

Assessing the Impact of Skills Acquisition Programmes of National Directorate of Employment incurring Unemployment in Taraba State

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Abstract

Unemployment has become a serious issue affecting development in Nigeria. A large number of educated Nigerians especially youths do not have access to job opportunities. It is on this basis that the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was established with the mandate to articulate programmes aimed at curbing unemployment in the country; in the light of the foregoing, this study seeks to examine the impact of National Directorate of Employment (NDE) programmes in curbing unemployment in Taraba State. Primary and secondary sources of information from government documents, pamphlets, gazettes, and published journals were used. The study purposively sampled 380 respondents from the target population using Krejcie and Morgan sample size determinant table. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested using Regression at 0.05 level of significance while data were analyzed using Standard deviation and cluster mean. The result of hypothesis one reveals that, there is a significant effect of skills acquisition programmes of (NDE) in curbing unemployment in Taraba State. Regression was used to test the hypothesis at 5 % level of significance and the p-value (0.000) was lower than the significance level. This can be statistically given as P-value $0.000 < 0.05$. Result of hypothesis testing also showed significant effect of (NDE) skills acquisition programmes in curbing unemployment in Taraba State. The study, therefore, concluded that Skills acquisition Programmes of (NDE) has helped many youths to acquire needed skills in Taraba State.

Keywords: Assessing, Employment, Skills acquisition programme and unemployment

Introduction

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) is one of the Federal Government's agencies established towards encouraging the survival of vocational skills development training and socio-economic development. The programme is charged with provision of small scale business skills and loans to enable young graduates establish their own businesses. According to Adebisi and Oni (2012), the philosophy of the NDE is self-enterprise, which emphasizes self-employment and self-reliance in preference to wage employment. This philosophy is pursued through policy planning and well-articulated programmes of vocational skills development programme (VSD), small scale enterprises programme, rural employment promotion programme and special public works programme (SPWP). These programmes are set up across the nation in an effort to alleviate unemployment problems in the nation. The NDE does not leave the disabled out of its programmes. The disabled work scheme is designed to enable them acquire skills, produce marketable products that will keep them gainfully employed.

Chojnicki and Czyz (2004) posited that socio-economic development is made up of processes caused by internal and external factors which determine the course and direction of development. The regional development factors of the present-day socio-institutional sphere, the business environment, innovativeness, social climate, and foreign investment strategies. The vocational skills development Programme (VSD) is one of the Directorate's job creation programmes primarily concerned with bequeathing productive, functional and marketable skills to the unemployed persons in Nigeria. These skills acquisition intervention, introduced as a novel approach in combating mass unemployment in Nigeria (NDE Annual Report, 2019).

Small scale enterprise programme is one of the four core programmes of the NDE designed to inculcate in unemployed graduates of tertiary institutions and other interested persons which include retired persons the spirit of entrepreneurship, creativity and self-reliance with a view to assist them set up their own business to create employment for themselves and other Tarabans and Nigerians as a whole (NDE Annual Report, 2019). Rural employment promotion focused on generating rural employment and improving incomes through agribusiness engagement, promoting the adoption of improved technologies in post-harvest handling storage and processing and promoting other non-farms rural employment activities in order to stem the rural-urban drift. The harsh economic situation being experienced in the country coupled with high level of insecurity has made rural farmers, women and youth have less disposable income to enhance their businesses. This has led to the closure of more agribusinesses, increase in the rate of non-abating unemployment and rise in crime level (NDE Annual Report, 2019).

Special public works is one of the core jobs creating programme of the NDE that seek to identify and exploit employment opportunities that abound in numerous public works sectors. Under the programme, skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled and professional manpower/labour that remained unemployed are organized to carry out utility, environmental, infrastructure development and sanitation works. It also promotes mass employment strategies through the attachment of qualified graduates to willing employers of labour for skills upgrading during which permanent employment or self-employment may be secured (NDE Annual Report, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Unemployment has become more alarming within the past decade; it is obvious that there has been a rapid increase in population growth and the rate of graduates produced by institutions of learning coupled with the high rate of school dropouts who are jobless and without skills which has led to youth involvement in social vices and delinquent behaviour in the society. To fight this situation, the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was been established with the mandate to articulate programmes that will help combat mass unemployment in Nigeria. Despite this gigantic effort made by the government to tackle unemployment and joblessness, the problem appears to be unsolved as, according to National Bureau of Statistics Report 2020, the rate of unemployment in Taraba State is 39.4%, which translates to; Labour force population is 1,351,313 and total youths unemployed of 532,520. This situation poses a serious havoc to the wellbeing of youths and the society in Taraba State and Nigeria as a whole which is a major concern that requires attention.

Admittedly, there are many empirical studies on National Directorate of Employment Programmes in Nigeria. Emphasis, however, has been on NDE operational scheme, role of NDE in poverty reduction, skill acquisition programs of NDE, impact of NDE program on graduate employment all with reference to one state or the other. There is, surprisingly, paucity of studies on this matter within the researcher's geographical area. This study is, therefore, motivated by the need to fill this gap.

Research Question

The study is guided by the following research question.

- I. What is the Impact of NDE's Skills Acquisition Programmes on Unemployment reduction in Taraba State?

Objective of the study

- i. To assess the impact of NDE's Skills Acquisition Programmes on unemployment reduction in Taraba State.

Research Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant relationship between skills acquisition programmes of NDE and unemployment reduction in Taraba State.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between skills acquisition programmes of NDE and unemployment reduction in Taraba State.

Conceptual Clarification

Skill Acquisition

Skill acquisition refers to ability to be trained on a particular task or function. It is a form of training of individuals or group of individuals to acquire skills needed for self-sustenance (Idoko, 2014). Skill acquisition is the manifestation of idea and knowledge through training geared towards instilling in the youths the spirit of entrepreneurship needed for meaningful development (Douli, 2012). Skill acquisition is a major tool for extreme poverty and hunger eradication with the aim of creating an avenue for jobs and wealth which will bring self-reliance and sufficiency and, contribute to the growth and development of a country's economy (Isaac in Oyerinde & Falade, 2016). Skill acquisition is the ability to be trained on a particular task or function (Mike, 2014). Idoko (2014) posited that skill acquisition requires the gathering of various abilities that enhance task execution through the coordination of both theoretical and practical form of knowledge. It involves the training of people in different fields of trade under a legal agreement between the trainers and the trainees for certain duration and under certain conditions. Nwaukwa, Iloeje, Nzeh and Nwagu (2018) stated that skill acquisition leads to employment generation in small and medium enterprises such as computer business centers, book binding centers, laminating centers, computer sales, computer training, internet centers (cybercafé), business registration, photocopying centers, reprographic, and printing press among others.

Unemployment

Unemployment, in economic terms, refers to the conditions where individuals who are willing and able to work are unable to find opportunities leading to a state of involuntary joblessness (Mike, 2014). Similarly, Adebisi and Oni (2012) see unemployment as the state of being without gainful employment, characterised by the active search for work, often measured as a percentage of the labour force, thus Unemployment is a macroeconomic indicator denoting the percentage of workforce that is not engaged in productive employment emphasizing the underutilization of human resources within an economy.

From the above assertions it can be deduced that unemployment is frequently analyzed in terms of structural, frictional, and cyclical factors highlighting the complexity of the phenomena influencing job availability and the workforce's ability to secure employment.

Employment

Employment implies work for which one has engaged and is being paid by an employer regularly as a result of training. Employment also simply implies an employer-employee relationship or contract of service, where employer defines the time and place of work, the nature of the work and the compensation provided upon its completion (Adamolekun, 2006).

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on empowerment theory which was popularized by Honnadle (1979) cited in Mbaya (2007) who argued that the best way to induce development is to empower the people to be able to handle their own development by themselves. This principle, like the basic need's principle, believes that meeting people's basic need is an essential component of development. However, it goes beyond that and argues that the provision of basic necessities alone does not constitute development. Julius Nyerere, the former president of Tanzania, argued that services that provide human beings comfort such as road, building, electricity, increased food and nutrition are essential to rural development. But to him, those things in themselves do not constitute development. He said that the availability of these things could facilitate development only when it leads to develop the mind, understanding and competence of the people to have more effective control over their own destiny. Nyerere translated his philosophy of development through an agrarian society that is equity-based, village and community-oriented, participative and democratic and which places a high value on human freedom. Honnadle further argued that the best way to induce development in the areas is to empower the people to be able to handle their own development by themselves. The Empowerment Theory subscribes to the saying that "if you have a child who loves to eat fish, you should do him a favour by teaching him how to fish than to give him fish at any time he need it". This is to enable him have access to fish even when you are not around. This theory suggests that rural development can be brought about effectively through land reforms, small-scale farmers' cooperatives, and other participative techniques that can empower the people to be able to stand on their own in the development process" (Dlakwa, 2009).

Erickson (2003) cited in Mery and Chelby (2008) noted that: "Empowerment is thought to occur when an organization sincerely engages people and progressively responds to this engagement with mutual interest and intention to promote growth". The National Directorate of Employment engages the unemployed Nigerians into various skill acquisition programmes or training for them to become employed or masters of their own destiny. Empowerment is both a value orientation for working in the community and a theoretical model for understanding the process and consequences of efforts to exert control and influence over decision that affect one's life, organizational functioning and the quality of community life (Zimmerman, 2000; Perkin & Zimmerman, 1995). Rapaport (1984) cited in Zimmerman (2000) accounts for the fact that empowerment may occur at multiple levels of analysis. Empowerment theory is viewed as a process: the mechanism by which people, organizations and communities gain mastery over their lives". An empowerment theory suggests a distinct approach for developing interventions and creating social change (the unemployment situation).

Empowerment may be seen as a process where individual learn to see a closer correspondence between their goals and a sense of how to achieve them and a relationship between their efforts and life outcomes. Empowerment theory is an important transition process from passive or specifically unemployment situation to an active or simple employment situation. Therefore, the theory of empowerment is pertinent to this study, this in the sense that the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), the case study of this work is primarily established to save people from passive or unemployment situation to employment or active situation. In the same vein, Dlakwa (2009) asserted that: Empowerment theory suggests that development

can be brought about effectively through land reforms, small-scale farmer's cooperatives and other participative techniques that can empower the people to be able to stand on their own in the development process. Dlakwa's assertion clearly portrayed to us that empowerment theory is relevant to this study, this is because the National Directorate and Employment works tirelessly towards ensuring that the unemployed persons are mutually engaged in one skills acquisition or the other, trained and by extension empowered in order to stand on their own to become independently employed and even employ the services of other people that are not employed.

Literature Review

Overview and Historical Development of NDE in Taraba State

The world-wide economic depression of the early 80's caused a rapid deterioration in Nigeria's economy. Industrial output shrank to an all-time low and commercial activities were consequently reduced, leading to the loss of employment opportunity for millions of Nigerians. By the end of 1985, the unemployment situation in Nigeria had reached desperate and alarming proportions (Charles, 2011). On 26th March 1986, the President appointed a committee to deliberate on strategies for dealing with mass unemployment under the auspices of the Federal Ministry of Employment, Labour and Productivity. The report of the Chukwuma Committee, as it became popularly known, was approved by the Federal Government in October, 1986. Based on its recommendations, the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was established on November 22, 1986 and its initial core programmes were formally launched on 30th January, 1987, by the Chief of General Staff, Vice Admiral Augustus Aikhomu, on behalf of the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (NDE, 2006).

The directorate was established by Act 25 CAP 250 of the laws of the Federal Government of Nigeria. The Act was published in the Federal Government (Extra-ordinary) Gazette No. 61 of 20th October, 1989. The President in his 1987 budget speech had directed the new body to "concentrate its efforts on the re-activation of public works, promotion of direct labour, promotion of self-employment, organization of artisans into co-operatives, and encouragement of a culture of maintenance and repairs." To ensure effective implantation of the President's directive, a Board of Directors representing a cross section of all interest groups from industry, commerce, agriculture, finance, employers of labour and government was set-up to define policy and supervise operations (NDE, 2015). The NDE was formally launched in January 1987 but actual training under the Small-Scale Industries and Graduate Employment Programme started in May 1987 when the Honourable Minister of Employment, Labour and Productivity invited all the Vice Chancellors and Rectors of the nation's universities and polytechnics to Lagos to discuss the institutionalization of Entrepreneur Development Programme (EDP) training in tertiary institutions (Comfort & Ngwama, 2015). They affirmed that from that time on, there have not been significant changes in terms of targeting, scope and coverage since the programme started in 1987. But one development has been a minor expansion of the target groups in 1988 to include mature people and young school leavers. To further enhance and streamline the strategies of the NDE in mass job generation, a committee, "the Ahmed Joda Committee of 1999" streamlined the activities of the various Poverty Alleviation Agencies in the country. Thus, NDE's activities were streamlined and made to focus mainly on training for job generation with resettlement limited to only symbolic proportion to test the efficacy of her training activities (NDE, 2015). The NDE is the nation's apex agency for employment creation through programmes of direct intervention among school leavers and graduates (Emeh, 2012). The mission statement of NDE is to design and implement

job creation programmes that will promote attitudinal change, employment generation, poverty reduction and enhance wealth creation (Charles, 2011).

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) has beamed its employment generating special light to Taraba State, where it enters partnership with the government of the State to provide jobs cum means of livelihood to the teeming unemployed youths, aiming to ease economic hardship and reducing youth engagement in crime (NDE, 2015).

Statutorily, various programmes of the NDE were introduced in the State backed by Nigerian laws to undertake such responsibilities as; equipping the unemployed with employment generating skills, providing some level of startup packs for entrepreneurial businesses in an effort to mitigate unemployment rate in the State.

Strategic Importance of NDE in Skill Development

One of the most significant factors influencing employment levels within the formal sector and activities in the informal sector is the structure and growth of the economy. The growth rates for the Nigerian economy have been high over the past eight years, but not significant enough to absorb the growing size of the country's labor force and make a dent in the unemployment rate, in view of these trends in the labor market, the question arises as to where these people can find work and what skills they require in order to earn a living. Powell and Treichel (2008, p.4) noted that there is no precise figure on the numbers working in the formal versus the informal sector, but the best estimates on the size of the formal sector is that about 2 million are employed in the civil service, 1 million in health and education and about another 2 million in private sector employment, hence approximately 10 percent of the labour force is in the formal sector. Agriculture is still the dominant sector and contributes about 42 percent of the country's GDP. This calls for strategic importance of NDE in determining and assessing and providing data on the nature of demand for skills in the informal sector. The National Directorate for Employment (NDE) undertakes trade tests on a regular basis and successful candidates are issued with a certificate of competency. Under this test, a person is required to have worked in a particular occupation for a number of years and the certification provides a public record of his competency. These records are useful since they act as a proxy for skills demand, given that a person will only be an apprentice and pay to have their skills tested if there is an economic demand for their services. From 1991 to 2004, a total of 363,716 people had their skills tested. This helps us to understand part of the picture of the demand for skills in the informal sector, as it reflects the structure of the economy described earlier, including regional dimensions (Powell & Treichel, 2008). Administrative data on the numbers of people enrolled on the open apprenticeship scheme can also help signal where there is a high demand for workplace skills in the informal sector. Under the open apprenticeship scheme, the National Directorate for Employment provides a young person with the opportunity to register for an apprenticeship with a master craftsman. There are a total of 86 trades and the length of the apprenticeship will depend on the trade. For the year 2006, Powell and Treichel noted that a total of 40,014 were registered on a program and the most common different type of trades.

Employment and Unemployment in Taraba State

Onueonoru (2008) posited that the global economic recession of the early 80's caused a rapid deterioration in Nigeria's economy. Industrial output shrank to an all-time low and commercial activities were consequently reduced leading to the loss of employment opportunity for millions of Nigerians. NBS (2009) reported that the unemployment situation in the country had become really distressing with unemployment figure going as high as 9.9% for females and 6.9% for males in the urban areas while the rates for the rural area were 6.3% and 3.5% for female and male respectively. Moreover, Osuala (2007) revealed that about 80% of graduates

secured paid employment within 3 months after their passing out from the National Youth Service Scheme in 1974. The National Youth Service Scheme (NYSC) in collaboration with the manpower board recorded that about 93% of 1983 graduates who completed their national service remained unemployed in years after (NBS, 2010). In August 1985, the Babangida administration came to power and immediately realized the threat posed by the menace of unemployment to the social political and economic well-being of the country. Babbie (2001) argued that youths and graduates are the hardest hit with growing joblessness resulting to increasing despondency among youths and their parents. The introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was aimed to stem the tide through the restructuring of the economy.

Another aim of SAP was to reduce the dominance of unproductive investment in the public sector, improve the sectors efficiency and intensify the growth potential of the private sectors (Abdullah *et al*, 2012; Ajagbe *et al.*, 2013). In a bid to rationalize government business enterprises, this resulted to loss of jobs due to retrenchment and outright layoffs. The situation became aggravated by the same action by a large portion of the private sector, which had hitherto survived basically on foreign inputs for their production (Abdullah *et al.*, 2012). The strict monetary measures occasioned by them structural adjustment especially that of an adverse exchange rate saw to the liquidation of such business. The result of all these was the outrageous high rate of unemployment. The government on the other hand seems to realize this and the implications it would have on the economy hence National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was established as a permanent institution for tackling the problems.

Government Polices on Employment

The period 1960 to 1990 saw a tremendous growth in the numbers, size and activity of businesses in the country particularly the small and medium enterprises (Bilauet *al*, 2015). These heightened activities encouraged government to formulate a set of regulations and policies to check unfair company practices. This was done by government deciding the kind of business one should engage in. However, certain business ventures are forbidden by law because of their determined effects on the government, other businesses and the public in general. The policy maintains that no individual or group has the legal right to manufacture military or paramilitary weapons such as land mines, atomic weapons except licensed to produce it for the government (Osuala, 2007). Moreover, another area of control is the type of product produced and brought to the market for sale. Adebayo (1999) added that any product, drug or food must obtain approval or license from government before it is displayed or advertised for sale. Even the automobile industry is regulated as to the class of component to import, car assembly plant is allowed to import only “completely knocked down” (CKD) parts and compelled to source other parts locally. In addition to this, car importers are restricted to bring into the country model of vehicles that are above 8 years from its manufactured date. The point that is being made there is that it is difficult to find any sector of the economy that is not affected in some way by legislation.

Dimensions of National Directorate of Employment Programmes

Vocational Skills Development Programme and Skills Acquisition

The Vocational Skills Development programme of the National Directorate of Employment involves the use of informal sector operators such as master craftsmen and women as training outlets for unskilled school leavers. Such school leavers are attached to them for periods long enough for them to acquire necessary skills (NDE Annual Report, 2018).

It also includes the deployment of well-equipped mobile workshops to train unemployed youths in rural areas where informal training outlets are non-existent. The training covers several vocational trades across all sectors of the economy.

Aims of the Programme

The Vocational Skills Development Programme of the NDE was designed to achieve the following aims:

- i. To provide technical and vocational training for holders of primary school certificate, school dropouts and those with vertical literacy education.
- ii. To equip the youths with such skills that will enable them to be self-employed or gain wage employment.
- iii. To provide alternative employment opportunities for youths so that they form cooperatives and start their own business.

Strategies/Scheme of the Programme

A. National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS)

The National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS) is one of the key schemes of the NDE with high mass employment potentials. The scheme is targeted at unskilled and unemployed youths both male and female to equip and up skill them with relevant demand driven skills. The scheme is implemented at two (2) levels namely:

i. Basic National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (B-NOAS)

The National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (B-NOAS) is designed to empower the unemployed and unskilled school leavers through skills training. The youths are recruited and posted to master craftsmen and women who are informal sectors operators for skills acquisition training. These trainers use their training facilities to impart skills to the unemployed youths for period long enough for them to learn a particular skill.

ii. Advanced National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (A-NOAS)

The Advanced-NOAS is designed for artisan who were graduates of the B-NOAS. The scheme is designed to bridge the skills-gap and upgrade the skills of the benefiting persons who are in business (i.e. equip them with higher level of competence).

B. School-on-Wheel Scheme (SOW)

The school-on-wheel (SOW) scheme was deigned to articulate training activities in the rural area with a view to creating a pool of artisans that will readily address the needs of the rural environment and therefore promote economic activities therein.

C. Community Based Training Scheme (CBTS)

The unemployed/underemployed persons were trained nationwide in income generating trades/skills peculiar to each. The skills which will enhance their income base thus reducing poverty include but not limited to: Bead stringing, tilling, satellite installation, Aluminum Fabrication, Tie and dye (Batik) on completion of training in their respective localities, these persons were provided with seed capitals (financial empowerment) with which to commence the practice of their learnt trade.

D. Special Vocational Training for the “Persons with Special Need” (Vulnerable Groups)

The special vocational training scheme is designed for unskilled and unemployed Persons with Special Needs (The vulnerable, physically challenged, widows, commercial sex workers,

displaced persons, orphans, people living with HIV/AIDS etc.) to enable them become self-employed and self-reliant.

E. Resettlement Loan Scheme (RLS)

The Resettlement Loans Scheme (RLS) is designed to assist graduates of all vocational skills acquisition training scheme with tools/equipment and working capital to enable them establish and run successful business.

F. Artisans Resettlement and Monitoring Scheme (ARMS)

The Artisan Resettlement and Mentoring Scheme (ARMS) is a scheme of the VSD aimed at empowering Artisans that are already proficient and skillful in various skills sets to obtainable they set up their own business with a view to creating more jobs and reducing the rate of unemployment in country. The Artisans are expected to acquire more business exposure under the mentorship of other successful business owners. These Artisans are provided with basic working tools and capital under the scheme depending on the skills set and cost of establishing such micro enterprises.

G. School to Work Training Scheme

The School–To-Work Training Scheme (STW) is a scheme designed to train young Junior and Senior Secondary Schools (JSS 1-3 and SS 1-2) students in quick win vocational skills with high income potentials within their various localities. This is with a view to possibly engaging them in productive ventures during their respective vacation periods or even while in school providing additional income for them while still in school.

H. Partnership in Skills Training (PIST)

This is a window for collaborative skills acquisition training between the Directorate and other relevant agencies, NGOs, private organizations, individual etc. it targets at empowering youths with relevant vocational skills, according to the needs of the collaborating partner, for decent job opportunity and wealth creation. Thus, this scheme oversees issues relating to NDEs collaboration in skill acquisition with external bodies both at government and non-governmental agencies.

Any developing nation that wants to shake off its syndromes of poverty, insecurity, unemployment and other social ills, must accept the vocational education is the vehicle for such realization through which individuals and communities are educated and endowed with the training of skilled manpower for self-reliance. It is for this development that the Federal Government stressed much on the importance of the teaching of technology and other relevant vocational education as stipulated in the National Policy on Education (2004) section 7 which stated that “Technical and Vocational Education is used as a comprehensive term in referring to those aspects of educational process involving, in addition to the general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitude, understanding and knowledge relating to occupation in various sectors of economic life”. The above statement reveals the government’s interest in the development of skills in individuals, required to boost the manpower needed for the socio-economic development of the nation.

Skill acquisition is knowledge and training in the area of using intellectual thinking and skillful manipulations of instruments and equipment to produce functional designs and products, and such training acquired by skilled workers is a job that cannot be perfumed by anybody, (Dashen., 2012). In assertion, Onyeneke (2008), viewed skill acquisition as the ability to do something well, usually gained through training or experience. This concept is the process that involves learning, innovation, possession and development of new practice,

training of experience that makes one to be creative, perfect and self-reliant in the act. The acquisition of skills and the utilization of knowledge obtained through vocational education training, when translated enhances individuals’ capacity to develop their potential and skills in the area of their interest and specialization.

Methodology

The study adopted a mixed design where data were collected quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative data involved the use of questionnaire while the qualitative data involved collecting data from secondary sources especially from the the websites of NDE, government documents, pamphlets, gazettes, and published journals. The secondary sources were relevant literature relating to National Directorate of Employment Programmes. This source of data served as a point of verification and clarification of the information gathered and content analysis was adopted.

The target population for this study consisted of the entire seventeen (17) members of Staff and 34,695 graduate beneficiaries of National Directorate of Employment (NDE) programmes since inception in Taraba State. The population comprises all categories of National Directorate of Employment (NDE) Staff in Taraba State office and the graduate beneficiaries which is computed to be 34,712.

The sample size for this study was 380 obtained using Morgan and Krejcie table of determining sample size. The rationale for the use of the Morgan and Krejcie is that, it is scientific and easy to provide accurate sample size. The study adopted purposive sampling technique, it is purposive because the questionnaire targeted the staff and graduated beneficiaries of NDE Programmes in the Study area. Then, a total of 380 respondents were selected using simple random sampling techniques. The selected members of the class or group (population) to whom the instrument was administered constitute the sample. The sample size of this research covers the staff and graduated beneficiaries of NDE programmes in Taraba state. These categories of staff and graduated beneficiaries were randomly drawn through a paper-in-the-hat method in the study area. The justification for choosing simple random sampling is that the technique is suitable and simple in providing the sample that can easily be drawn to represent the population.

Result of the Findings

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

This section presents socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents in the study area which includes gender, age, educational qualification, Marital Status and category.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents based on Gender

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Male	216	62.6
Female	129	37.4
Total	345	100.0
Junior Staff	7	1.7
Senior Staff	10	2.9
Beneficiaries	329	95.4
Total	345	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents based on gender. Out of 345 respondents, 62.6% are male while the remaining 37.4% are female. This indicates that a large proportion

of respondents are male. 1.7%, 2.9% are Senior Staff and 95.4% are beneficiaries of NDE programmes. This implies that most of the respondents are beneficiaries of NDE programme

Table 2: Distribution of respondents based on Age

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
15-25 years	199	57.7
26-36 years	110	31.9
37-47 years	13	3.8
48 and above	23	6.6
Total	345	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents based on age. Out of 345 respondents, 57.7% were within the ages of 15-25 years, 31.9% were within the ages of 26-36, 3.8% were within the ages of 36-45 years and 6.6% were within the age of 48 and above. This implies that most of the respondents were between the ages of 15-25 years.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents based on educational qualification

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
NCE/Diploma	245	71.0
BSc	88	25.5
MSc	7	2.0
PhD	5	1.4
Total	345	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 shows the distribution of respondents based on educational qualification. Out of 345 respondents, 71.0% were NCE/Diploma holders, 25.5% were B.Sc. holders, 2.0 % are M.Sc. holders and 1.4% has Ph.D. qualification. This indicates that most of the respondents were holders of NCE/Diploma.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents based on marital status

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Single	269	78.0
Married	59	17.1
Separated	15	4.3
Widows	2	0.6
Total	345	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4 shows the distribution of respondents based on marital status. Out of 345 respondents, 78.0% are single, 17.1% were married, 4.3% separated and finally 0.6% were widows. This implies that most of the respondents were single.

Effects of Vocational Skills Development Programme on Skills acquisition in Taraba State

i. Research Question 1: What is impact of NDE’s Skills Acquisition Programmes on Unemployment reduction in Taraba State?

Table 6: Showing mean value ratings of respondents with regards to research question 1.

S/N	Item Description	RESPONSES							
		SA	A	D	SD	SUM	X	STD. D	DECISION
	Unskilled beneficiaries Are sent to master trainers to acquire vocational skills	124	81	71	69	950	2.75	1.144	A
	Participants are trained for the period of three (3) months	158	156	22	9	1153	3.34	.715	A
	Skills acquired are sources of employment to the beneficiaries	123	121	64	37	1020	2.96	.986	A
	Acquired skills makes beneficiaries to be self-reliant	74	102	102	67	873	2.53	1.034	A
	Skills acquired make participants to become employers of labour	76	100	108	61	881	2.55	1.022	A
	Cluster Mean						2.83		A

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Key (SA = Strongly Agreed, A = Agreed, D = Disagreed SD = Strongly Disagreed).

Table 6 shows respondents views on the effect of vocational skills development programme on skills acquisition in Taraba State. The table shows the mean (X) of their responses as well as the standard deviations, which is an indication of the variability of their responses or how close their responses are to the central mean. All responses in this table show a mean value of 2.5 and above, indicative of the fact that the respondents agreed to all the items under the research question. They agreed that: unskilled beneficiaries are sent to master trainers to acquire vocational skills (X= 2.75); participants are trained for the period of three months (X3.34); skills acquired are sources of employment to the beneficiaries (X=2.96); that acquired skills make beneficiaries to be self-reliant (X2.53), and finally the respondents agreed that skills acquired make participants to be employers of labour (X=2.55).

In view of this, and also judging from the cluster mean value of 2.83, therefore, we accept all the claims and uphold that the listed items show that Vocational Skills Development Programme has effect on Skills acquisition in Taraba State.

Test of Hypotheses

H₀: There is no significant relationship between skills acquisition programmes of NDE and unemployment reduction in Taraba State.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between skills acquisition programmes of NDE and unemployment in Taraba State.

Hypothesis one was tested using the values of the responses derived from table 4.3 respectively

Table 7: Test of Hypothesis one Using Simple Linear Regression

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	1.643	.191		8.603	.000
Vocational Skills Devt. Programme	.525	.052	.677	10.057	.000
R	=	.677			
R Square	=	.428			
Adj. R Square	=	.425			
F-Statistics	=	101.146			
Sig.	=	.000			

a. Dependent Variable: Skills Acquisition

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The result in Table 7 shows that the coefficient of determination (R square) explains the variation in the dependent variable due to changes in the independent variable. The R square value of 0.428 indicates that there was a 42.8% variation in skills acquisition due to changes in Vocational Skills Development Programme at a 95% confidence interval. Also, the value of R (0.677) from the Table shows a positive relationship between the study variables. (F = 101.146; P = .000). the regression coefficient reveals that a unit change in vocational skills development programme would increase skills acquisition by 52.5%, and the p-value (.000) was less than 0.05. The null hypothesis was rejected and the study concluded that there is a significant relationship between skills acquisition programmes of NDE unemployment reduction in Taraba State.

Findings

- i. The result of hypothesis one reveals that, there is a significant effect of skills acquisition programmes of NDE in curbing unemployment in Taraba State. Regression was used to test the hypothesis at 5 % level of significance and the p-value (0.000) was lower than the significance level. This can be statistically given as P-value $0.000 < 0.05$. Result of hypothesis testing also showed significant effect of NDE skills acquisition programmes in curbing unemployment in Taraba State. The findings of the study agreed with the submission by Adebisi and Oni (2012) who shows that the operational schemes and training programme of NDE met the needs of trainees in Southwestern Nigeria. The study adopted the survey design. The findings agree with that of Ukoha, Osuji, Osuji and Ibeagwa (2014) study examined the influence of the skills acquisition programs of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) on job creation in Abia State. Both primary and secondary sources of information were used in gathering data for the study. 120 questionnaires were administered to NDE by means of simple random sampling technique. Out of these, 108 questionnaires were returned with valid responses who found that the NDE vocational skills development programmes is helping its beneficiaries to acquire skills and generate employment.
- ii. Finding of the study also indicated that NDE programme has helped in establishment of small and medium scale enterprises which has played a significant role in curbing unemployment in Taraba State.

Conclusion

The study assesses the impact of National Directorate of Employment Skills Acquisition Programmes in curbing unemployment in Taraba State, Nigeria. The establishment of the National Directorate of Employment by the Federal Government of Nigeria to tackle the problem of unemployment is indeed a step in the right direction. Findings of the study indicated that although unemployment situation is still very much, the Directorate has played significant effect on poverty reduction and unemployment reduction through its programmes. The study concludes that Vocational Skills Development Programme has helped many youths to acquire needed skills in Taraba State. The study also concludes that there have been increase and expansion in small and medium scale enterprises in Taraba State as a result of activity of Small-Scale Enterprise Programme. The study further concluded that Rural Employment Promotion Programme has helped to reduce the rate of poverty in rural areas thereby improving the standard of living. Finally, the study concludes that many unemployed youths have been engaged through Special Public Works Programme thereby reducing the rate of unemployment.

Recommendations

Based on findings of the study and conclusion drawn, the following recommendations were made:

- i. In order to strengthen vocational skills development programme, the provision of equipment and the effective utilization of the equipment and facilities should be given priority attention to ensure impartation of functional and productive vocational skills into the prospective NDE trainees. When youths are empowered through the acquisition of vocational skills, there is the possibility that they will use the skills to create new avenues for wealth. The NDE training should be aimed at bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge by offering more technological learning and capacity building skills.
- ii. Government should put in more effort in establishing Small and Medium Scale enterprises through the provision of facilities and grants so as to generate more employment in the State.

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