

Skills Acquisition and Unemployment Reduction in Nigeria: A Case Study of National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in Akwa Ibom State

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Abstract

The study investigated how Unemployment problem is tackled through Skills Acquisition by the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Different measures have been adopted by the government to tackle the challenge with very little result. Using data obtained from both primary and secondary sources for the period 1987-2012, we found that positive link exist between Skills Acquisition by NDE and Unemployment reduction in Akwa Ibom State even though not without daunting challenges. However, the results of the income contributions of Skills Acquisition by NDE to the States' economy were mixed. While 48% asserted to a positive link, 40% accepted a minimal influence. Thus, we recommend more spread of NDE training centers to all the Local Government Areas in the State for more benefits to be realized, among others.

Keywords: Unemployment; Skills Acquisition; National directorate of employment (NDE); Akwa Ibom State; Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria is bedeviled with a myriad of problems, which despite her oil wealth, inhibits her development. Unemployment is one of the developmental problems that face every developing economy in this twenty-first century, and Nigeria is not exempted. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2009, 2011) [1], the national unemployment rates for Nigeria between 2000 and 2011 showed that the number of unemployed persons constituted 31.1% in 2000; 13.6% in 2001; 12.6% in 2002; 14.8% in 2003; 13.4% in 2004; 11.9% in 2005; 13.7% in 2006; 14.6% in 2007; 14.9% in 2008; 19.7% in 2009; 21.1% in 2010 and 23.9% in 2011. In 2012, unemployment rate in Nigeria increased to 24%. Such wide rate of unemployment was transmitted through the various states' unemployment rates. For instance, within the period under review (2000-2011), unemployment rate in Akwa Ibom State fall from 18.5% in 2000 to 12.3% in 2002. However, from then onward, it maintained a steady increase from 14.4% in 2003 to 15.3% in 2006, falling slightly to 13.5% in 2007 and then moving onward to 34.1% in 2008 and falling slightly to 25.3% in 2010.

The Nigeria Economic Report released by the World Bank in 2011 stated that unemployment rate worsened from "12% of the working population in 2006 to 24% in 2011". Being among the top richest state in terms of crude oil production and federal allocation in the south: south region of Nigeria, unemployment rate in Akwa Ibom State is also increasing at an alarming rate. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) as at 2010, the unemployment rate of Akwa Ibom State was the second highest in the south-south zone with 36.1%. The situation has been on the increase and this has resulted in increase in social vices in the country. Available records clearly shows that in the last two decades of the independence of Nigeria as a sovereign nation (1960s and 1970s), unemployment and its attendant consequence: poverty, were not of national concern as they are today.

The origin of unemployment in Nigeria can be traced back to the oil boom era of 1970s. During this period, Nigerian government and individuals abandoned skills acquisition and utilization through diversified entrepreneurship practices that have the capability to boost both individual and the country's economic ego. Emphasis shifted from entrepreneurial practices to paper qualification which has resulted in increased unemployment in the country.

The nation's agricultural, industrial and the then bubbling public

service sectors were able to effectively absorb most of the labour force. Nigerian citizens before the oil boom believed in what one can do in order to ensure self-sustenance. For instance, an increase in the economic status of the country was as a result of diversified activities bordering on agricultural products such as cocoa, groundnut, palm kernel, palm oil, cassava, in addition to other craft practices. The educational system in Nigeria then encouraged craft practices even at the primary school level. During the period, Nigeria had so many skilled technicians such as carpenters, painters, auto-mechanics, fashion designers, hair dressers, among others.

Faced with the foregoing, Nigeria established the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in March 1986 with its programmes formally launched in January 1987. The main objective of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was the responsibility of Job Creation to the teeming army of the unemployed in Nigeria. The programme was aimed at designing and articulating policies to tackle general unemployment problem in the economy. This includes obtaining and maintaining a data bank on declared vacancies and employment in the economy with a view to reduce job search cost. The activities of NDE cover all sectors of the economy.

Since its establishment, NDE has been grappling with the nagging issue of employment creation through its various programmes such as employment counseling services and job linkages, vocational skills acquisition training, entrepreneurial training and enterprise creation, training for rural employment promotion, training for labour-based transient works, collaboration with other relevant agencies and organization, among others [2].

In other to achieve its mandate, NDE immediately spread its tentacle to all the 36 states of the federation and the federal capital territory, Abuja. In Akwa Ibom State, NDE has its state head office in Uyo, the state capital, and four training centers spread across the three

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senatorial district of the state. Four areas of employment intervention programmes being articulated by NDE in Akwa Ibom State, include

- a. Vocational Skill Acquisition (VSD),
- b. Small Scale Enterprises (SSE),
- c. Rural Employment Promotion (REP), and
- d. Special Public Works (SPW).

The evidences in the country cum states' unemployment position and most recently, the complementing evidence of employment test for recruitment into the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) conducted across the country on Saturday, March 15, 2014, which consisted of over 56, 000 applicants', shows that a reappraisal of the country's agencies on employment creation is important. Report shows that the exercise claimed the lives of about 16 applicants due to the stampede ensuing at the different test centers while many were left injured. This poses a source of worry to the researchers and results in the consideration of the study by the researchers.

The Nigerian economy since the attainment of political independence in 1960 has undergone fundamental changes. As a nation, Nigeria has been working tirelessly since the collapse of oil boom to achieve youth independence and improved economic status through several reforms and programme initiatives such as:

1. The Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP)
2. The National Directorate of Employment (NDE)
3. Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agencies (SMEDAN)
4. National Agency for Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)
5. Better Life Programme
6. National Open Apprenticeship Scheme
7. The graduate job creation loan Guarantee scheme
8. Agricultural Sector Employment Programme
9. Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P)
10. Youth Enterprise With Innovation in Nigeria (YOUWIN)

Despite these policies and programmes, youth unemployment remains a major challenge to the developmental process of the Nigerian economy. Youth unemployment appears to be shooting up the sky as many Nigerian youths lack appropriate skills that will empower them after graduation from school. The "Nigerian unemployment report 2011" prepared by the National Bureau of Statistics show that the rate of unemployment is higher in the rural areas with 25.6% than in the urban areas with 17.1%. The result of the survey by the National Bureau of Statistics show that persons aged 0-14 years constituted 39.6%, those aged between 15-64% (the economically active population), constituted 56.3%, which those aged 65 years and above constituted 4.2%. The problem of unemployment has posed a great challenge to many countries, both developed and developing and regions/provinces of the world in which Akwa Ibom State is not an exception. For instance, within the period (2000-2011), unemployment rate in Akwa Ibom State rises from 18.5% in 2000 to 14.4% in 2003, 15.3% in 2006, falling slightly to 13.5% in 2007 and then moving steadily upward to 34.1% in 2008 and an all-time peak of 36.1% in 2010.

Most youths graduate from school without the needed skills or competencies that would enable them function in today's emerging society. Going by these data, it is apparent that the role of skills acquisition in the creation of employment among the youths may not be overemphasized. The study, therefore, seeks to investigate the extent to which skills acquisition programme has helped in reducing unemployment in Akwa Ibom State in particular and Nigeria at large, taking the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) as a study programme.

Thus, we examine the efficiency/efficacy of skills acquisition programme in reducing unemployment in Akwa Ibom State with special emphasis on skills acquisition through the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) using the following questions:

- How does skills acquisition by NDE affect Unemployment in Akwa Ibom State?
- What Challenges if any, may hinder effective contributions of NDE in AKwa Ibom State?
- Does Skills Acquisition by NDE improve the income of the citizens of Akwa Ibom State in the period under review?

Many studies have examined the role of skills acquisition in unemployment reduction or employment creation, see for instance [3-5], but fail to examine such contributions by NDE in the state. This study exists to fill such gap in the literature.

Definition of Terms

i. Skills

According to Speelman [6], a skill is seen as ability to do something well, usually gained through training or experience. Skills are often acquired after a training session or after a practical.

ii. Skills acquisition

Skills acquisition is the ability to learn or acquire skills. It involves the development of a new skill, practice of a way of doing things usually gained through training or experience [6].

iii. Unemployment

Unemployment or joblessness, as defined by the International Labour Organization (1982) occurs when people are without jobs and they have actively sought work within the past five weeks. The unemployment rate is a measure of the prevalence of unemployment and it is calculated as a%age by dividing the number of unemployed individuals by all individuals currently in the labour force. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2011), unemployment rate is the proportion of those who are looking for work but could not find work for at least 40 hours during the reference period to the total currently active (labour force) population.

Literature Review

Empirical

Ogunlela [7] explore the impact of National Directorate of Employment Programmes on graduate employment and unemployment in Kaduna State of Nigeria, using both secondary data as well as oral interview. He found out that the impact of NDE on graduate employment in Kaduna State has not been particularly positive and much still needs to be done. Only modest achievement in the area of generation of graduate employment has so far been recorded, calling

for a thorough reappraisal of its programme in order to overhaul the system.

According to Ogundele, Akingbade, and Akinlabi [8], the contribution of Skill Acquisition and training on unemployment reduction through youth empowerment and social welfare service improvement will be much significant if encouraged at all the level in the state especially at local and community level. This position approximate Ohize and Muhammed [9], who opined that non-government organization, can play a vital role in Training and Skill Acquisition.

This is evident from the success story of project YES as findings revealed that the scheme has contributed to the economic uplift of the youths by providing them with vocational skill acquisition and counseling services aimed at reorienting their attitudes towards self and societal development.

Akpama et al. [10] observed that acquisition of vocational skills lead to a significant reduction of poverty among young adults who participated on skills acquisition programmes. Entrepreneurial studies are inter-disciplinary training that focuses on the tools needed to start a new business or vocation. Because Nigeria is fast becoming a predominantly youthful society with high rate of unemployment, it requires training the youth in entrepreneurship skills in technical vocational education and training to tackle unemployment which has reached alarming proportions. Amadi and Abdullah [11], reported from their study that a greater percentage of the sampled youth reported high and moderate levels of their capacity building; implying that the vocational skills acquisition and development was a successful scheme. They however recommended that the constraints that impede the success of the scheme be addressed by policy makers to make the outcome of the skills training more successful. Adofu and Ocheja investigated the conduct of Skill Acquisition and training in alleviating poverty and unemployment in Kogi state, Nigeria. This relationship between entrepreneurship skill acquisition and poverty/unemployment was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The descriptive tools consisted of the use of percentages and frequencies presented in a tabular form. A chi-square test (χ^2) was employed to test the validity or otherwise of the effect of entrepreneurship skill acquisition on poverty alleviation and unemployment reduction in Nigeria using primary data obtained in six local government areas that made up the four district of the state. The result shows that 65% of the respondents accepted that lack of entrepreneurship skills among youth is responsible for the high rate of poverty/unemployment in Nigeria. The result also revealed that at least 60% of the people that benefitted from the skills acquisition programme can now afford the basic necessity of life. The study therefore recommended that since most of the people that benefitted from the programme could afford the basic necessity of life, the government should begin to think of the way of developing the programme to the status of poverty/unemployment eradication programme.

More often than not, some Scholars focuses on Skill Acquisition enshrine in entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship skills acquired in the context of this study refers to an individual's knowledge and ability to perform specific tasks successfully; while entrepreneurship according to Anerua and Obiazi is the process of perceiving business opportunities, mobilizing both human and material resources and initiating action(s) under an enterprise which is characterized by risk taking, innovation and creativity to meet individual, group or societal needs. Entrepreneurship skills therefore, are business skills which one acquires to function effectively in the turbulent business environment as an independent or

self-employed person in order to improve one's economic status and the society at large. The importance of entrepreneurship skills acquisition cannot be over-emphasized since appropriate skills acquisition through entrepreneurship will help to make young school leavers to be self-reliant and boost their economic status. Isike [12] stated that entrepreneurship has been identified globally and nationally as a tool for generating a sustainable economy which is the core value of the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategies (NEEDS). Through such Skills Acquisition, the establishment of small businesses helps to generate substantial amount of employment and income which are essential parts of a country's Gross National Product (GNP) on the one hand and reduce unemployment on the other. For the laudable benefits of entrepreneurship skills acquisition to manifest in our youths' and the general public, skills must be learned through formal or non-formal settings.

Uloko and Ejinkonye [13] remarked that when youths are empowered through the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills, there is the possibility that they will use the skills to create new avenues for wealth. Empowering the youth to set up businesses involves proper acquisition of skills through education and training.

Such acquisition opens one's eyes to forecast business opportunities using appropriate entrepreneurship skills. Okolocha and Okolocha accepted that students can acquire such Entrepreneurial Skills from Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES). In a study of such effect in 258 Nigerian students in Anambra State, they found that Student's Industrial Work Experiences Scheme (SIWES) is an important programme that can help to bridge the gap between school life and the world of works by blending meaningful job experiences with related institutions learnt in the classroom. For SIWES to help students to acquire the appropriate entrepreneurial skills that will help them face the challenges of unemployment and economic crises, proper machinery for sustained SIWES programme was advocated. Ola-Adebayo [14] advocated that this is better achieved through Entrepreneurship Education. In a study of the determinants of Skill Acquisition and professional knowledge acquired by Nigerian graduates through the current university curriculum using primary research techniques, he found that entrepreneurial education is best received in the schools settings. Also, learning by doing is seen as the best approach or method to teach entrepreneurial education. The research also noted that being male or female has nothing to do with perception of the importance of acquiring entrepreneurial skills education within and outside the school system. Employment should be made mandatory on the platform of having gone through any one vocational education training, the study opined.

The authority in charge of education should face-up to the challenges and proffer a way out of the dilemma of unemployment which has resulted in insecurity and economic instability in the country.

Ezeji and Okorie [15] while stressing the importance of skills acquisition in national growth, emphatically contended, "that Nigeria's social and economic problems will be drastically reduced if people are given adequate vocational training in skills, raw materials, machineries and equipment". It is only with skilled men that materials can be harnessed, manipulated and transformed into products. With quality skills acquisition programmes, countries like America, Britain, Germany and Japan have rehabilitated drug addicts, school dropouts and several destitute who eventually contributed meaningfully to the economy and the development of high volume of productivity in their countries. In their study, Kanyenze, et al. [16] underscores that trainings in vocational and technical skills will reduce youth marginalization

in Anglophone Africa. In the survey of six Anglophone countries of Africa including Egypt, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, they found that these countries have instituted various programmes of skills acquisition but unemployment is still on the rise. They, therefore suggest that youth unemployment should not be seen as an incidental or special anomaly of an otherwise employment friendly environment, but as a manifestation of the overall structural problem that affects adults as well as youths. Therefore, the point in contention is that policies aimed at enhancing the welfare and employability of youths should preferably be undertaken in the broader context of policies aimed at enhancing the overall labour absorption capacity of African economies.

Theoretical

The Dreyfus model of skill acquisition: The study of Skill Acquisition all over the world draws from the early works of Professor Stuart Dreyfus, a Mathematician and Professor Hubert Dreyfus, a philosopher-from their study of chess players and pilots. Briefly, the Dreyfus model posits that, in the acquisition and development of a skill, one passes through five levels of proficiency:

- i. Novice
- ii. Advanced beginner
- iii. Competent
- iv. Proficient
- v. Expert

The levels reflect changes in two general aspects of skill performance. One is a movement from reliance on abstract principles to the use of past, concrete experience as paradigms. The other is a change in the perception and understanding of a demand situation so that the situation is seen less as a compilation of equally relevant bits and more as a complete whole in which only certain parts are relevant [17].

i. Novice: In the novice level, beginners have no experience with the situations in which they are expected to perform tasks. In order to give them entry to these situations, they are taught about them in terms of objective attributes. These attributes are features of the task that can be recognized without situational experience. Novice practitioners are also taught rules to guide action in respect to different attributes.

The heart of the difficulty that the novice faces is the inability to use discretionary judgment. Since novices have no experience with the situation they face, they must use context-free rules to guide their task performance.

ii. Advanced beginner: The advanced beginner is one who can demonstrate marginally acceptable performance. This person is one who has coped with enough real situations to note (or to have them pointed out by a mentor) the recurrent meaningful situational components, called aspects. In the Dreyfus model, the term "aspects" has a very specific meaning. Unlike the measurable, context-free attributes or features that the inexperienced novice uses, aspects are overall, global characteristics that require prior experience in actual situations for recognition [17]. An instructor or mentor can provide guidelines for recognizing such aspects. While aspects may be made explicit, they cannot be made completely objective. Aspect recognition is dependent on prior experience.

The advanced beginner, or instructor of the advanced beginner,

can formulate guidelines for actions in terms of attributes and aspects. These action guidelines integrate as many attributes and aspects as possible, but they tend to ignore the differential importance. In other words, they treat all attributes and aspects as equally important.

iii. Competent: Competent level typified the period by which the learner has been on the job two to three years. It develops when the learner begins to see his or her actions in terms of long-range goals or plans. The learner is consciously aware of these plans and the goal or plan dictates which attributes and aspects of the current and contemplated future situation are to be considered most important and which can be ignored. For the competent learner, a plan establishes a perspective, and the plan is based on considerable conscious, abstract, analytic contemplation of the problem.

The competent learner lacks the speed and flexibility of the learners who have reached the proficient level, but the competency stage is characterized by a feeling of mastery and the ability to cope with and manage the many contingencies of the profession. The competent learner's conscious, deliberate planning helps to achieve a level of efficiency and organization. In some organizations, learners at this stage can benefit from decision-making games and simulations that give them practice in planning and coordinating multiple, complex demands.

The competent level is supported and reinforced institutionally, and many learners may stay at this level because it is perceived as the ideal by their supervisors. The standardization and routinization of procedures, geared to manage the high turnover in most organizations, most often reflect the competent level of performance. Most in-service education is aimed at the competent level of achievement.

iv. Proficient: With continued practice, the competent performer moves to the proficient stage. Characteristically, the proficient performer perceives situations as wholes, rather than in terms of aspects, and performance is guided by maxims. Maxims are used to guide the proficient performer, but a deep understanding of the situation is required before a maxim can be used.

Maxims reflect what would appear to the competent or novice performer as unintelligible degrees of the situation. Experience teaches the proficient performer what typical events to expect in a given situation and how to modify plans in response to these events. Because of the experience-based ability to recognize whole situations, the proficient performer can now recognize when the expected normal picture does not present itself, that is, when the normal situation is absent. The holistic understanding of the proficient performer improves his or her decision making. Decision making is now less labored since the performer has a perspective about which of the many attributes and aspects present are the important ones.

v. Expert: At the expert level, the performer no longer relies on an analytical principle (rule, guideline, or maxim) to connect her/his understanding of the situation to an appropriate action. The expert performer, with her/his enormous background of experience, has an intuitive grasp of the situation and zeros-in on the accurate region of the problem without wasteful consideration of a large range of unfruitful possible problem situations. It is very frustrating to try to capture verbal descriptions of an expert performance because the expert operates from a deep understanding of the situation in that, as the Dreyfus Model of Skill Acquisition posits, the expert performance is holistic rather than fractionated, procedural, and based upon incremental steps.

First applied to nursing sciences [18-20], Dreyfus Model of Skill

Acquisition has gained wider application in many other fields of studies.

Methodology

Research design

Our population of study is Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The state occupies a landmass of 8, 142 km² with 31 local government areas, which support a population of 3,920,208 with a population density of 481.48 per square kilometer. About 87.89 per cent of the total population lives in the rural areas, implying that the remaining 12.11 per cent of the population live in the urban center.

The total sample for the study will be all the staff of National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in Akwa Ibom State (management/technical trainers), all trainees of NDE in the 4 training centers in the state, as well as trainees who have successfully completed their training and are now practicing what they learned making up a total of 141 sample. This total sample will be examined using proportionate stratified sampling. According to Gall, Gall and Borg [21], proportionate stratified random sampling involves a sample selected so that subgroups in the population are proportionately represented in a sample. More than that, a proportionately stratified random sample will ensure that every segment of the population is identified and its proportion is determined and taken into consideration. Major primary data will be collected through field survey from 3 technical/vocational skill acquisition centers located in each of the senatorial districts in the state, in addition to 1 agricultural skill acquisition centre located in Asuna, Etinan local Government Area. The primary data will be supplemented by secondary data which shall include unemployment rate for Akwa Ibom State, yearly enrolment/training statistics by National Directorate of Employment (NDE), number of beneficiaries of various NDE schemes, trades offered in each of the centers. These data will be sourced from the data bank of National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in Akwa Ibom State, the Central Bank of Nigeria Statistical Bulletin (various issues) and Publications of National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) [22-24].

In line with the study method, the data were collected through a combination of (a) structured questionnaires and (b) oral interviews. The fieldwork lasted for eight months, August-March 2014, early part of which was for preliminary visits to the training centers. To all trainers and trainees in each of the centers, questionnaires were given. The questionnaires administration was supplemented by oral interview, where necessary.

Trend of Unemployment by States in Nigeria

Available record shows that Unemployment were on the rise by some State in the country including Akwa Ibom State. Table 1 shows the rate of Unemployment of five states in Nigeria. According to Table 1, Unemployment in increased from 13.5% in 2007 to 34.1% in 2008 and

TS/N	States	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
1	Akwa Ibom	13.5	34.1	34.1	25.8	18.4
2	Benue	7.9	7.8	8.5	6	14.2
3	Kaduna	8.7	12.7	11.6	12.4	30.3
4	Niger	4.2	3.9	28	11.7	39.4
5	Lagos	13.7	7.6	19.5	27.6	8.3

Table 1: Unemployment by some States in Nigeria (2007-2011). Source: Extracted from Eme, 2014.

2009 respectively, before declining to 25.8% in 2010 and further declined to 18.4 in 2011. A critical observation of the rate of Unemployment in the State indicates that the rate of growth is faster and sharper on the rise than on the fall. When compared with other states in the Table, the Unemployment rate in Akwa Ibom State was worrisome (Figure 1). It was only Lagos State that had a double digit Unemployment rate in 2007 that only grow on a declining rate within the period. However, other States exhibits traits of higher Unemployment from 2011.

When the information on Table 1 is translated into Figure 1, it became clear that Unemployment in Akwa Ibom State demand urgent attention.

It is this perplexing rate of Unemployment by States in the country that gives Nigeria an Unemployment rate that is on the rise. As Table 2 shows, Unemployment has been on the increase steadily in Nigeria from 21.1% in 2010 to 24.3% in 2012 and a peak of 28.5% in 2013, with analyst projecting an even more rise to 30% in 2014. The foregoing motivated an investigation into the activities of National Directorate of Employment in Akwa Ibom State in the rest of the chapter.

Acquiring skills in Akwa Ibom State: The role of National Directorate of Employment (NDE)

In line with the national mandate of National Directorate of Employment (NDE), which is primarily to address unemployment problems in Nigeria, the NDE in Akwa Ibom State has introduced a number of intervention programmes designed to mitigate or reduce the scourge of unemployment. Four areas of employment intervention programmes have been articulated by NDE in Akwa Ibom State, including;

- a. Vocational Skill Acquisition (VSD),
- b. Small Scale Enterprises (SSE),
- c. Rural Employment Promotion (REP), and
- d. Special Public Works (SPW).

Table 2 presents NDEs intervention programmes and the strategies adopted for its actualization.

Based on these trainings, various categories of persons have developed skills for employment either by self or through employment linkages. Data available shows that NDE provides five types of skill acquisition in Akwa Ibom State ranging from Technical to Domestic, Agricultural, Business and Computer skills. Tables 3 and 4 presents various skills acquired by Akwa Ibomites through NDE in recent years with their examples.

To effectively cover the state, NDE categorizes their training centers into three senatorial districts. Table 5 presents the senatorial districts and the local governments covered.

Presently, not less than four Skill Acquisition centers provides not less than 10 trades in each of the centers for Akwa Ibom Indigenes as Table 4 further shows. Close observations of the spread of the skills

Year	Unemployment	Rate
2010	21.1	Percent
2011	23.9	Percent
2012	24.3	Percent
2013	28.5	Percent
2014	30 %	projection

Table 2: Unemployment trend in Nigeria, 2010-2014. Source: Eme, 2014.

acquisition training centers and their specialties indicate that Akwa Ibom State benefited more in technical skills than in other skills.

Perhaps this is expected to reduce unemployment among youths in the state and by implication the country in general. Other areas not clearly captured in the location of the training centers of Table 6 were operations based on the needs of the technique. For instance School-On-Wheels (SOW) of the Vocational Skills Department has for the past twenty six years trained more than three thousand one hundred and eighty-four (3184) unemployed persons in the state which cannot have access to these training centers.

Skill Acquisition by NDE and economic growth of Akwa Ibom State (1987-2012)

The relationship between unemployment, Skills Acquisition by

NDE and the growth of the economy in Akwa Ibom State is represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows the GDP, Unemployment rate and Number of Persons Trained by NDE in Akwa Ibom State from 1987 to 2012. However, data for unemployment rate for Akwa Ibom State was from 1987 to 2011. The figure shows that the only period in which Skills Acquisition by NDE may have had seemingly positive effects on the GDP of the state were the periods from 1987 to 1995. Within the period, the number of trainees by NDE grows from 941 persons to 4404 persons in 1989 and 5439 persons in 1992 before falling to 731 individuals in 1995; even as GDP grows steadily from 2843.46 million naira in 1987 to 52248.96 million naira. The unemployment rate in that period fell from 4.8 in 1990 to 2.2 in 1993 before growing steadily to 8.1 in 1995. The figure also shows that GDP of the state grows within 200000 million in nominal

Department	Skill Acquisition Strategies	Duration
Vocational Skill Acquisition (VSD)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Band National Open Apprenticeship Skills (B-NAOS) 2. School-On-Wheels (SOW) 3. Resettlement Loan Scheme (RLS) 4. Advanced National Open Apprenticeship Skills (A-NAOS) 	From three to twenty four months
Small Scale Enterprises (SSE)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Start Your Own Business (SYOB) 2. Improve Your Business (IYB) 3. Entrepreneurship Development Programmes (EDP) 4. Basic Business Training (BBT) 	Between three and twelve months
Rural Employment Promotion (REP)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rural Agricultural Development Training Scheme (RADTS) 2. Rural Handicraft Training Scheme (RHRS) 3. Integrated Farming Training Scheme (IFTS) 	Between three and twenty-four months
Special Public Works (SPW)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Environmental Beautification Training Scheme (EBTS) 2. Wind Energy Training Scheme (WETS) 3. Solar Energy Training Scheme (WETS) 4. Labour Based Training Scheme (LBTS) 5. Graduate Attachment Programme (GAP) 6. Community Development Services (CDS) 	From three months to three years

Source: Compiled by the Researcher based on information from NDE in AKS.

Table 3: Types of Skill Acquisition offered by NDE in Akwa Ibom State.

S/N	Type of Skills	Examples
1	Technical Skills (VSD)	Welding, Plumbing, Aluminum Works, Electrical Installations, Photography/ Video, GSM Maintenance, Interlocking Spurs
2	Domestic Skills (VSD)	Fashion Design, Soap Making, Catering, Hair Dressing, Beads Making, Hats Making, Tailoring
3	Agricultural Skills (REPD)	Crop Production, Fisheries, Piggery, Poultry
4	Business Skills (SSED)	Basic Business Training(BBT), Start Your Own Business(SYOB), Entrepreneurship Development Programme(EDP), Improve Your Business(IYB)
5	Computer Skills (VSD)	Computer Operation, Repairs, Programming

Source: Compiled by the Researcher based on information from NDE in AKS.

Table 4: Types of Skill Acquisition offered by NDE in Akwa Ibom State.

	Senatorial District	LGAs Covered
1.	Uyo Senatorial District (Akwa Ibom NorthEast)	Etinan, Ibesikpo Asutan, Ibiono Ibom, Itu, Nsit Atai, Nsit Ubium, Nssit Ibom, Uruan, and Uyo
2.	Eket Senatorial District (Akwa Ibom South)	Eastern Obolo, Eket, Esit Eket, Ibono, Ikot Abasi, Mkpai Enin, Okobo, Onna, Udung Uko, Oron, and Urue Offiong / Oruko
3.	Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District (Akwa Ibom NorthWest)	Abak, Essien Udim, Etim Ekpo, Ikot Ekpene, Ika, Ikono, Ini, Obot Akara, Oruk Anam, and Ukanafun

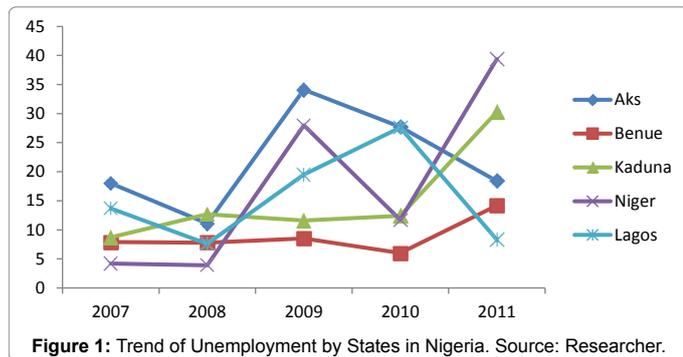
Source: Researcher based on information from NDE in AKS.

Table 5: Distribution of NDE Trainings by Senatorial Districts and LGAs.

S/N	Training Centers	Skills Acquired	Senatorial District	Location
1	Essien Udim L.G.A.	Technical Skills	Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District	Behind the Local Government Secretariat, Afaha Ikot Ebak
2	Nsit Ubium L.G.A.	Technical Skills	Uyo Senatorial District	50-Unit housing estate, beside the Local Government Secretariat, Ikot Edibon
3	Udung Ukoh L.G.A.	Technical Skills	Eket Senatorial District	Beside the proposed stadium, Udung Otok village in Udung Ukoh
4	Asuna, Etinan L.G.A.	Agricultural Skills		Ikot Nseyen, Asuna, Etinan

Source: Researcher based on information from NDE in AKS and field survey.

Table 6: NDE Skills Acquisition Centers in Akwa Ibom State and Location.



terms in the years preceding 2002. But the growth shoots up from 2003, taking an ever increasing trend following positive effects of growth in the economy of which skills acquired from NDE by the unemployed citizens may have been a factor. Akwa Ibom State recorded a positive growth in nominal GDP from 229379.2 in 2003 to about 1014693.4 in 2011. Within the same period, the number of persons trained by NDE in the state grows from 3200 to 5365 respectively.

Thus, even though unemployment rate grows from 12.3 in 2002 to 34.1 in 2009 and 36.1 in 2010, the growth of GDP could not be some sector of the states' retarded as a result of positive influences of economy of which NDE is inclusive.

Field survey by the researchers: An overview

Akwa Ibom State has three (3) skill acquisition centres, with one located in each of the senatorial district. The skill acquisition centre for Uyo, Eket and Ikot Ekpene Senatorial districts are located in Ikot Edibon, Nsit Ubium Local Government Area, Udung Uko in Udung Uko Local Government Area and Ikot Ebak in Essien Udim Local Government Area respectively. The centres are under the department of Vocational Skill Development (VSD) of the NDE and the current programme undertaken is the Basic National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (BNOAS). Each of the centres is managed by a centre manager.

During the researcher's visit to each of the centres, commencement of new training at the centres was three weeks old. A summary of skills acquired in each centre is presented where the findings of the field survey and other analysis can be found.

Section A

Demographic characteristics of the respondents: The total number of respondents issued the questionnaire was 145 of which 141 was returned. Table 7 shows details of other attributes measured

Section B

Analysis of our objective questions

Objective 1: The Effectiveness of Skills Acquisition in Tackling Unemployment in Akwa Ibom State.

Data collected in respect of this objective are shown in Table 8.

The data shown on Table 8, revealed the statement, responses, numbers, computed sample mean \bar{X} and standard deviation of the first objective which give the sample mean of 2.4 and 0.7 standard deviation. The result also shows that over 126 of the respondent from all categories (Trainers, Graduate Trainees and those currently undergoing Training) asserted to the validity of Skills Acquisition in tackling unemployment in Akwa Ibom State. This represents about 89%

	Respondent Demography	Frequency	%
A	Number of respondents	141	100%
B	Sex: Male	64	45%
	Female	77	55%
C	Category of Respondents	28	20%
	Trainers	29	20.5%
	Graduate Trainees Trainees under training	84	59.5%
D	Age Range: <20	10	7%
	21-30	104	74%
	31-40	24	17%
	41-50	3	2%
E	Marital Status: Single	95	67%
	Married	41	29%
	Divorced	5	4%
F	Education: No School	7	5%
	FSLC	16	11%
	SSCE	107	76%
	B. Sc.	11	8%

Source: Researcher based on Field Survey.

Table 7: Demographic characteristics of the respondents.

of the sample population. This position is justified given the coefficient of variation of 0.31 signifying that the response from the sample is not uniform. The calculated Z-score of 39.62 greater than 1.96 Table Value Z-score implies that our sample means is 39.62 standard error greater than the true population mean at 95% confidence level. Our findings suggest that Skills Acquisition reduced unemployment in Akwa Ibom State to a larger extent.

Objective 2: To examine the challenges of skill acquisition in Akwa Ibom State and therefore make recommendation for the way forward.

Data for the analysis of Objective 2 is presented in Table 9.

The data shown on Table 9, revealed the statement, responses, numbers, computed sample mean \bar{X} and standard deviation of the first objective which give the sample mean of 2.3 and 0.8 standard deviation. The result also shows that over 111 of the respondent from all categories (Trainers, Graduate Trainees and those currently undergoing Training) asserted to the fact that Skill Acquisition faces numerous challenges in Akwa Ibom State. This represents about 79% of the sample population. The calculated Z-score shows that our sample mean is 32.4 standard error greater than the true population mean, and significant at five% level. This implies that the challenges facing Skills Acquisition in Akwa Ibom State is enormous. Twenty one% of the sample population however, accepted that though few challenges exist, they are ineffective in real terms. The respondents listed the challenges to include, but not limited to;

- Accommodation: There was no accommodation for the instructors and trainees so as to enhance concentration and provide ample time for practical session by the trainees.
- Empowerment of trainees after training: Empowerment of trainees is not done at least one to six months after training and certification. This might make the trainees to be dormant for some time after the training hence, they may forget what they learnt as practice makes perfect.
- Contact of trainees after completion: No organized data bank is available at the skills acquisition centers. Figures conflict between training centers and the head office. In addition, there is no regular contact of the trainees by the center manager or a representative after the training so as to know their progress.

Only few trainees are contacted by the center manager after the training.

- *Location of center:* The centers are not located in a more centralized area within the senatorial district. This poses a lot of setback to both the trainees and the trainers such as delay in resuming each day's training session, reaching the house late after a day's training, and trainees not having ample time for practice after each day's training as they would be rushing back home due to distance factor.
- *Accessibility of the center:* There is no main entrance to the center, only a walkway was available.

Objective 3: Examining the income contribution of Skills Acquisition by NDE in the economy of Akwa Ibom State.

Two groups of respondents respond to this question, the trainers and the graduate trainees. Their response is presented in Table 10.

The result presented in Table 10 shows a mean respondent of 1.9 and the standard deviation of 0.40. A total of 58 responses were gathered and about 48% agreed to the NDE-improved income linkages in Akwa Ibom State. The calculated Z-score of 39 shows that the respondents are justified at 95% level of confidence. However, 40% of the respondents showed that the effect may be minimal while 12% reject in totality the Skill Acquisition-Income linkage relationship in Akwa Ibom State. The position of the minimal linkage effect may be appreciated by considering Figure 2.

Figures 2 and 3 shows that the rate of NDE training and unemployment rate in Akwa Ibom State. For instance, unemployment rate declines from 4.8 in 1990 to 2.2 in 1993 even though the rate of skills acquisition by NDE grows from -87.4 in 1990 to -70.2 in 1991 before falling back to -81.3 in 1993. This shows that skills acquisition was successful at inception. From a single digit of 9.0 in 1997 unemployment rate grows to 12.3 in 2002; to 15.3 in 2006 and fell only slightly to 13.5 in 2007. Within the same years, NDE rate had revolved around 4.5%, 33.03%, -10.2% and 9.63% respectively. Ever since then, unemployment rate has grown steadily from 34.1% in 2008 to a peak of 36.1 in 2010, only falling to 18.4 in 2011 apparently

due to the state government employment in the state civil service within that year. In these years, the rate of growth of skills acquisition by NDE continues to dwindle around the negatives, only showing signs of positive trend in 2009. Such trend may have left doubt in the minds of over 40% of respondents in our study that NDE may have produced noticeable effect in Akwa Ibom State, leaving us with mixed conclusion.

Conclusion

The study investigated the contributions of Skills Acquisition by National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria to unemployment reduction in the state. It began with the recognition that unemployment was on the rise in Akwa Ibom State with an average of 19.5% in the last decade, but NDE was training individuals for self-employment, with what effect? We employed a combination of both primary and secondary data to conduct our analysis. Structured questionnaires were administered on both the trainers, trainees that have completed the Skills Acquisition training, and trainees currently under training. Secondary evidences provided by the state NDE office were also used to examine the economic relationship of the variables. Our findings suggest that there is a positive nexus between Skills Acquisition by NDE and unemployment reduction in Akwa Ibom State. These positive influences are not however without challenges, ranging from political willingness of the government to actually implement and care for the training facilities to regional proximities of the unemployed to the training centers, among others. However, the result of the income contributions of NDE in the state was mixed. Though traces of income effect really exist, the effect was minimal to attract wide acceptance. Thus, we make some policy recommendations to boost their relationship.

1. We recommend that the Location of the centers be more central to aid accessibility. For instances, the skills acquisition center for Uyo Senatorial district is located in Nsit Ubium Local Government Area. It implies that indigenes of Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area have to relocate and settled in Nsit Ubium to benefit from the programme.
2. Directly following the above, we also recommend that

S/N	Statement	AG	DA	Mean \bar{X}	SD	Z-Cal.
	Skills Acquisition by NDE has help in reducing the rate of unemployment in Akwa Ibom State.	126	15	2.3774	0.7292	39.62

Source: Researcher based on output from SPSS.

Note: AG-Agree, DA-Disagree, SD-Standard Deviation

Table 8: Analysis of questionnaire Statement related to Objective one.

S/N	Statement	AG	DA	Mean \bar{X}	SD	Z-Cal
	Skill Acquisition in Akwa Ibom State does not have any Challenge(s) capable of limiting its effect on unemployment reduction	111	30	2.2659	0.82164	32.4

Note: AG-Agree, DA-Disagree, SD-Standard Deviation

Source: Researcher based on output from SPSS.

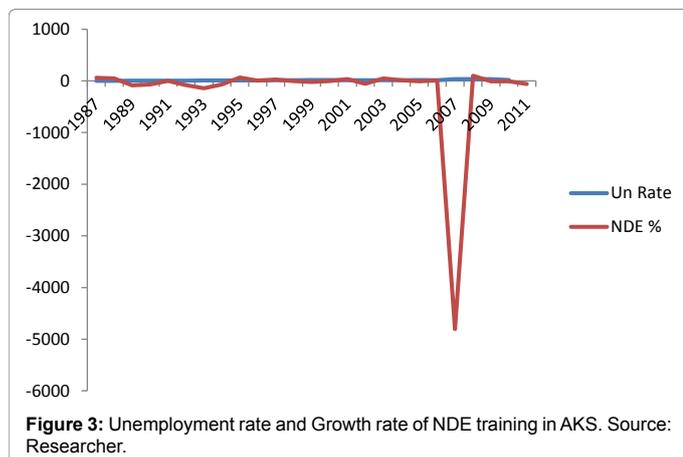
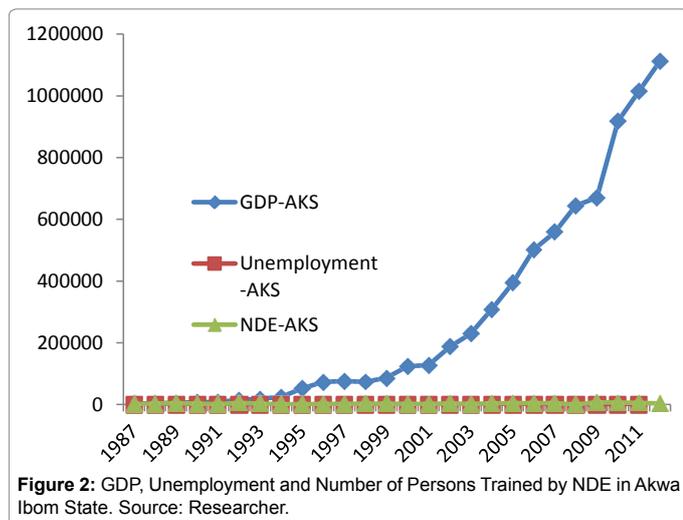
Table 9: Analysis of questionnaire Statement related to Objective two.

S/N	Statement	AG	DA	FI	Mean \bar{X}	SD	Z-Cal
	Skills Acquisition by NDE in Akwa Ibom State does not improve the income of the citizens.	28	7	23	1.93165	0.40003	38.633

Note: AG-Agree, DA-Disagree, FI-Fairly Impressive, SD-Standard Deviation

Source: Researcher based on output from SPSS.

Table 10: Analysis of questionnaire Statement related to Objective three.



more NDE training centers should be located in the 31 local government areas of the state. This will give many indigenes if the state the opportunity of benefiting from NDE trainings. To achieve this, NDE can partner with private individuals and all the local authorities.

3. Sometimes because the instructors of the programmes are not well remunerated, the studies found out that if accommodations can be provided close to the training centers for them, it could improve the efficiency of the programmes, and so recommended. Some centers are located in an Estate where the flats were left unoccupied and the vicinity bushy. The local authority in collaboration with NDE operators can fashion out this Option.
4. The study recommends speedy Empowerment of trainees to be done between one to three months after training and certification. In an interview with the instructors of the programme, the researchers found out that 2012 batch of trainees had not yet been empowered by the government.
5. In addition to the available data of the graduated trainees at the State office, a data bank of all the successful trainees and beneficiaries of the training should be created at the training centers and maintained.

6. NDE should create a forum for beneficiaries to be meeting on regular basis to discuss their challenges and way-forward on a quarterly or at least bi-annual basis. Regular contact with the graduated trainees by the center manager is important so as to know if they are doing fine or not.

The income effect from Skills Acquisition by NDE is low. The inability of the Graduate trainees to set up the businesses in themselves is suspected. We therefore recommend government / private assistance to fund their business set-up.

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