemployment in Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were as follows:

a. examine how student' talents are managed from admission to graduation
b. determine the level of facilities available for training and talent acquisition; and
c. determine the utilization level of available facilities for training and talent acquisition
d. appraise the centrality of job creation goals in technical and vocational education training and skill acquisition

Research Questions

1. How are students' talents managed from admission to graduation?
2. What is the available facility level for training and talent acquisition?
3. Level of utilization of available facilities for training and talent acquisition
4. What is the central goal of technical and vocational center training?

Literature Review

Technical and vocational education is a type of education in which learners are trained to become technicians, technologists, and craftsmen, in addition to general education, which enables them to be self-reliant and independent. Technical and vocational education is all forms and levels of education that inculcate knowledge, practical skills, understanding, and attitudes related to occupations in all sectors of economic and social life (UNDP. 2015). Vocational and technical education can be defined as organized learning programs and activities where individuals are prepared for both formal and independent work and develop their career to attain technical competences. According to the Encyclopedia Americana (International Edition) (1991), the goal of vocational and technical education is to prepare youth and adults for occupations, especially in skilled trades, and also to increase workers' skills in their chosen skill. The aims of technical and vocational education according to the Nigeria National Policy on Education (2004) include the provision of trained manpower in applied science, technology, and commerce, especially in sub-professional grades; the inculcation of technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for industrial, commercial, and economic development; the provision of people who can apply scientific knowledge to the solution of environmental problems; and the impartation of skills leading to the production of enterprising and independent craftsmen and technicians. The aforementioned aims are the reason why technical and vocational education centers major in imparting skills and developing talents.

Talent can be defined as the ability to perform an excellent task without prior training. A talented person can be endowed with natural abilities in performing a task and achieving the desired goal. According to Nilsson and Ellstrom (2012), talent is related to how well an individual performs a particular task or job. Talents are one of the areas of technical and vocational education. However, the challenge is identifying talented students and grooming or developing them. This is because organizations need high performance or talented individuals to achieve their goals and objectives. Technical and vocational education should be well equipped to bridge the gap between labor needs and market demands (Cainarca and Sgobbi, 2012; Woods, 2012). Talented individuals manifest above-average potentials (Clark, 2013), and according to Renzulli and Renzulli (2010), such individuals are considered gifted; therefore, talented technical and vocational students can also be referred to as vocationally gifted students. He also proposed a model known as the "three rings," which are ability, task commitment, and creativity. Talented individuals interact between the three components.

Gardner's theory of multiple intelligence (MI) sees intelligence as the incorporation of several talents. According to Gardner (1983; 1999), there are nine types of intelligence: linguistic intelligence (talented in the use of words), musical intelligence (talented in identifying and composing music), logical-mathematical intelligence (talented in reasoning, thinking logically, and problem solving), spatial intelligence (talented in identifying and visualizing shape, space, color, and line), bodily-kinesthetic intelligence (talented in fine and gross motor skills), interpersonal intelligence (talented in communication skill), intrapersonal intelligence (talented in understanding and appreciating one's feeling), naturalistic intelligence (talented in recognizing nature), and existential intelligence (talented in understanding human existence). The application of Gardner's theory of multiple intelligence in technical and vocational education can be used to identify individual talented students, and such individuals can be groomed or managed along with a particular talent or some talent exhibited by the individual.

It has been observed that acquiring a university certificate does not guarantee a job after graduation. Therefore, graduates should consider acquiring skills as an alternative to avoid being unemployed or dependent on others. Skill is the ability to achieve a goal based on the acquired training, knowledge, and practices. Skill acquisition is the process of gaining new ideas of how to do things through training and practice. According to Magbagbeola

(2004), skill acquisition is the process of accumulating skills that enhance an individual's performance. The Dreyfus model of skill acquisition is a model of how learners acquire skills through formal training and practice. In 1980, two brothers, Stuart and Hubert Dreyfus, proposed this model in an influential 18-page report on their research at the University of California, Berkeley Operations Research Center for the United States Air force Office of Scientific Research (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1982). According to this model, a student should pass through five distinct stages: novice, competence, proficiency, expertise, and mastery. The first stage, which is the novice stage, is the stage where learners follow rules given by the educator; competence is developed after gaining considerable experience from following rules; proficiency is evidence in individuals who use their intuition in decision making and in developing their rules and plans; expertise is the ability of learners to put into performance what has been learned without depending on explicit knowledge; and mastery is the highest stage in which the individual is independent and self-reliant. According to Prince et al. (2017), there are three methods of acquiring skills, these are, Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES); demonstration and project method, and the task-instructional level approach.

Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) is hand-on and on-the-job practical experience for students studying a course that requires experience and exposure Owoeye, et al. (2023). The SIWES program enables students to gain experience by exposing them to the work environment and tools or machinery that might not be available in the college. It helps students fit into the world of work and bridges the gap between theory and practice (Daerego et al., 2023). Demonstration is another practical method of exposing students to the world of work under the condition of providing a work shop and functional tools. The trainer must also be knowledgeable and skilled. The task-instructional approach is used to train students through problem solving. According to Olaitan (1996), this approach has three levels: work activity, community training, and job placement. At the work activity level, students are taught how to perform a task and are also shown practical ways to use tools. The instructor then allows the student to practice using the same tool. At the community level, students are attached to an industry within the community to gain more exposure. The last level, which is the job placement level, helps trainees to secure placement after they have been found to be competent.

Technical and vocational education can be viewed as specialized training that ushers the individual into the world of work immediately after completion. Technical and vocational education provides skilled personnel, ranging from technicians to supervisors (Ivan et al., 2008). One of the successful indicators of technical and vocational education is the employability of its graduates, that is, their ability to meet market needs (Law, 2007). Brown and Hesketh (2004) defined employability as the ability to secure and maintain different kinds of jobs. According to him, employability is the ability to get a job and maintain the job even in the pool of job seekers. To secure and maintain a job in the world of work, it is necessary to possess the employability skills needed by the industries. Technical and vocational education teachers need to help future employees acquire the necessary skills to be employable, and educators should also link teaching in schools and real work application. In the world of rapid technological changes, acquiring the necessary skills is a means of increasing a nation's productivity; therefore, the government should empower technical and vocational centers in equipping learners to effectively contribute to the country's growth. Tiwari et al. (2025)

Research Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The study population comprises all staff and students of the seven (7) technical and vocational colleges in Ondo State. The sample consisted of 190 respondents. Multistage sampling techniques were used. Simple random sampling techniques were used to select 5 technical and vocational college skill acquisition centers in the study area, whereas purposive sampling

techniques were used to select 28 students and 10 teachers from each of the selected technical and vocational college skill acquisition centers in the study area. The questionnaire was used to elicit responses from the participants. A reliability index of 0.73 was obtained for the instrument before use. Data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages.

Results and Discussion of the Findings

To achieve the objectives of the study and answer the research questions that were raised, responses were coded and data were converted to percentages. Any % between 1% and 49% was considered low, 50% and 69% was considered moderate, and 70% and above were considered high.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: How are students' talents managed from admission to graduation?

Table 1: Percentage Score for Technical and Vocational Centers for Talent Management

INDICATORS	A	%	D	%	A%	D%
Selection by talent during admission	171	40.0	257	60.0		
Training in the talent area during program	300	70.1	128	29.9		
Offer of practical experience in the talent area	101	23.6	327	76.4	**41.5**	**58.5**
Professional assistance for start-up after training	158	36.9	270	63.1		
Total	888		1252			

Summarily, a close look at the analyses above reveals that there is effective management of the talents and skills of vocational and technical education students.

Research Question 2: What is the available facility level for training and talent acquisition?

Table 2: Percentage Scores for the Level of Facility Available for Training and Talent Acquisition

INDICATORS	A	%	D	%	A%	D%
Machines and tools used	171	40.0	257	60.0		
Computer tools	300	70.1	128	29.9		
Classes, lab, and workshops	101	23.6	327	76.4	**41.5**	**58.5**
Offices and Office Equipment	158	36.9	270	63.1		
Total	888		1252			

In summary, the analysis presented in Table 2 shows that there was a moderately low level of facilities available for training and talent acquisition,

Research Question 3: What is the level of utilization of available facilities for training and talent acquisition?

Level of utilization of available facilities in technical and vocational centers

INDICATORS	Response partern	%	% Utilize	
Maximally used	151	60.0		
Moderately used	24	74.1	**53.6**	**46.4**
Rarely used	15	23.6		
Not used	0	60.0		
	1146			

The analysis presented in Table 3 shows that the available facilities were put to maximum use.

Research Question 4: What is the central goal of technical and vocational training?

Table 4: Percentage Scores for Training Goals at Technical and Vocational Centers

INDICATORS	A	%	D	%	A%	D%
To create a job	116	27.1	312	72.9	**43.1**	**56.9**
To be employees	244	57.0	184	43.0		
To be consultants	71	16.6	357	83.4		
To be trainers	270	63.1	158	36.9		
Total	923		1217			

In summary, the analysis presented in Table 2 shows that job creation was the central goal at the skill acquisition centers.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that there is effective management of the talents and skills of the students of vocational and technical education centers, there was moderately low level of facilities available for training and talent acquisition, the available facilities were put to maximum use, and job creation was central goal at the skill acquisition centers.

Recommendations

It was recommended that the government and other stakeholders should put more effort into providing facilities at various vocational and technical education skill acquisition centers.

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