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Empowering Youths for Self-Reliance Through Technical and Vocational Education and Training

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Abstract

The study examined the role of Technical and Vocational Education and Training in empowering youths for self-reliance. The study was carried out in the three Senatorial Districts of Ogun State, Nigeria. The study employed the survey approach, and 100 youths were randomly selected from each of the three Polytechnics covered in the study (The Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro in Ogun West, Moshood Abiola Polytechnic in Ogun Central and Gateway Polytechnic, Sapaade in Ogun East) to make a total of 300 youths as the sample for the study. A structured questionnaire with a 4-point likert type scale was used as the instrument of data collection. Data collected were analysed with frequency counts, simple percentage and ordinary least square method (OLS) of regression. It was found that TVET has the potential to significantly enhance youth empowerment and serve as an effective instrument engendering self-reliance among youths in Ogun State and Nigeria in general. It was therefore recommended, that TVET programmes should be given adequate priority, funding, support and necessary resources by all stakeholders such as government, private entities, industries and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs to facilitate youth awareness and involvement in technical and vocational activities should be provided.

Keywords: Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), Youths, Self-reliance, Unemployment.

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1. Introduction

An important element at the centre of any production activity and meaningful development is human capacity. People not only initiate and drive all economic and production activities, but also determine and control other resources that are involved in production. Developing countries all over the world have been making use of their comparative advantage in productivity and economic growth as a result of the strength of their education and human capital development programmes as these are considered fundamental key to any meaningful national development.

Chukwuedo & Omofonmwan (2015), opine TVET is an indispensable part of education and training that can produce demand-driven manpower for sustainable production-oriented, industrial and technological advancement. Okwelle (2013) sees TVET as deliberate interventions to initiate and facilitate learning which would make people more productive in designated economic activities. In the Nigerian National Policy on Education, TVET is an umbrella term that refers to all educational processes involving the study of technologies and related sciences, and the processes that facilitate the learning of attitudes, understanding, knowledge and practical skills needed in various occupations, productive sectors and in economic and social life (Okwelle & Wordu, 2016; Chukwuedo & Omonfonmwan, 2015). It is a reliable vehicle for self-sustenance, economic prosperity and political supremacy of a nation over others (Alhassan & Abdullahi, 2013). TVET facilitates the development and strengthening of youths for production and economic activities; and empowers individuals to become self-reliant (Zarini, Wilson, Mar, & Varis, 2009), it is an important mechanism that could aid in achieving workable emancipation and empowerment of young

people as it promotes the development of skills, knowledge, values, understanding, actions and behaviour (Alhasan & Abdullahi, 2013; Iro-Idoro & Jimoh, 2018).

According to UNESCO (2013), youth comprise a large and growing proportion of most population and their possibilities of gainful employment is impinging on their economic sustenance, both in their own native land and in foreign lands. Hence, the empowerment of this important category of people forms the major concern and subject of topical discourse in most nations and has prompted hundreds of skill acquisition and development initiatives as well as adaptation to innovation-driven approaches and trainings.

Empowerment is the ability and courage to dive into any challenge without waiting for permission from someone else. It manifests in the drive to take a project, initiative, or crazy idea even when we lack information or resource and the willingness to try, to learn from mistakes, and to be persistent (Chalasani, 2013). Meaningful empowerment results in positive thinking of individuals about their abilities to understand issues and make changes through notion of self-efficacy, personal control and positive self-image (Iro-Idoro & Jimoh, 2017; Iro-Idoro & Iro-Idoro, 2015).

According to Chalasani (2013), youth empowerment should be a deliberate involvement of youth in socio and economic development activities and should result in meaningful change from economic dependence on parents to having productive and economically dispositions with the considerable ability to support oneself and other people. The realization of community change characterized with individual capacity development can be achieved in many ways including technical and vocational education and training, information sharing, etc. (Ledford & Lucas, 2013 and Eppic 2017).

Many TVET-related youth empowerment programmes had been put in place by Nigerian at different time, but many of these suffered poor structure which made them non-impactful to the youths. This is could be seen in the large number of youths that do not have practical work skills and eventually leading to myriads of social and economic problems such as unemployment, insecurity, chaos, loss of lives and properties (Chinnedu, 2015). According to Obaseki (2018), a lot of the so-called skills acquisition initiatives in Nigeria are not in tandem with the demands and reality of the labour market and societal needs, hence rendering the youths redundant and mismatch in productive engagements. The main reasons for this ugly trend in youth productive engagement, according to Obaseki (2018), include inconsistency in policy formulation and implementation and poor planning by those saddled with the responsibilities. The consequence of this is the army of unemployed, underemployed or unemployable youths who turn to agents of instability and security in the country. However, any meaningful youth empowerment programme or imitative should result in behavioural change, good work ethics, entrepreneurial aspirations and readiness, and the development of skills that will enhance the contributions of the recipient to the development of their communities and reduce poverty (Chinnedu, 2015).

Okwelle & Deebom (2017) posit that for Nigeria to achieve a sustainable empowerment, efforts should, as a matter of importance, be geared towards bridging the gap between education and schooling and preparation for work with emphasis on effective technical and vocational education and training. However, Akosile (2018) observed that the absence of a robust, well-modeled and adequately monitored technical and vocational system to offer opportunities for youths to get decent works and jobs is a key factor responsible for the massive movement of young people abroad in search of greener pastures.

In line with the objective and importance of TVET, the development of a competent work force through the acquisition of practical life skills for developing sound, intelligent and learning societies becomes imperative for the empowerment of people toward self-reliance (Iro-Idoro & Jimoh, 2018). Okwelle and Deebom (2017) assert that empowerment is only possible when concrete steps are taken to make the people acquire skills that will enable them to be self-reliant and therefore become the tools for achieving empowerment and its sustainability.

Youth empowerment involves six interdependent dimensions: psychological, community, organizational, economic, social and cultural. Psychological empowerment facilitates the consciousness, self-efficacy, self-awareness, quality of life and problem-solving abilities of individuals. This could be seen as emotional empowerment (Iro-Idoro &

Iro-Idoro, 2015; Iro-Idoro**,** Ayodele & Jimoh, 2015 and Snavely & Rigby, 2017) and its dimension aims to create self-confidence and give youths the skills to acquire knowledge (Edralin, Tibon & Tugas, 2015). Community empowerment enhances youth participation in community activities through leadership development, improving communication, and creating a network of support to mobilize the community to address concerns (Kar, Pascual & Chickering, 1999). Organizational empowerment aims to create a base of resources for a community that aim to protect, promote and cater for the less privileged. Economic empowerment teaches entrepreneurial skills, how to get experience and have ownership of assets and economic security. Social empowerment deals with social inclusion of youths that will make them find the resources to be proactive in their societies. Cultural empowerment recreates cultural rules and norms for youths. Through these dimensions, a truly empowerment initiative will be helpful to the youth in one or more aspects of their lives (Edralin, Tibon & Tugas, 2015; Chinedu, 2015).

According to Uzochukwu (2015), youth empowerment includes skill, educational, business, moral, financial empowerment and others. Youth empowerment also takes place in the form of emotional, cognitive and behavioural empowerment (Zimmerman, 2000; Collura, 2016; Snavely & Rigby, 2017. However, it necessary and will be beneficial if youths acquire skills in specific areas that has been identified from labour market needs as this will enable them to be gainfully employed, become responsible and productive and all sectors of the economy (Chinedu, 2015).

Studies have shown that despite the youth empowerment and poverty reduction programmes set up by Nigerian government at different levels since independence to date, there still exist a high rate of youth unemployment. This has been attributed to lack of policy implementation, poor commitment to the programmes, inadequate funding, poor administration, unsuitable programme content, etc. (Iro-Idoro & Jimoh, 2018; Nwankwo, Obeta & Nwaogbe, 2013). As a result, youth unemployment persists and remains a major concern for national economic and social development (Obaseki, 2018). This prompted Nigeria like other African nations to focus on technical and vocational skill acquisition and utilization as strategies to leverage youths out of economic quandary created by unemployment.

Approaches to youth empowerment emphasize skill acquisition, psychological/emotional empowerment, economic independence and behavioural change of youths (Edralin, Tibon & Tugas, 2015; Uzochukwu, 2015; Collura, 2016; Snavely & Rigby, 2017). Therefore, the objective of this study was to examine the extent to which Technical and Vocational Education and Training could serve as mechanism for empowering youths for self-reliance. The study specifically aimed to identify the various technical and vocational skill areas in which youths could be empowered for self-reliance; determine the extent to which skill acquisition through TVET could foster psychological empowerment among youths in Ogun State; and determine the extent to which skill acquisition through TVET could facilitate economic empowerment among youths in Ogun State.

In Ogun State, like other parts of the country, youth unemployment is noticeable in the different activities in which youth are engaged as consequences of not only lack of productive skills but an indication of non-availability of white collars jobs to accommodate ever-increasing number of graduates, poor social support system and empowerment initiatives, lack of necessary resources and enabling environment to encourage entrepreneurial development, etc. (Iro-Idoro & Jimoh, 2018). However, in line with the objectives of TVET, it is expected that TVET will offer compatibility between labour demand and supply through acquisition of skills as well as vocational knowledge capable of empowering the youths for self-reliance, self-determination, economic and financial independence and economic development of the society (Hollander & Mar, 2009; Zarini, *et al.*, 2009). Hence, this study examines the various technical and vocational skill areas and the extent to which skill acquisition in these areas could contribute to youth empowerment for self-reliance.

2. Methodology

The descriptive survey approach was used in carrying out this study. Three polytechnics in Ogun State were covered in the study and the population comprised students in the selected polytechnics. The schools were selected

from the three senatorial districts in the State – The Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro in Ogun West, Moshood Abiola Polytechnic in Ogun Central and Gateway Polytechnic, Sapade in Ogun East. A total of 300 students were randomly selected from the different fields and disciplines of the institutions covered. It was postulated that:

H_0: TVET has no significant contributions to Youth Empowerment for self-reliance in Ogun State.

The main instrument of data collection was a structured questionnaire designed on a 4-point likert scale and tagged Youth Empowerment Scale (YES). The questionnaire was subjected to content validity by TVET experts. Out of the 300 questionnaires administered, 282 were returned but 274 were filled correctly while 8 were inappropriately filled. Hence, 274 questionnaires were valid and used for data analysis.

Descriptive and inferential methods of data analysis were applied, and the analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.

3. Results and Discussion

Analysis of the age distribution of the youths surveyed shows that 76.3% of them were between the ages of 18 to 22 years, 12.8% were within age of 23 to 27 years and 10.9% were above 27 years of age as shown in Fig. 1. Fig. 2 shows that 54% were female while 46% were male.

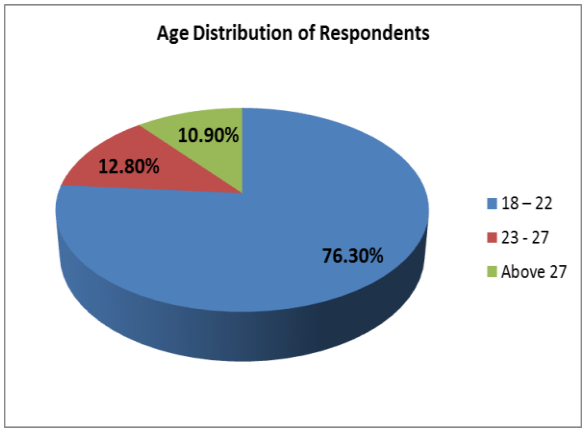

Fig 2: Age of Respondents

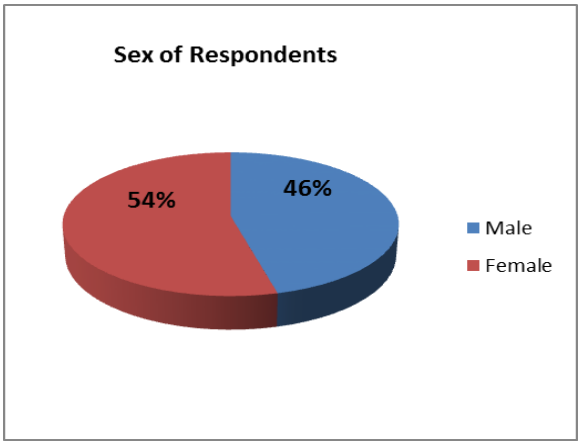

Fig 2: Sex of Respondents

Table 1: *Technical and vocational skill areas in which youths could be empowered for self-reliance*

TVET SKILL AREAS	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
Catering	35.77%	32.48%	14.96%	16.79%	2.87
Event Decoration	34.67%	44.89%	8.39%	12.04%	3.02
Event Planning and Management	36.86%	40.88%	11.68%	10.58%	3.04
Automobile Repairs	28.16%	36.88%	13.20%	21.76%	2.71
Auto Electrical	27.56%	31.91%	14.80%	25.73%	2.61
Automobile body fittings and Accessories	39.21%	30.21%	16.42%	14.15%	2.94
Plumbing and Pipe Fitting	44.16%	40.88%	6.20%	8.76%	3.20
Architectural Designs	25.70%	40.00%	15.69%	18.60%	2.73
Block making and Bricklaying	35.40%	33.58%	19.34%	11.68%	2.93

Wood works and Furniture	43.43%	44.53%	5.11%	6.93%	3.24
Electrical wiring and Installations	28.25%	37.59%	13.41%	20.75%	2.73
Computer Software Design	37.96%	36.13%	15.33%	10.58%	3.01
Photography	31.39%	24.45%	20.44%	23.72%	2.64
Web Design	33.21%	33.21%	16.42%	17.15%	2.82
Computer Graphics/Designs & Word Processing	33.96%	36.13%	19.33%	10.58%	2.93
GSM Repairs	43.07%	41.61%	8.39%	6.93%	3.21
Computer Repairs	52.55%	35.40%	4.38%	7.66%	3.33
Electronic Repairs	24.45%	29.56%	23.72%	22.26%	2.56
Fashion Design and Dress Making	44.16%	44.53%	5.11%	6.20%	3.27
Barbing/Hair Dressing	31.75%	37.59%	15.69%	14.96%	2.86
Bead works	39.78%	40.51%	8.39%	11.31%	3.09
Home Decoration and Painting	44.16%	30.66%	15.69%	9.49%	3.09
Art work and Designs	44.16%	36.13%	12.04%	7.66%	3.17
Tie and Dye	44.89%	45.99%	5.11%	4.01%	3.32

The above table shows the descriptive statistics of the different technical and vocational skill areas available for training of youths towards empowerment for self-reliance. From the table, all the skill areas identified show mean values greater than 2.5 with photography and electronic repairs having the least mean scores. The above implies that all the technical and vocations areas are good and viable skill empowerment options for youths to make them self-reliant. In essence, any youth empowerment initiative or programme must focus on specific lucrative skill areas to actually achieve the objective of the empowerment as buttressed in Chinedu (2015).

The study further inquired about the group of likely technical and vocational areas that the youths considered viable or enterprising and like to acquire skills in addition to their academic training and achievement for the purpose of financial sustenance and self-reliance. The results are as presented in Table 2 and Figure 2.

Table 2: Participant Interests in Skill groups

Skill Group	Skill Areas	No. of Response	Percentage
Catering and Events	Catering, Event Decoration, Event Planning and Management, Photography	**53**	**19%**
Building, Structures & Constructions	Plumbing and Pipe Fitting, Architectural design Block making and Bricklaying, Wood works and Furniture, Electrical wiring & Installations	**34**	**12%**
Automobile	Repairs, Maintenance, Wiring, Electrical, Body fittings and Accessories, Air-conditioning	**41**	**15**

Computer and Digital Skills	Software Design, Web Design, GSM Repairs, Computer graphics/designs & word processing, Computer Maintenance and Repairs, Electronics Repairs	**65**	**24%**
Fashion and Beauty	Barbing/Hair Dressing, Fashion Design and Dress Making, Bead making and design, Cosmetics	**48**	**18%**
Painting and Designs	Home Decoration and Painting, Art works and Designs, Tie and Dye	**33**	**12%**
		274	**100**

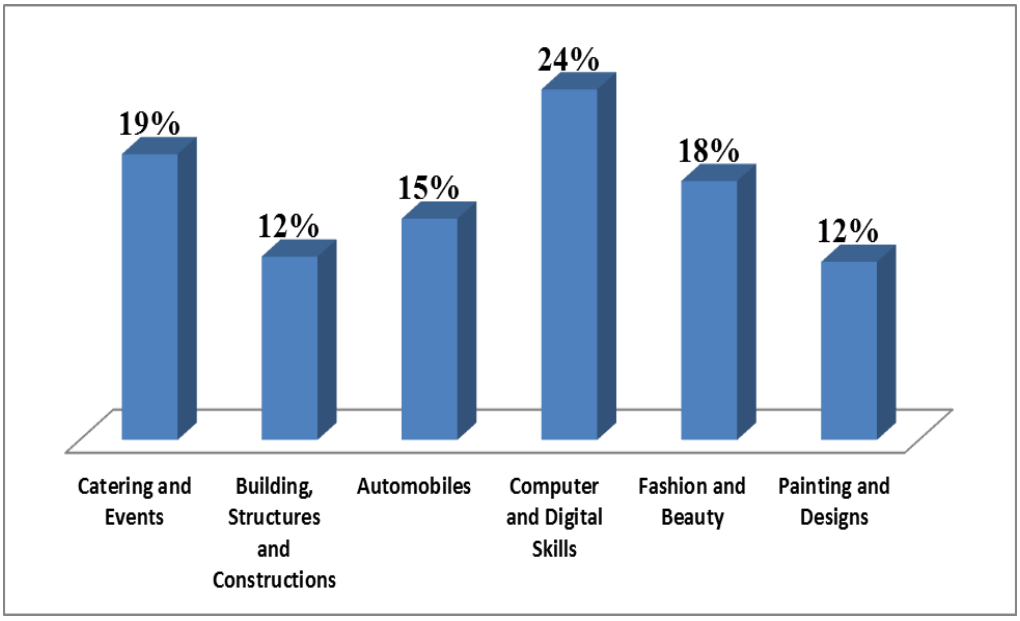

Figure 3: Bar chart showing youth preference for skill groups

From the above, the respondents indicated that youth could be better equipped with skills in digital and computer related fields for the purpose of empowerment (24%) closely followed by catering and events (19%) as well as fashion and beauty (18%). The result indicated that building and structure as well as painting and designs have lower values of 12% each. The implication of these is that most jobs that drive the economy and in which youths are interested are ICT-enabled and require digital and computer related skills. Also, the trend in fashion and beauty, events and decorations also reflect in the response patterns of the respondents as reasonable percentage of the youths showed inclination towards acquiring skills in the areas. These is an indication of their psychological disposition and social awareness about skill acquisition in different technical and vocational domains as observed in Edralin, Tibon & Tugas (2015); Iro-Idoro & Jimoh, 2017 and Snavely & Rigby (2017). However, it should be pointed out that most of the skills areas are not the core areas of specialization of the youths in their programmes of study, they had exposure and skills in the areas through the vocational and entrepreneurship trainings.

Figure 4 shows the summary of the possible militating factors that could hinder the empowerment of youth for self-reliance.

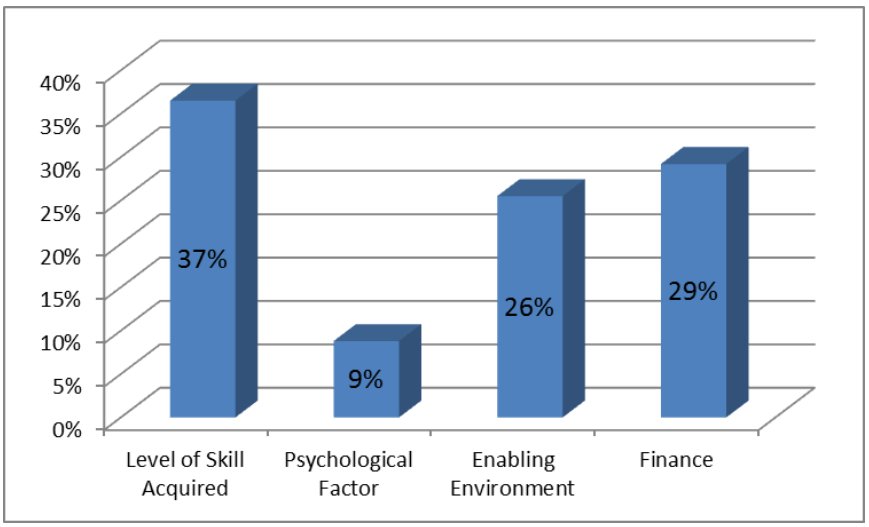

Figure 3: Bar chart showing the likely factors militating against Youth Empowerment for Self-reliance via TVET.

37% of the respondents believed that level of skill acquired could hindered any student that went through vocational courses from being self-reliance because the student in question could have the feeling that he never had the best of the training required in his/her field of study.

Some of the respondents (9%) also feel that psychological factor plays major role in starting a business in their various areas. The factors range from negative comments from the friends, family acceptance of the intended venture to general acceptability in the community. It is a general believe that whosoever has passed through one vocational course or the other should look for white collar job.

It is also believed that the Nigeria environment is not conducive for start-up of any vocation or business because the entrepreneur will have to provide virtually everything which will nourish and grow the business. There will be the need for security, constant power supply and other needed facilities to start the business. About 26% of the respondents believed that this factor will not allow the business to witness its budding stage through to the maturity stage.

Lastly, it is believed that for every business, there must be starting capital for which it may seems very difficult if not impossible for a fresh graduate or new entrant to business to have. 29% of the respondents opined that finance is also one of the factors that could hinder self-reliance of the youths' in Ogun state despite their various skills acquired in their areas of specialization.

Hypothesis Testing

Regression analysis involving Ordinary Least Square method (OLS) was used to test the hypothesis.

H_0: TVET has no significant contributions to Youth Empowerment for self-reliance in Ogun State.

Table 3: Relationship between TVET and youths empowerment in Ogun State

Variable	Correlation Coefficient	p-value	Remark
TVET and Youth Empowerment	0.552	0.000	Significant

*p-value is significant at 5%

The result as presented in Table 3 above shows the relationship that exist between the variables under consideration, that is, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Youth Empowerment. The result obtained indicated that there is a strong positive relationship between TVET and Youths' Empowerment with correlation coefficient of 0.552. Moreover, the effect is significant with p-value 0.000 which is less than 0.05 significance level. Hence, it is upheld that TVET have significant relationship with youth empowerment in Ogun State. The result reflects the youths' level of exposure, disposition and aspiration for vocational activities as options for economic sustenance and self-reliance.

Table 4: Summary of the Regression Analysis of the Impact of TVET on Youth Empowerment

Variable	β coefficient	Standard Error	T	p-value
Constant	3.728	1.622	2.298	0.048*
TVET	0.247	0.086	2.872	0.000**

$R = 0.552$, $R^2 = 0.305$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.303$, Standard Error = 1.602, $F = 35.564$, Sig. = 0.000, Note: *Test is significant at 5% significance level, **Test is significant at 1% significance level, R is the correlation coefficient, R^2 represents the coefficient of variation.

The result as indicated in Table 4 shows the contribution of TVET to Youth Empowerment for self-reliance in Ogun State. It was observed that exposition and awareness to technical and vocational skills yield about 24.7% increase in self-reliance of the youths in Ogun State (t-value is 2.872 with p-value<0.05 significance level). Furthermore, the F-value of 35.564 with p-value < 0.05 is an indication of the adequacy of the model relating TVET and youth empowerment. It shows that TVET could account for about 30.5% variation in the empowerments of youths. Hence, the alternative hypothesis is accepted and we then conclude that TVET will have significant impact on Youths' Empowerment for Self-reliance in Ogun State.

The results support Iro-Idoro and Jimoh (2018) that Technical and Vocational Educational and Training will equip people with skills that are important to bring about good living and economic sustenance. Previous studies have also indicated that TVET has significant contribution to the development of trained people that are enterprising and self-reliant through their use of technical skills (Okorieocha & Duru, 2013; Chukwuedo & Omofonmwan, 2015; Dokubo & Dokubo, 2014).

4. Conclusion

Youths play significant role in our societies and are important in driving nations for growth and development in all spheres. Empowering the youths to be productive is not an option but a necessity to make them useful for the society and be economically independent. Technical and Vocational Education and Training offers a wide range of skill acquisition and empowerment opportunities through which the youth could be equipped and engaged to have good living and economic sustenance. A keen appreciation and understanding of the youth interest and preferences for vocational activities will be helpful in tailoring social awareness and encouragement of the youth towards specific technical and vocational activities. With adequate attention and funding of TVET programmes in higher institutions as well as commitment to youth empowerment through technical and vocation trainings will enhance youth productive engagement, empower them socially and economically to become self-reliant thereby reducing youth unemployment, restiveness and social insecurity. Finally, more efforts should be instituted to encourage youths to embrace technical and vocational activities. Specifically, the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), Polytechnics, Monotechnics and Colleges of Technology should put necessary mechanism in place to motivate students' interest, enrolment and participation in technical and technology-based courses especially in programmes where enrolment is low. Government should further increase funding of technical education and provide enabling environment and motivations that will foster youth interest in technical and vocational activities.

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