



# Towards Enriching University Curricula for Vocational and Entrepreneurship Empowerment of Youths in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** Despite Nigerian government efforts at integrating vocational and entrepreneurial curricula into higher institutions to ensure that youths are prepared for the world of work, the challenges of inertia particularly in the area of inability to create jobs for self-empowerment and sustenance are key factors to such entertained fear in the mind of the would-be Nigerian graduates. On the thrust of these observations, this study focused on the possible strategies of enriching university curricula for vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment of youths in Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and five research questions were answered in the study. A total of 1000 final year undergraduate students purposively sampled from some Nigerian Universities participated in the study. University Curricula Enrichment Scale (UCES) with a reliability co-efficient of 0.77 was used for data collection. Descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentage, mean and rank order were appropriately used for data analysis. The study found that university curricula are largely void of many local vocational trades with a below average of 40.1%. Also, entrepreneurship and vocational school-work/internship learning is grossly inadequate with a percentage rating of 22.2 among others. It is recommended that all concerned with university policy formulation and implementation should re-envision university curricula for enhanced empowerment of youths for economic gains.

**Keywords:** Curricula, Empowerment, Entrepreneurship, Vocational

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The world over, youths are perceived to be the future and hope of every country. As education represents the instrument for human progress, youths are expected to be educated and get prepared to thrive in a rapidly changing world. Where youths are not properly educated, they would become a menace to the society. As a result, any high returns on resources invested in youths today have both immediate and long-term benefits (Bello, Danjuma & Adamu, 2007).

Observations however show that Nigerian graduates of today are faced with the problem of inability to create jobs and be self-employed (Ogonna & Okpala, 2011). Many of the graduates from the higher institutions of learning are not with employable skills (Adebisi, 2014). They are thus part of the employment crises which have emerged as the most challenging issues confronting many world economics. Many of Nigerian youths are obviously not productive and have actually been reduced to petty traders and smugglers. In many instances, Hassan (2013) observed that the growth in the phenomenon of trafficking in persons and child labour can be attributed

to poverty and joblessness among the youths. Despite the fact that many countries including Nigeria have realized that youth potentials can be developed and harnessed through a sound education system, the problem of graduate unemployment, most of which are youths is becoming more gargantuan each passing year. Hence, the high rate of unemployment in the country becomes the order of the day (Adebisi, 2014).

In addition, graduate unemployment has come to characterize the Nigerian labour market. As a result of the inability of a proportionate Nigerian graduates to create jobs, Nnamani (2007) cited in Ogonna & Okpala (2011) declared that this has resulted in an increase of unemployment among youths. Youth unemployment in Nigeria has become a threat to socio-economic, peace and stability (Ajufo, 2015). In fact, there has been a steady increase in the involvement of youths in various anti-social activities and offences in Nigeria as a result of unemployment (Okafor, 2011). In a similar view, Ojajorotu (2010) and Gilbert (2010) affirmed that some of unemployed youths have been used as local militants to attack, bomb, vandalize and destroy oil pipelines and properties in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.



Despite the fact that Nigerian government at various times has made efforts to educate youths and prepare them for the labour market through curricular reviews of various educational programmes, empowerment programmes, and various links with some entrepreneurial organizations through internship and collaborations, graduate unemployment among the university graduates is still exacerbated. There are many reasons that can be attributed to the university graduates unemployment and their persistent inability to be job creators and job owners. Alumona & Erinsakin (2012) identified some of the reasons as: the nature of the school curricula, economy, poor quality of graduates and staff quality.

Of much concern to the authors of this paper is the university curricula. The relevance of university education in this regard is the extent to which the courses studied by undergraduates could readily and easily fit them into the modern labour market. UNESCO (2005) opined that after finishing formal education, young people should be able to subsequently make successful transition from school to work with the skills and knowledge they acquired. Instead, under grim circumstances, a good number of university graduates and some other products of polytechnics, colleges of education and colleges of health technology among others had to accept jobs that were unrelated to their specialization. The result is that graduates, who do not have adequate vocational and entrepreneurial skills which could make them marketable, cannot be readily employed in the world of work. It is surprising that there are acute shortage of artisans and skilled workforce as there are many unemployed graduates of higher institutions. (Sharma, 2013).

Obviously, the trends in the criticisms levied on university education in Nigeria as well as the curricula in some cases have made some people perceive contemporary education as investment in frustration. The aims of tertiary education to develop relevant high level manpower; acquire both physical and intellectual skills for self-reliance; and develop as well as inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society in practice have been questioned. There is nothing more hopeful, and more of a greater gift than to educate a person in the three educational domains. Investing in university education of citizens helps governments meet their obligations by improving opportunities for the vulnerable group (youths) and their families, by strengthening their economics, and by keeping them in good health (Adebayo, 2012).

However, the critical issue which continues to generate criticisms is the nature of the university curricula. According to the World Bank and the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) as cited by Ajala (2002), Alumona & Erinsakin (2012), one

of the major causes of declining quality of university education in Nigeria is the irrelevant curriculum. Part of the problem with the curricula as cited by them is that it is not tailored towards inculcating adequate vocational skills. In the present dispensation, there is a yawning gap between the curriculum of Nigerian university education system and the roles its graduates are expected to play in the society (Eneh & Eneh, 2015). If at the level of university education, beneficiaries lack relevant and employable skills, then when and where would they acquire the required skills that would make them functional in the challenging labour market? Regardless of the quality of universities in Nigeria, the curricula that foster vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment are very essential.

It needs to be reiterated that the quality of manpower a nation has is determined by its skill-oriented curricula. To have high quality and adequate graduate youths for national development, vocational skills acquisition through relevant vocational trades must be acquired. Training of university students for work-skills cannot be separated from vocational studies since one of the main purposes of establishing higher institutions of learning is production of manpower for the nation. As a result, effective skills' acquisition in education is an indispensable tool towards producing a self-reliant nation and dynamic economy (Aderogba, 2011). Aderogba (2011) buttressed that to be self-reliant or self-employed, an individual must have acquired the right habits, attitudes, and saleable skills, with which he can explore his environment as well as means of surviving in the face of employment. Hence, the need for vocational empowerment of youths in Nigeria.

In the same vein, entrepreneurship education is the type of education which has the ability to impact the growth and development of an enterprise through technical and vocational training (Tamuno&Ogiji, 1999 cited in AKpan and Etor, 2013). Entrepreneurship ability involves the acquisition of skills, ideas and managerial competencies necessary for self-employment (Elebe, 2011). Basic managerial skills, can only be made to function where they blend with skills often fostered in entrepreneurship curriculum. Likewise, to translate the vocational skills acquired in technical and vocational education into sustainable self-employment, entrepreneurship education is an immediate tool. Thus, the integration of entrepreneurship education into the university curricula is expected to give Nigerian youths the needed knowledge to be able to manage their own businesses and make them employers of labour rather than mere job seekers.

Entrepreneurship education creates the willingness and the ability in a person to seek out investment opportunities in the society and be able to establish and



run an enterprise successfully based on identifiable opportunities (Fashua, 2006). Since entrepreneurship education objectives at the tertiary level aim at offering functional education for youths; providing graduates with adequate training to be creative and innovative; and offering graduates adequate training in the acquisition of skills that will enable them to meet the manpower needs of the society (Nwangwu, 2007); in this respect, undergraduate youths' empowerment through university education curricula demands greater attention.

Youths' empowerment can be seen as an intervention strategy that addresses socio-economic problems which confront the youths in participating in national development. It is an ongoing process of human growth and development, a framework for youths that focuses on their capacities, strength and developmental needs (Ndid, 2009). Empowerment is an important component of sustainable development initiative in the contemporary global environment (Ijeh, 2009). That is why the call for youth empowerment continues to be an emerging trend in Nigeria with emphasis on vocational and entrepreneurship education. In order to achieve the aim of undergraduate youths' empowerment in Nigeria, it is assumed that vocational and technical education programmes, through a good number of vocational trades available in tertiary institutions as well as entrepreneurship studies, are practical avenues. Still, it remains obvious at this growing millennium that the challenges of inertia, particularly in the area of undergraduates' inability to create jobs for survival, remain crucial. The role of university curricula in preparing youths for the labour market is becoming more challenging in modern society. All these observations in the background led to the focus of this paper.

## 2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

One of the best ways to enhance youth empowerment is through quality university education. However, in Nigeria, the issues of university graduates' unemployment and working in private sectors not based on their specializations or relevant trade options are becoming more gargantuan each passing year. These problems have become more pathetic despite all the strategies put in place by Nigerian governments in addressing the issue of human capital and sustainable empowerment. Given that gainful employment and ability of youths to create jobs are part of the life wires of any economy, the criticisms about the deficiencies in university curriculum in Nigeria in the area of vocational and entrepreneurship needs of undergraduate students call for a re-think and re-envision of what operates in the university education programme.

There is still a wide gap between education acquired by youths in Nigerian universities and the market needs

in society. As a result of these observations and the continuous debates on the issue by academia, this study examined the possible strategies of enriching university curricula for vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment of youths in Nigeria. By implication, it would be an eye-opener for African countries as a whole to re-envision their higher education and curricular practices for enhanced graduate preparedness and productivity for the labour market.

## 3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were answered in the study:

1. To what extent have university curricula prepared youths for vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment?
2. What are the deficiencies in University curricula affecting youths' vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment?
3. What are the emerging challenges affecting undergraduate youths' vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment in the university?
4. What are the strategies for improving university curricula for vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment of youths?
5. What are the vocational trade courses essential in the university undergraduate curricula for youths' vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment?

## 4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study covered two selected federal universities and two selected state universities in Lagos and Ogun States of Nigeria. Final year undergraduate students in various faculties/colleges of the universities were the subject of the study, and university curricula being implemented across the faculties/colleges were the content scope of the study.

## 5. METHODOLOGY

The study made use of descriptive survey design. It employed the use of both quantitative and qualitative analysis in finding out the means of enriching university curricula for vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment of youths. The target population was all the final year undergraduate students in the federal and state universities located in Lagos and Ogun States of Nigeria. These students are in various disciplines (specializations) as are available in their respective universities.



The random sampling technique was used to select University of Lagos and Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta as well as Olabisi Onabanjo University and Tai Solarin University of Education making four (4) out of six (6) government-owned universities in both Lagos and Ogun States in Southwestern Nigeria. In the four selected universities, 1000 final year students were purposefully sampled because it is assumed that they have stayed in their respective universities for over three years, and that a good number of them have been exposed to Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) in Nigeria in their course of study. They are thus eligible to comment appreciably on the type of vocational trade courses to be included in the university curricula. The distribution of the sample is as follows.

**Table 1. Sample size**

University	Number of Respondents	Male	Female
University of Lagos	244	140	104
Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta	264	163	101
Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye	250	130	120
Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu-Ode	242	109	133
Total	1,000	542	458

The instrument that was used for data collection was the University Curricula Enrichment Scale (UCES). It was divided into six sections – A, B, C, D, E and F. Section A of UCES contained the bio-data of the participants. Section B consisted of eight items, focusing on the extent of preparation of undergraduate youths for vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment through university curricula – High Extent (HE), Moderate Extent (ME) and Low Extent (LE) response categories were attached to the items. Section C contained five items which sought to find out the deficiencies in university curricula affecting youths' empowerment. The frequencies of the students' responses and their percentages were required for sections B and C. Section D was on the emerging challenges affecting undergraduate youths vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment in the university. It contained ten items and a rating scale of *Strongly Agree* (SA-4), *Agree* (A-3), *Disagree* (D-2), and *Strongly Disagree* (SD-1) were the response categories used. Section E contained eight items on the possible strategies for improving university curricula towards undergraduate youths' vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment; while, Section F identified twenty-five trade course options, which may be integrated into the university curricula for enriched youths' empowerment. Frequency count, mean categories, and ranking of the mean were required for decision point – A mid-point mean of 2.50 obtained on

the average of their spread of opinions ( $4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 10 / 2 = 5$ ) was required as the accepted criterion mean out of a maximum rating of 5.0 while the mean below 2.50 was regarded as negative rejection region. The instrument (UCES) was validated by some experts in vocational and entrepreneurship studies in content coverage, phrasing, wording and depth of coverage. The reliability co-efficient of Sections B and C were determined using Conbach Alpha and reliability co-efficient of 0.76 and 0.79 were obtained after which thirty copies of the instrument have been administered on some undergraduate final year students outside the scope of the study. Split-half approach was used for Sections D, E, and F, and Pearson Product Moment of Correlation was used to determine an average co-efficient of reliability upon which a value of 0.77 reliability co-efficient was obtained.

The researcher and five postgraduate students who served as research assistants administered and collected the completed copies of the University Curricula Enrichment Scale (UCES) within three weeks from the undergraduate students who were the participants (respondents) in this study.

## 6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following results were obtained after the administration of the instrument (UCES) and analysis of the data collected.

**Research Question 1:** To what extent have university curricula prepared youths for vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment?

**Table 2. Extent of the Preparation of Undergraduate Youths for Vocational and Entrepreneurship Empowerment through University Curricula**

S/N	Item	High Extent (HE)	Moderate Extent (ME)	Low Extent (LE)
1.	Ability of undergraduate youths to meet the skill needs of the modern world employment.	150 (15.0)	780 (78.0)	70 (7.0)
2.	Undergraduate youths are able to transfer from institution to work with the skills and knowledge they acquired.	45 (4.5)	550 (55.0)	405 (40.5)
3.	Preparedness of undergraduate youths to fit into the world of work.	141 (14.1)	791 (79.1)	68 (6.8)
4.	Acquisition of marketable skills for graduate employment in the world of work.	100 (10.0)	210 (21.0)	690 (69.0)



5.	Preparedness of undergraduate youths in vocational and entrepreneurship skills to get jobs just to make two ends meet.	610 (61.0)	35 (31.5)	75 (7.5)
6.	University curricula's adequacy to enable youths to meet the vocational and entrepreneurship challenges of the labour market.	140 (14.0)	610 (61.0)	250 (25.0)
7.	Empowerment of undergraduate youths with ability to get jobs that would sustain them after graduation	290 (29.0)	6161 (61.6)	94 (9.4)
8.	Possession of the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and commercial understanding to enable new graduates to make productive contributions toward organizational objectives soon after commencing employment.	210 (21.0)	520 (52.0)	270 (27.0)
<b>Average (%)</b>		<b>21.1%</b>	<b>54.8%</b>	<b>24.1%</b>

From Table 2, it can be seen that the extent of undergraduate youths' preparation for vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment through university curricula is of high and moderate extents in items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8. Specifically, their ability to meet the skills' needs of the modern world employment is between 15.0% (High Extent) and 78.0% (Moderate Extent). Ability to transmit from institution to work with the skills and knowledge they acquired is between 4.5% (High Extent) and 55.0% (Moderate Extent); preparedness to fit into the world of work is between 14.1% (High Extent) and 79.1% (Moderate Extent). Acquisition of skills to get jobs just to make two ends meet is 61.0% (High Extent) and 31.5% (Moderate Extent); the university curricula's adequacy in ensuring that the youths meet the vocational and entrepreneurship challenges of the labour market is between 14.0% (High Extent) and 61.0% for Moderate Extent; A range of 29.0% (High Extent) and 61.6% (Moderate Extent) is recorded for the empowerment capacity of the youths to get jobs that would sustain them after graduation. The undergraduate youths' productive tendency to contribute to the achievement of organizational objectives soon after commencing employment is between 21.1% (High Extent) and 52.0% (Moderate Extent); the acquisition of marketable skills for graduate employment in the world of work by the university students is rated to be 10.0% (High Extent) and 21.0% (Moderate Extent). In sum, an average overall percentage of 21.1 and 54.8 are recorded for High Extent and Moderate Extent for the extent to which university curricula have prepared youths for

vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment; while, 24.1% is recorded for Low Extent. These results indicate that the present university curricula in Nigeria are not bad as some criticisms over the years suggest. Still, the overall moderate ratings of 54.8% make it evident that the curricula of university education should still be enriched for better vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment of youths. (Table 2).

**Research Question 2:** What are the deficiencies in university curricula affecting youths' vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment?

**Table 3. Deficiencies in University Curricula Affecting Youths Vocational and Entrepreneurship Empowerment**

S/N	Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	University curricula are not well tailored towards vocational and entrepreneurship skills	124	12.4
2.	Inadequate programming of university programmes with undergraduate students' internship/individual attachment training	222	22.2
3.	University curricula are largely void of many local vocational trades/studies necessary for youth empowerment	401	40.1
4.	Entrepreneurship studies/education is not offered in interdisciplinary form in the university curricula	197	19.7
5.	University curricula is deficient in portable skills in some vocational trades that would make students blend in some other trade options outside their specialization for economic growth after graduation	56	5.6
<b>Total</b>		<b>1000</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 3 reveals the deficiencies in university curricula affecting youths' vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment. A highest percentage of 40.1 out of a total of 100.0% is recorded for item 3 in Table 3. That is, university curricula are largely void of many local vocational trade/studies necessary for youth empowerment. This is followed by inadequate planning of university programmes with undergraduate students' internship/industrial attachment training (22.2%). Some other respondents also pointed to deficiencies in the way entrepreneurship studies/education is offered (19.7%) and non-tailoring of university curricula towards vocational and entrepreneurship skills (12.4%) among others.

**Research Question 3:** What are the emerging challenges affecting undergraduate youths vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment in the university?



**Table 4. Emerging Challenges Affecting Undergraduate Youths Vocational and Entrepreneurship Empowerment in the University.**

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remark
1.	Ineffective method of instruction	17 (1.7)	380 (38.0)	340 (34.0)	263 (26.3)	2.35	Rejected
2.	Too much focus on theoretical instructions delivery	100 (10.0)	700 (70.0)	201 (20.1)	99 (9.9)	2.41	Rejected
3.	Inappropriate skills and knowledge developed in the university curricula	101 (10.1)	404 (40.4)	-	494 (49.4)	2.40	Rejected
4.	Mismatch between quality of university curricula and youth vocational and entrepreneurship preparation needs for labour sector	80 (8.0)	615 (61.5)	150 (15.0)	255 (25.5)	3.10	Accepted
5.	Poor learning resources and funding limitation for implementing university curricula	301 (30.1)	464 (46.4)	136 (13.6)	99 (9.9)	3.64	Accepted
6.	Inadequate staff/students ratios to the detriment of undergraduate students vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment	91 (9.1)	409 (40.9)	305 (30.5)	195 (19.5)	2.60	Accepted
7.	Lateness in starting entrepreneurship education in some Nigerian universities	250 (25.0)	600 (60.0)	150 (15.0)	-	2.90	Accepted
8.	Insufficient experts in the field of vocational studies and entrepreneurship	85 (8.5)	650 (65.0)	100 (10.0)	165 (16.5)	3.20	Accepted
9.	Inadequate implementation of vocational and entrepreneurship education curriculum	201 (20.1)	600 (60.0)	99 (9.9)	100 (10.0)	3.15	Accepted
10.	Slow pace of university curricula in moving with labour market needs	160 (16.0)	450 (45.0)	310 (31.0)	300 (30.0)	2.40	Rejected

The observations in the results presented in Table 4 show that all the mean responses from 2.50 and above based on the decision point are rated as the emerging challenges affecting the vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment of youths in the university. The challenges are rated in the following order: Poor learning resources and funding limitation ( $x=3.64$ ); insufficient experts in the field of vocational studies and entrepreneurship ( $x=3.20$ ); inadequate implementation of vocational and entrepreneurship education curriculum ( $x=3.10$ ); lateness in starting entrepreneurship education in some Nigerian universities ( $x=2.90$ ) and inadequate staff/students ratios to the detriment of undergraduate students vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment ( $x=2.60$ ). These challenges are altogether limiting the viability of university curricula in empowering youths for labour market.

**Research Question 4:** What are the strategies for improving university curricula for vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment of youths?

**Table 5. Strategies for Improving University Curricula for Vocational and Entrepreneurship Empowerment of Youths**

S/N	Strategies for Improving University Curricula	Mean X	Ranking
1.	Need to give more attention to internship/student industrial work training for vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment of youths	3.13	3 <sup>rd</sup>
2.	University curricula should be more responsive providers of education in areas of higher level skill shortage of the labour market	3.15	2 <sup>nd</sup>
3.	Making students work experience/internships a regular part of the university curricula in practice	2.69	7 <sup>th</sup>
4.	Need for matching undergraduate students' entrepreneurship internship programme with local entrepreneurs and vocational trade experts	2.66	8 <sup>th</sup>
5.	Need for the university curricula to be more closely tied to the businesses, industries and other employment sectors that manage the market economy	3.05	4 <sup>th</sup>
6.	Need to include the practice of vocational studies/courses as mandatory part of the university curricula in practice	3.21	1 <sup>st</sup>
7.	Need to make entrepreneurship education as a mandatory part of the university education for all students	2.85	5 <sup>th</sup>
8.	Development of a continuous employability agenda in university curricula in practice	2.71	6 <sup>th</sup>



The results in Table 5 provide a true picture of the strategies which could be put in place to enrich university curricula for vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment. All the eight items have their mean responses above 2.50 and are thus regarded as workable strategies applauded by the respondents in this study as means of enriching university curricula towards vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment of youths. In a specific sense, the need to include the practice of vocational studies/courses as a mandatory part of the university education for all students has the highest mean score of 3.21 (Table 5). Similarly, though the mean rating of 2.66 is the least in Table 5, it is also accepted that there is the need for matching undergraduate students' entrepreneurship internship programme with local entrepreneurs and vocational trade experts for adequate youths' empowerment.

**Research Question 5:** What are the vocational trade courses essential for inclusion in the university curricula for vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment of undergraduate youths?

**Table 6. Vocational Trade Courses (Studies) Essential for inclusion in the University Curricula for Vocational and Entrepreneurship Empowerment**

S/N	Vocational Trade Course (Options)	Mean X	Decision
1.	Textile Trade and Tailoring	2.90	Accepted
2.	Plumbing and Pipe Fitting	2.65	Accepted
3.	Catering Services	2.64	Accepted
4.	Graphics Art	2.52	Accepted
5.	Automobile Trade	2.40	Rejected *
6.	Metal Fabrication (Welding)	2.51	Accepted
7.	Photography and Video Coverage	2.66	Accepted
8.	Carpentry and Joinery	2.87	Accepted
9.	Furniture and Upholstery Construction	2.84	Accepted
10.	Wood Machinery/Operation	2.41	Rejected *
11.	Electrical Installation and Maintenance	2.74	Accepted
12.	Basic Electronics (Radio, Television and Appliances Repairs)	2.69	Accepted
13.	Computer Maintenance and Operation	2.99	Accepted
14.	Knitting	2.50	Accepted
15.	Animal Rearing	3.10	Accepted
16.	Dyeing and Bleaching	3.32	Accepted
17.	Hair Dressing/Barbing	2.51	Accepted
18.	Masonry, Bricklaying and Concrete Works	2.31	Rejected *
19.	Poultry Rearing	3.01	Accepted
20.	Shoe Making	2.32	Rejected *
21.	Horticulture and Gardening Services	3.11	Accepted
22.	Painting	2.41	Rejected *
23.	Sculpture	2.52	Accepted
24.	Fruit Juice Production	2.98	Accepted
25.	Fish Farming	3.16	Accepted

\* The vocational trades with an asterisk are rejected by the respondents.

In line with the need to include and improve the practice of vocational studies/courses as a mandatory part of the university curricula in practice (item 6, Table 5), Table 6 represents a list of twenty-five vocational trade courses essential for inclusion in university curricula for youths vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment. Twenty of the listed vocational trade courses are accepted for inclusion in university curricula; while, the five vocational trade courses rejected are Automobile Trade ( $x=2.40$ ), Wood Machining/Operation ( $x=2.41$ ), Masonry (Bricklaying and Concrete Works) ( $x=2.31$ ), Shoe Making ( $x=2.32$ ) and Painting ( $x=2.41$ ). The reasons for rejecting the five vocational trades courses (studies) above may be due to the very low status that the undergraduate youths have for them among others. Specifically, one of the reasons might be attitudinal. Notwithstanding, the wish of the undergraduate youths to have a good number of the vocational trades/courses included as part of their university vocational and entrepreneurship curricula is worthy of note and a good direction to follow by policy makers, curriculum reviewers and relevant stakeholders of education in general.

## 7. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This empirical study has revealed the functionality of university curricula in preparing youths for vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment. The curricula have been rated to be 54.8% moderate and above on the average as a means for youths' empowerment (Table 2). Notwithstanding, Adebayo (2012) reiterated that the adaptation of functional university education to incorporate poverty alleviation programmes, can empower the youths for sustainable development in Nigeria if properly planned and implemented by the stakeholders concerned. It means that with the percentage rating of 21.1% for High Extent and 54.8% for Moderate Extent, (Table 2) on the average, university curricula in Nigeria still need to be improved upon for the betterment of the recipients of the university programmes in economic and job placement terms in the world of work.

The deficiencies in university curricula affecting youths' vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment show that the curricula are void of many local vocational trades/studies; inadequacies in internship/students 'industrial attachment training; teaching of entrepreneurship education/studies in isolation instead of making it interdisciplinary in many cases; and failure to tailor university curricula towards some vocational and entrepreneurship skills as presented in Table 3. These deficiencies agree with Akomolafe & Adegun's (2009) observation that graduates who do not have marketable skills cannot be employed in the world or work. These deficiencies equally confirm that Nigerian society



through its curricula is still facing the challenges of giving education that would effectively equip undergraduate students with the right set of skills and knowledge demanded by the labour market.

The emerging challenges affecting youths' empowerment in the university are indications that to date, all is not well with the curricula implementation. Most of the challenges pointed out by the undergraduate youths who participated in this study, as indicated in Table 4, corroborate the reports of Ndidi (2009), Nwosu & Ohia (2009), Alumona & Erinsakin (2012), Sofoluwe, Shokunbo & Ajewole (2013) and Hassan (2013), who at various times observed a number of challenges which hinder the growth and development of education in Nigeria, leading to youths' unemployment in the society.

As presented in Table 5, if the university curricula are not performing as expected in the areas of skills' acquisition for vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment of youths, what then are the strategies or approaches to be used to make university education programmes more functional? There is the urgent need for the following as found out in the study:

1. Inclusion of vocational studies/courses as mandatory for all university undergraduate students;
2. Responsiveness of university curricula to higher level skills shortage of the labour market;
3. Need to give more attention to internship/students industrial work training;
4. Linking university curricula closely with businesses, industries and other employment sectors;
5. Need to make entrepreneurship education mandatory for all university undergraduate students;
6. Development of a continuous employability agenda in university curricula in practice;
7. Blending of students' work experience/internships with regular part of the university curricula in practice; and
8. Need for matching undergraduate students' entrepreneurship internship programme with local entrepreneurs and vocational trade experts.

On the preferred vocational trade courses essential for inclusion in the university curricula, the twenty trade options accepted by the respondents as against twenty-five trade options identified in this study demand serious attention (Table 6). The need to start exposing university undergraduate youths to any of the trade courses as may be made available in their various universities, and as resources permit, will expose them to practical work experience in those areas and provide opportunities for vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment. Such

courses/trade options are no doubt highly desired and required in university education for an eventful end of young graduates in modern labour market across the African countries of the world.

## CONCLUSION

The role of university education in generating employable graduates who could readily fill available job vacancies and at the same time be job creators remains pertinent in Nigeria and other developing African countries. Upon the backdrop of higher rate of youth unemployment in the labour market, this study has made effort towards enriching university curricula for vocational and entrepreneurship empowerment of youths in Nigeria. Despite the deficiencies in the existing university curricula as well as the emerging challenges affecting youths' empowerment, university education in Nigeria and some other African countries with such issues can still be made more functional through the strategies supported by the respondents who are the recipients of university curricula.

A nation like Nigeria, with the present situation, and unrelenting efforts to educate youths and prepare them to thrive in a rapidly changing world of work, can thrive better. All it calls for is university curricula enrichment. Vocational and entrepreneurship programmes are the possible ingredients. Investment in these areas pays anytime anywhere for self-actualization of youths and economic growth of the society as a whole. In sum, African countries including Nigeria can thrive better where vocational and entrepreneurship policies and programmes are re-envisioned and adequately put into practice.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings emerging from this study, the following recommendations are made.

1. Inculcating more vocational trade courses/options into the university curricula, where students can make their choice apart from their major specialization, should be a workable line of action.
2. University curricula should be enriched with more entrepreneurship courses in interdisciplinary perspective.
3. There is the need to review undergraduate students' vocational entrepreneurship internship/industrial training scheme in terms of duration and establish binding policies for effective students' industrial training.
4. Nigerian university environment should be made more student-friendly by providing adequate resources, to motivate undergraduate youths towards economic empowerment.





5. It is high time for all Nigerian universities to establish a centre for vocational and entrepreneurship studies that will coordinate youth empowerment programmes apart from their specialized course option for their degree programmes.

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