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CAREER EDUCATION: AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR CURBING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to determine career education as an effective tool for curbing youth unemployment. Specifically, this study determined: the effect of unemployment on national development, challenges facing career education in schools and the benefits of career education towards curbing youth unemployment. Three research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated and tested to guide the study at 0.05 level of significance. The descriptive survey design was used and the population for this study was made up of technical and vocational educators in the Niger State College of Education Minna. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The data collected were analysed using mean and t-test. The findings revealed that career education helps labour markets work to meet their goals, the effects of unemployment on national security are high wave of crime, robbery, political assassinations, religious riots, among youths and the challenges facing career guidance in schools is inadequate career resource centre, inadequate time for guidance and counselling. The following recommendations are hereby proffered among others, are: career guidance services should be made compulsory and provided for all levels of education to help students in making realistic career choices; the roles, responsibilities, and ethical obligations of employees in the industry should be adequately communicated to the students during training by focusing on career education.

INTRODUCTION

Youths occupy a prominent place in any society. Apart from being the leaders of tomorrow, they outnumber the middle-aged and the aged (Onyekpe, 2007). The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2001) defines youth as people aged between 18 and 35. Unemployment, by default, is the difference between the labour gainfully employed at the wages and working conditions that exist, and the amount of labour available, however, Gbosi (2006) defined unemployment as a situation in which people who are willing to work at the prevailing wage rate are unable to find jobs. Youth unemployment is becoming an increasingly troublesome issue in many parts of the world (Ifeoma, 2012). Okonkwo (2005) concluded that the negative consequences of the youth unemployment include poverty, psychological problems of frustration, depression, hostility, abduction, murder, armed robbery, and all manner of criminal behaviours causing general insecurity of life and property. The situation of unemployment in Africa and Nigeria to be specific has been on the increase, which has resulted in an increase in social vices among other negativities include increased susceptibility to malnutrition, illness, mental stress and loss of self-esteem leading to depression and high unemployment rate. The Unemployment rate is the percentage of the total labour force that is unemployed but actively seeking employment and willing to work (Gbosi, 2005). Lack of employable skills due to inappropriate career education in the school curricula is another factor contributing to the rising youth unemployment. Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) gives individuals the skills to learn and become productive citizens and advance in the workplace (Oni, 2006). However, without proper Career Education (CE) these missions may not be adequately achieved.

Curbing unemployment generally entails the acquisition of certain skills and meeting some conditions of employability. It is not just vocational education, it includes vocational education, but broader than it. TVE is concerned with the acquisition of skills and knowledge for employment and sustainable livelihood (Maclean and Wilson, 2009). The youths are struggling with the challenges of acquiring technical skills because the society is focused mostly on formal university education. Apart from Technical and Vocational Education (TVE), Entrepreneurship Education (EE) is also an effective technique in curbing youth unemployment.

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There is a growing recognition, among governments and organizations, that as jobs become scarce, youth entrepreneurship becomes an important strategy for integrating the youths into labour markets thereby addressing unemployment challenges (ILO, 2009). It equally reduces the poverty rate with visible increment in employment rate among the youths. The unemployment rate was discovered to be negatively related to poor entrepreneurial development (Oladele, Akeke & Oladunjoye, 2011). This justifies the need for a guided entrepreneurial education to reduce the high rate of youth unemployment.

Career education helps young people develop the knowledge and skills needed to make successful choices of career, manage transitions in learning and move into work, while career guidance enable young people to use the developed knowledge and skills to make the decisions about learning and work that are right for them. Career education can be defined as a systematic programme of activities and experiences designed to increase knowledge of self, occupations and training paths, job search skills and decision making strategies. Since the main purpose of education is to prepare one for a career, this signifies that career education and guidance is of paramount importance in the Nigeria educational system. According to Isaacson (1971), a complete programme of career education includes:

1. Awareness of the world of work;
2. Broad orientation to occupations;
3. In-depth exploration at selected clusters;
4. Career preparation and understanding of the economics of jobs; and
5. Placement for all students

Career education is being looked at as an alternative besides other methods of creating employment opportunities among the youths. Career education has been identified as a key focus in addressing the mismatch between the needs of labour market and the products of the educational and training systems, thereby dealing with unemployment and improving labour mobility (Balasuriya & Hughes, 2003). It also includes assisting people to reflect on their aspirations, interests, competencies, personal attributes, qualifications and ability to match these with available training and employment opportunities. Career education will therefore play a key role in curbing youth unemployment by ensuring the required match between the needs of the labour market and the products of educational systems.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Unemployment is one of the developmental problems that face every developing economy in the 21st century. In support of this; analysts have argued that many graduates in Nigeria lack the technical and entrepreneurial skills to facilitate self-employment (Oladele, Akeke and Oladunjoye, 2011). International statistics portrayed that industrial and service workers living in developing regions account for about two-thirds of the unemployed (Patterson, Okafor, & Williams, 2006). In response to the alarming unemployment situation, the Nigerian government at various times has made attempts to solve the nagging unemployment problems by setting up various intervention agencies. Notable among these are the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Youth Empowerment Scheme (Project YES), Better Life Programme, (BLP), the Peoples' Bank of Nigeria (PBN), Family Support Programme (FSP), Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDs) and the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP).

However, all these intervention techniques failed to yield the desired results to curb unemployment because they were only declarative without concerted effort and could not stand the test of time. Career education is being looked at as an alternative besides other methods of creating employment opportunities for youths at all level of education. Hence, the need to seek the perception of technical and vocational educators is of paramount value.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to determine the:

1. Effect of unemployment on national development
2. Challenges facing career education in schools
3. Benefits of career education towards curbing youth unemployment.

Research Questions

1. What are the effects of unemployment on national development?
2. What are the challenges facing career education in schools?
3. What are the benefits of career education towards curbing youth unemployment?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance
 HO₁: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of technical and vocational educators on the challenges facing career education in schools.
 HO₂: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of technical and vocational educators on the benefits of career education towards curbing youth unemployment

METHODOLOGY

In carrying out this study, the survey approach was used, where questionnaires are used to determine the opinion of the respondents on the issue under investigation. Yalams and Ndomi (1999) define descriptive survey research as the gathering of information about a large number of people or objects by studying a representative sample of the entire group through the use of questionnaires. The target population for this study was made up of 24 vocational educators and 25 technical educators in the school of vocational and technical education in Niger State College of Education Minna. No sampling was done since the population is not too large. The instrument used for the data collection was a structured questionnaire with 36 items. Out of forty nine (49) numbers of questionnaires administered to the respondents thirty eight (38) were returned representing seventy seven point five percent (77.5%) returned rate. The analysis of data for the research questions and hypotheses was accomplished using the mean and t-test. The mean was used to determine the degree of acceptance or rejection in research questions with the use of four point rating scale while t-test was used to test the hypotheses between the two groups of respondents. The mean of 2.50 was used as decision points for every questionnaire item. Consequently, any item with mean responses of 2.50 and above was considered agreed. Any item with a mean response of 2.49 and below was equally considered disagreed in the second part accordingly. The t-test was used to test the hypotheses of two groups of respondents. A t- critical value of ± 1.96 was selected based on the degree of freedom of 36 tested at 0.05 levels of significance. Therefore, any hypothesis with t-calculated value equal or less than the t-critical value was regarded as not significant.

Research Question 1

What are the effects of unemployment on National development?

Table 1: Mean responses of the respondents on the effects of unemployment on National development
 $N_1= 15, N_2= 23$

S/N	Item	\bar{X}_1	\bar{X}_2	\bar{X}_t	Remark
1	Unemployment brings economic, social and political vices in the society	3.13	3.54	3.34	Agreed
2	The high wave of crime, robbery, political assassinations, religious riots, among youths.	3.87	3.92	3.90	Agreed
3	The high wave of inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic and communal clashes	3.10	3.64	3.36	Agreed
4	Increase in prostitution among young girls	2.81	3.19	3.00	Agreed
5	Increase malnutrition	3.64	3.10	3.36	Agreed
6	Loss of income	3.19	3.70	3.44	Agreed
7	Demoralized and strained family relationship	2.80	3.66	3.23	Agreed
8	Higher incidence of unemployment causes Ill-health and death	2.60	3.73	3.17	Agreed
9	Led to broken marriages	3.49	3.51	3.50	Agreed
10	Waste of human labour	3.19	2.40	2.80	Agreed
	Grand Mean (\bar{X}_g)		3.31		Agreed

Key: N_1 = Technical educators, N_2 = Vocational educators, \bar{X}_1 = Mean of response of technical educators, \bar{X}_2 = Mean of response of vocational educators, \bar{X}_t = Average mean responses of the respondents on the effects of unemployment on National development

The data presented in Table 1 revealed that the Grand Mean (\bar{X}_g) value (3.31) of the items is above the cutoff point (2.50). Therefore, all the respondents agreed with the effects of unemployment on National development.

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Research Question 2

What are the challenges facing career education in schools?

Table 2: Mean responses of the respondents to the challenges facing career education in schools

S/N	Item	\bar{X}_1	\bar{X}_2	\bar{X}_t	Remark
1	Adequate time for guidance and counseling	1.13	1.02	1.08	Disagreed
2	High job duties	3.21	3.33	3.27	Agreed
3	Inadequate career resource centre	3.98	3.87	3.93	Agreed
4	A poor relationship between teachers and parents	3.50	3.70	3.60	Agreed
5	Inadequate guidance and counselling books	3.75	3.70	3.73	Agreed
6	Inadequate guidance and counselling office	3.45	3.15	3.30	Agreed
7	Low level of qualification of teacher counsellors	3.40	3.42	3.41	Agreed
8	Inadequate resources for guidance and counselling	3.88	3.90	3.89	Agreed
9	Less teacher counsellor's teaching workload	2.22	2.47	2.35	Disagreed
10	Inadequate school administration support to Guidance and counselling	3.41	3.32	3.36	Agreed
11	Inadequate training and re-training of counsellors	2.98	3.67	3.33	Agreed
12	Low monitoring of guidance and counselling in the schools	3.40	3.57	3.49	Agreed
13	Head teachers negative attitude towards guidance and counseling	3.14	2.40	2.77	Agreed
14	Lack of adequate support from stakeholders for guidance and counselling programmes	2.70	3.62	3.16	Agreed
15	Increasingly diverse student populations in the schools	3.40	2.69	3.05	Agreed
16	Increasing reliance on technology	2.98	3.67	3.33	Agreed
Grand Mean (\bar{X}_g)		3.09	3.22	3.16	Agreed

The data presented in table 2 revealed that the Grand Mean (\bar{X}_g) value (3.16) of the items is above the cutoff point (2.50). Therefore, all the respondents agreed on the challenges facing career education in schools.

Research Question 3

What are the benefits of career education towards curbing youth unemployment?

Table 3: Mean responses of the respondents on the benefits of career education towards curbing youth unemployment

S/N	Item	\bar{X}_1	\bar{X}_2	\bar{X}_t	Remark
1	It helps labour markets work to meet their goals	4.00	4.00	4.00	Agreed
2	Facilitates education systems meet their goals	3.89	3.90	3.90	Agreed
3	Offer people with a very wide range of skills	3.77	3.96	3.87	Agreed
4	It promotes equity	3.38	3.00	3.19	Agreed
5	Career education helps people to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications and abilities	3.00	3.33	3.17	Agreed
6	Teaches people to plan and make decisions about work and learning.	3.54	3.50	3.52	Agreed
7	Gives information about the labour market	2.85	2.40	2.63	Agreed
8	Improve the efficiency of labour markets and education systems	2.62	2.83	2.73	Agreed
9	It supports key policy objectives ranging from lifelong learning for social equity	3.08	3.20	3.14	Agreed
10	Allow people to build human capital and employability throughout their lives	2.69	3.00	2.85	Agreed
Grand Mean (\bar{X}_g)		3.25	3.31	3.28	Agreed

The data presented on table 3 revealed that the Grand Mean (\bar{X}_g) value (3.30) of the items is above the cutoff point (2.50). Therefore, all the respondents agreed on the benefits of career education towards curbing youth unemployment

Hypothesis I

HO₁: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of Technical and Vocational Educators on the challenges facing career education in schools.

Table 4: t– test statistical analysis of the respondents on the challenges facing career education in schools

	N	df	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal	t-cri	Level of Sig.	Decision
Technical Educators	15	36	3.09	0.727	0.215	1.68	NS	Accepted
Vocational Educators	23		3.22	0.188				

Keys: N= Number, \bar{X} = Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, df= Degree of freedom, t-cal= Calculated value
 Since the t-calculated value of 0.215 is less than the t-critical of 1.68 at 36 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance; the null hypothesis tested was accepted. This indicates that there is no significance difference between the mean responses of technical and vocational educators on the challenges facing career education in schools.

Hypothesis II

HO₂: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of Technical and Vocational Educators on the benefits of career education towards curbing youth unemployment

Table 5: t – test statistical analysis of the respondents on the benefits of career education towards curbing youth unemployment

	N	df	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal	t-cri	Level of Sig.	Decision
Technical Educators	15	36	3.25	0.415	0.550	1.68	NS	Accepted
Vocational Educators	23		3.31	0.103				

Since the t-calculated value of 0.5505 is less than the t- critical of 1.68 at 36 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance; the null hypothesis tested was accepted. There is no significant difference between the mean responses of technical and vocational educators about the benefits of career guidance towards curbing youth unemployment

FINDINGS

The following are the findings of the study, based on the data collected and analysed; they are highlighted based on the research questions posed in the study by the hypothesis.

Findings related to the effects of unemployment on National Security are:

1. The high wave of crime, robbery, political assassinations, religious riots, among youths.
2. Led to broken marriages
3. Loss of income
4. Increase malnutrition

Findings related to the challenges facing career education in schools are:

1. Inadequate career resource centre
2. Inadequate Resources for Guidance and Counselling
3. Inadequate training and re-training of counsellors
4. Poor relationship of teachers with parents

Findings related to the benefits of career education towards curbing youth unemployment are:

1. It helps labour markets work to meet their goals
2. It helps education systems meet their goals
3. It teaches people to plan and make decisions about work and learning

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The discussions of the findings are based on the research questions posed in the study and the hypothesis: The findings of this study revealed that youth unemployment is caused as a result of pathetic career education. The findings also revealed that unemployment is undesirable, bringing economic, social and political vices in the society. It has numerous consequences to societies among which include the high wave of crime; robbery among youths, political assassinations, religious riots, inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic clashes.

communal clashes were due to the increasing unemployment rate. This concurs with Egbuna (2001), Alanana (2003) and Okonkwo (2005) conclusion that the negative consequences of the youth unemployment include poverty, psychological problems of frustration, depression, hostility, abduction, murder, armed robbery, and all manner of criminal behaviours causing general insecurity of life and property. Similarly, the issue of unemployment has caused hunger and malnutrition. Therefore, unemployment and price increase of food and the unceasing onslaught of the unemployed and their dependents have led to increase malnutrition and its associated diseases in the third world. The social consequences of unemployment for those who are out of work include a higher incidence of poverty.

The research findings also revealed that the evil effects of mass unemployment have cracked some families in the country. Callen, Peter and Paul (2010) maintained that some unemployed people and their families experience anxiety and despair, frustration and desperate unhappiness. He also stated that the psychological pressure of unemployment causes some people to suffer stress.

The research findings also revealed that the resources used for career guidance are inadequate; these findings agree with Nyamwange, Nyakan and Ondima (2012) observations that there is a lack of counselling facilities which hinder the provision of guidance and counselling service. For instance, only 28% of the schools studied had reference books and only 19% had a career resource centre. Although 61.9% of the schools had a counselling office, the percentage of the schools without was quite big (38.1%) and yet a counselling office is critical for any effective guidance and counselling programme (Callen, Peter & Paul, 2010). Besides, contrary to Kiragu's (2002) recommendation, most school counselors' offices do not have the basic guidance and counselling facilities such as reference books, guidance and counselling manual and career resource materials. Quality guidance and counselling services require a number of facilities. These include: office space, bookshelves, drawers, files, finance, time, reference books, guidance and counselling manuals, psychological test materials among others.

It was also observed that the guidance and counseling personnel did not receive sufficient amounts of support from the school administration to enable them render quality services this coincides with Callen, Peter & Paul (2010) observation that only 28.6% of the schools studied gave financial assistance to the guidance and counselling department, only 52.4% sent teacher counsellors for seminars; only 14.3% gave teacher counsellors less teaching load, only 14.3% monitored guidance and counselling in their schools and only 33.3% availed competent teacher counsellors in their school. These finding indicate that successful implementation of guidance and counseling programmes depends on support from the stakeholders.

The findings also indicate that students had a generally negative attitude towards guidance and counselling as only a small percentage thought it had a role to play in boosting their ability to make informed decisions about 38% regarded guidance and counselling necessary in enhancing their self understanding; and only 46% deemed guidance and counselling generally necessary in the schools (Callen, Peter & Paul, 2010). These findings are of the same mind with Kombo's (2006) that high school students have a somewhat negative attitude towards guidance and counselling. Besides, the study also established that head teachers also had a negative attitude towards guidance and counselling. This negative attitude of both students and head teachers towards counselling does not auger well for the provision of quality guidance and counselling services in secondary schools.

CONCLUSION

Based on the finding of the study, it was analyzed that youth unemployment is a menace in Nigeria and constitutes a real danger and a threat to social, economic and political development. Youth unemployment will never be successfully curbed no matter the employment opportunities, financial support among others if there is no proper career education as the mounting evidence of measuring the power and civilization of the youths.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings the following recommendations were proffered viz:

1. Career guidance services should be made compulsory and provided for all levels of education to help students in making realistic career choices;
2. The roles, responsibilities, and ethical obligations of employees in the industry should be adequately communicated to the students during training by focusing on career education
3. There should be regular training and re-training of vocational guidance counsellors.
4. Government should support the establishment of counselling centers in schools to bring vocational guidance to the door-step of the youths.

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