

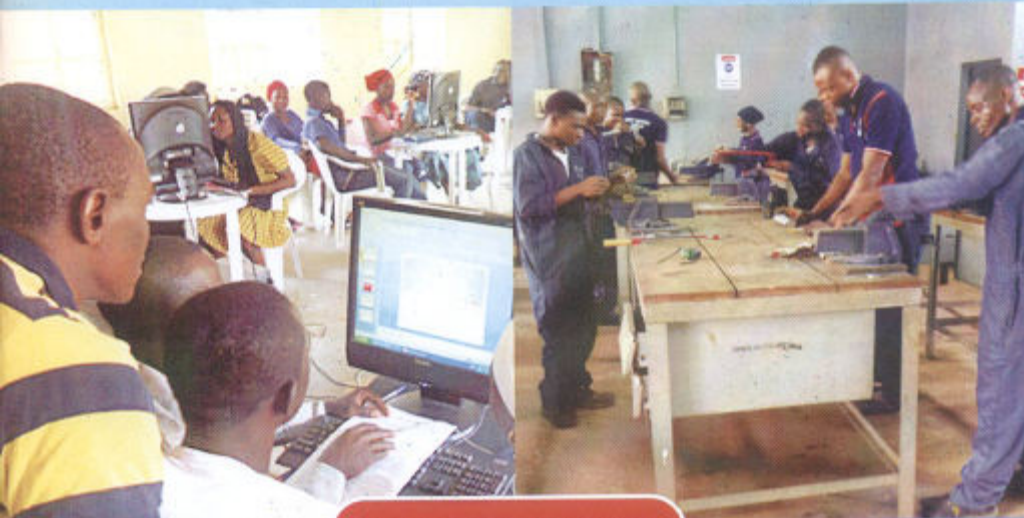


MONOGRAPH

CPED

CPED Monograph Series No. 2, 2002

“NON-FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEMS AND THEIR IMPACT ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN **BAYELSA AND RIVERS STATES, NIGERIA**”



**Andrew G. Onokerhoraye
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Emmanuel Ideh
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This Publication is supported by *Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) of Nigeria.*

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By

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Published by

Centre for Population and Environmental Development (CPED)
BS-1 and SM-2 Ugbowo Shopping Complex,
Ugbowo Housing Estate
P.O. Box 10085, Ugbowo Post Office
Benin City, Nigeria

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First published in 2002

Series Editor:

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Printed in Nigeria by:



AMBIK PRESS LTD.
#4, Otiike-Odibi Avenue, Isiohor,
Via Ugbowo Old Lagos Road,
P.O. Box 5027,
Benin City, Edo State.
052-880527 & 08074009192

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study is undertaken under the auspices of the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) of Nigeria's Research Grants for Academia Scheme. SPDC provided the funds for the execution of all the aspects of this study up to this stage. I am grateful to SPDC for supporting this study.

The field research team which comprised interviewers, field workers and supervisors worked relentlessly under challenging situations, especially during the raining periods to solicit detailed information from respondents especially youths as well as federal, state and local government agencies and their officials. We also appreciate the support of private sector organisations involved in non-formal education in the two states including SPDC Eastern Division in Port Harcourt and its youth training centres in the execution of the research project. The co-operation of both interviewers and respondents in all the organisations and institutions visited made this study a reality.

The execution of this research project received considerable support from the *Centre for Population and Environmental Development (CPED)*, Benin City, especially in the use of its facilities and Programme Officers in the execution of the field surveys. In this connection I thank Mr. Johnson Dudu and Mr. Augustine Agbi for their contributions to the success of the research project.

While the text and all the shortcomings of this study are my responsibility, it is my hope that the findings of the study would enhance knowledge of the challenges facing non-formal education to promote youth employment in the two states in particular and Niger Delta in general and that the policy issues raised will be examined by all concerned to improve the employment of youths in the region.

Andrew G. Onokerhoraye

Benin City, August 2002

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

Despite heavy investment in education over the past four decades, typically on the order of 20 per cent of the national budget, Nigeria has low rates of enrolment, and the formal school system has been in crisis. Primary school enrolment rates lag behind population growth. Severe economic constraints and concurrent structural adjustment pressures appear to have reduced prospects of widespread private gain from formal schooling, at least in the eyes of parents and communities. With the liberalisation policies in the country in the mid 1980s, formal sector employment has declined and public sector employees have become subject to retrenchment. In addition, due to economic and structural difficulties in the education system, ever-increasing numbers of young people are leaving school unable to either progress up the academic ladder, or gain employment in the formal sector. Compounding the employment problems of school leavers is a general consensus that educational policy has not been geared towards self-employment, rather at all stages, preparation has been towards wage employment. Dwindling job opportunities in the formal sector, compounded by increased pressure on parents and communities for disbursements of time, financial and other resources seem to have altered the cost-benefit equation of schooling,

particularly in rural communities. The wages of formal sector employees were in real terms still declining, and no longer could the government ignore the potential of the informal sector as a mechanism for providing employment and subsistence income for ever increasing numbers of people.

Cries about the education crises in Nigeria and other African countries grew louder in the 1990s. Not just parents, but scholars and international assistance agencies pointed out the major symptoms of the education crisis as the following:

- The inability of the system to accommodate the growing population of children;
- Reductions in rates of enrolment and increasing rates of early school abandonment;
- Deteriorating infrastructure
- Curricula that continue to transmit information in a foreign language;
- Curricula that fails to prepare products for self employment;
- The lack of bona fide association with indigenous systems and values; and
- Unpaid and demoralized teaching staff.

In a policy paper published in 1988, the World Bank underscored the stagnation of enrolments, the erosion of quality and growing inefficiency in resource and personnel management as the main educational issues of the time (World Bank, 1988). However, with continued

recognition of the centrality of human resource development as the key to social and economic change, the reaffirmation of education as human right following the Jomtien conference, and the emergence of various movements for democratisation and decentralisation as a result of the end of the cold war, governments, assistance agencies, and local communities have been looking for ways to resolve the crisis. New initiatives have been launched as a response to perceived failures of the formal school system. Alternative and /or complementary structures seek to reach those individuals who have been traditionally excluded (Coombs, 1986).

In the context of Nigeria particularly in the Niger Delta region, there are a large number of people mostly youths who have been negatively affected by the problems of the formal school system as outlined above. Over the years the Nigerian economy has not experienced any real growth. The estimated annual growth rate of 5% of GDP has never been achieved. The absence of economic growth has had negative impact on employment growth. The implementation of Economic Structural Adjustment Programme and the Civil Service Reform Programme has witnessed retrenchments in all sectors of the economy. The retrenched people have added to the already swelled unemployment problems experienced by school leavers. Youth, ages 15-30, form a volatile and large group of poorly educated and unemployed (often-unemployable) persons who are easy victims of warlords. They form a

potentially destabilising force sub-nationally and nationally and to some extent globally as reflected in the wave of illegal migration to advanced countries.

Many of the conflicts in the Niger Delta have involved the recruitment of youth and child soldiers who become easy victims of ethnic nationalists. This suggests that a principal function of the educational system in the Niger Delta is the political socialisation of young people so that they can learn their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Programmes focused on providing education, training, and employment opportunities for the youth must form an important part of education plans. Non-formal, technical and vocational education programmes need special attention in this regard. Increasingly, attention of the various authorities in the public and private sectors as well as in the civil society is being paid to non-formal education especially for the youths in the Niger Delta region. Goal: In contrast to extensive research on formal schooling, non-formal education does not seem to have been a significant area of research in Nigeria in general and the Niger Delta in particular. In view of the increasing importance of non-formal education in the region especially in the context of providing employment opportunities for the youths, there is need to map the pattern and characteristics of the provision and consumption of non-formal education. We need to know which government and non-governmental agencies are supporting non-formal education and the mechanism they employ. More

specifically we need to know what provision is there to support and assist young people in the Niger Delta region. Above all there is need to establish whether the preparation of youth for the formal and informal sectors through non-formal education is based on cohesive or fragmented policies and actions.

Research Objectives

This study examines both the structures and processes that assist in the training of youths that aspire to become self-employed entrepreneurs and artisans working in the formal and informal sectors of two states in the Niger Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers. It attempts to investigate and appraise the results of selected non-formal education services in the two states. It analyses in context both the process and actual learning outcomes of the different non-formal education programmes.

In specific terms, the objectives of the study are as follows:

- To identify and examine the non-formal educational and vocational programmes leading to formal and informal sector employment in the Niger Delta including entry qualifications, providers, the nature of provision, i.e. the nature of the training programmes, and
- To identify trends and possible future needs in non-formal education and training provision for future employment in the formal

and informal sectors of the Niger Delta.

Methodology

The principal research instruments used were library searches, semi-structure interviews, small group discussions, observations and questionnaires.

The preparatory phase began with extensive library searches to identify the key governmental and non-governmental agencies involved in the training of youths, their policies, (past, present and future) and finally to identify and collect documentary and academic literature relevant to the study. This initial search was intentionally very broad, encompassing all forms of youth training. The search exercise was extremely productive as it enabled the researcher to identify the principal training providers, assisted in identifying some of the issues and concerns addressed in the subsequent interviews with administrators, trainers, trainees and entrepreneurs and finally, target possible venues for detailed field work. Building on this, arrangements were made to visit and interview key officials in public and private organisations and NGOs.

The second phase of the study involved fieldwork consisting of visits, observations and interviews, at non-formal training venues, primary schools street youths and both subsistence and small-scale entrepreneurs in both rural and urban locations. Authorisation from several Ministries enabled the researchers to conduct their enquiries in

different training centres. Attention then focused on interviewing providers and their clients, undertaking local document searches, observing where possible, practical activities and finally examining the quality and range of learning and artefacts produced by the clients.

Site tours of training venues allowed the researcher to carry out an audit of the fabric of the building, the availability and condition of utilities, plant, equipment and other resources. Visits to primary and secondary schools also enabled the researcher to administer a questionnaire to a number of pupils about their aspirations and expectations. Similarly, primary and secondary school dropouts operating as street youths were observed and interviewed about their schooling, working life, aspirations and expectations. Finally discussions with local entrepreneurs yielded valuable information about the relative merits, constraints and perceptions of the capabilities of graduate trainees from the various different training providers. Views on primary and secondary education and its relevance to employment prospects were also sought out in a sample of urban and rural communities in the two States Bayelsa and Delta.

The concluding phase of the study was both comparative and reflective as data collected during the preparatory and fieldwork was analysed. In addition further visits were made to some Ministries, private sector organisations and agencies to ensure that this report

made reference to contemporary patterns in both education and training.

The remaining part of the monograph is divided into four parts. The first part presents the conceptual background to the study by reviewing the relevant literature and the different perspectives on non-formal education in the context of a developing country such as Nigeria. Part two provides the empirical background to the study by examining the trends in population growth in Bayelsa and Rivers states. Part three focuses on the critical examination of the different types of non-formal education training activities with special reference to those designed to provide employment for the youths. The final part draws attention to policy issues, which must be tackled if non-formal education is to make the required impact on youth employment in Bayelsa and Rivers States.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The Literature on Non-formal Education in the Context of West Africa

As noted earlier, very little is written in the academic literature about non-formal education directed to youth and children in West Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. There are several likely reasons for this. In terms of overall national impact, non-formal education is greatly overshadowed by formal education. In contrast to the millions of children who attend primary and secondary schools five to six days a week for approximately two-thirds of every year, a much smaller proportion of the general population is exposed at any one time to non-formal education. Consequently, fewer financial and human resources have been devoted to non-formal education. Another probable cause for the limited scholarly attention devoted to non-formal education is its fragmented nature. Apart from comprising a host of different areas of learning, non-formal education in Nigeria as in other parts of West Africa has been managed by different government departments (as opposed to a single ministry of education) and by a vast array of non-governmental organisations, many of which are foreign operated and depend solely on foreign funds. It has thus not been easy for researchers to delve into such programmes to produce generalised findings.

However, an examination of the literature shows that the studies that have been carried out can be broadly categorised as follows (Ahmed and Coombs, 1975)

- Evaluations of literacy training and its contributions to autonomously managed community development;
- Assessments of agricultural extensions programmes;
- Inquiry into the learning needs of out-of-school youth, and ways that non-formal education can complement formal schooling; and
- Research into the training needs of rural women and the motivational factors that impinge on their receptiveness to non-formal education.

The literature shows that research into non-formal education in West Africa has reinforced the findings of international studies on non-formal education in Africa and in other regions of the world. Several researchers, for example, have pointed out the cost-effectiveness of non-formal education. It has been indicated that literacy training is strongly linked to improvements in other learning domains such as health and hygiene, agricultural production, environmental protection, and revenue-generating skills. In studies carried out in Mali and Benin, for example, the functional effectiveness of literacy was also examined in an assessment of women's literacy programmes (Namudu and Tapsola, 1993). When linked with revenue-generating projects trainees' did not only embrace literacy

more eagerly, but it also enhanced women's productive potential. This was especially evident when the women perceived the connection between literacy and practical ends such as increased revenue and better systems of co-operative management. Dembele, who revealed that literacy training in the context of Malian communities with active village development committees could have a positive impact on agricultural production, demonstrated this circular link between literacy and immediate community aspirations further. As all these studies show literacy is not perceived as an end in itself in societies where oral communication remains predominant, but rather is commonly regarded as an instrumental means toward utilitarian ends.

The relationship between non-formal education and subsequent job performance has received little attention so far. However, Kudaya's report on the different educational backgrounds and the differential earning power of commercial managers in Togo revealed that entrepreneurs working in the informal sector enjoyed a somewhat higher economic advantage than many fixed wage-earning managers in the formal industrial and commercial sectors of the economy (Kudaya, 1989). In view of the fact that skills acquired via non-formal education were oriented toward informal sector jobs, and that general education obtained through formal schooling has been linked traditionally to public and modern industrial sector employment, both of which are experiencing severe human

resource bottlenecks, Kudaya concluded that expanding non-formal education would likely enhance the effectiveness of national investment in potential growth sectors of the economy (Kudaya, 1989:34).

Some research has also focused on the limitations and shortcomings of non-formal education. Some studies have indicated that systems of accountability have not emerged automatically as a result of more literate co-operative memberships, nor have increased levels of farmer literacy reduced obstreperous attitudes of politicians and bureaucrats toward co-ops (Lenget, 1983). It has been pointed out that while literacy can enhance individual proficiency in certain tasks, its effectiveness is limited as a means of generating political change and local employment. Women's educational programmes are likewise flawed. It has been noted that non-formal education for women does not always consider the extensive and fatiguing domestic work that all too frequently hinders their participation in training sessions. Research has shown also that training is too dispersed and insufficiently designed to accommodate and respond to women's local needs. Similar problems have been identified in non-formal education for youths (Moulton, 1983). An assessment of an out-of-school youth literacy-training project indicated that the project was conceived too narrowly and did not include needs articulated by youth groups themselves. Further research has also revealed complete lack of non-formal education co-ordination in some countries and the incoherence of

teaching methods applied by different programmes operating in the same locality or region. Non-formal education is often fragmented into discrete subjects such as preventive health care, environmental protection, literacy, and agriculture. They tend to be myopic, and lack explicit philosophical or ideological foundations evident in popular education movements in Latin America and Southeast Asia. Additional research has demonstrated that non-formal education as practised is often pedantic and authoritarian, quite the opposite of the concept of non-formal education that is more participatory and interactive than formal schooling. One reason for this gap between the ideal and the actual practice of non-formal education is that many extension workers themselves have been educated in the peremptory of authoritarian school classrooms.

In the context of the Niger Delta where basically little research on non-formal education has been carried out despite the prevalence of different types in the region, the preceding review of the literature on non-formal education in West Africa suggests a numbers of issues which should attract the attention of researchers who are interested in non-formal education in the region. These issues are outlined below:

- Because most non-formal education has been heavily sponsored by externally funded non-governmental agencies, it has also remained fragmented and uncoordinated, and oriented mainly to alleviating

perceived basic needs rather than heightening political sensitivity and more extensive democratic practices. Critical investigations of non-formal education in the Niger Delta region are useful, because as out-of-school education increasingly seems to offer a potentially feasible cost-effective complement to formal schooling, it needs to be subjected to rigorous analysis if its potential is to be realised in the Niger Delta context.

- The knowledge base of non-formal education in the Niger Delta is quite limited. There is urgent need to improve the existing knowledge base, which can provide the basis for future action by state and non-state actors. In so doing, the main purpose is to augment general understanding about the inevitable changes affecting non-formal education, and thus sharpen the analytical comprehension that is needed for making choices and managing educational change at the non-formal level.
- A major aspect of non-formal education, which has not been explored in the Niger Delta, relates to the need to examine the determinants that facilitate the integration of school-leavers into productive and fulfilling occupations. Until recently, government employment was the generally acknowledged occupational arena for most aspiring graduates in the Niger Delta as in other parts of Nigeria. Yet in the wake of liberalisation and trends

toward privatisation, and with evidence that school-leavers do seek jobs in the informal market economy, there is need for research to track the occupational effects of general and vocational education on subsequent job performance.

- Furthermore, in view of the prevailing significance of non-formal education as an alternative for youth who are unable to progress through the formal school system, and as a relatively low-cost, short-term means of acquiring specific occupational skills, there is need to examine more closely the structures and processes of non-formal education, and the effectiveness of non-formal education as a social change agent and as a means of improving individual livelihoods
- Finally, there is need to examine the relationship between formal and non-formal education and how collaborative connections can be generated between the two systems, particularly in local communities in the Niger Delta.

It is against the background of the preceding observations on the gap in the literature on non-formal education in the Niger Delta context that this study was conceived.

CHAPTER 3

Population Growth, Education Training and the Problems of Youth Employment

The function of education in Nigeria can be described as two fold; to establish and reinforce national identity through discipline, hard work, honesty and morality and secondly to prepare young people for the world of work as part of the process of manpower planning. At Nigeria's Independence, illiteracy among all sectors of the population was identified as one of the principal constraints to the socio-economic development of the country and as a consequence the government introduced a number of measures that resulted in the rapid expansion of educational provision. Both governments and the communities invested heavily in education in order to increase access and educational attainment. Nigerians had and continue to have high expectations of education. Parents invest a great deal in the education of their children in the hope that, when they complete school, will be gainfully employed and provide for themselves and for other members of the family. The challenge of educational development with respect to the preparation of youths for work is closely tied to population growth patterns in relation to educational provision characteristics. It is in this context that this chapter examines the trends in population growth and educational development in Bayelsa and Rivers States.

Trends in Population Growth and Characteristics in Bayelsa and Rivers States

Population constitutes a vital component of the resource base and the development potentials of any society. The most important elements of the population in this regard are its size, rate of growth, spatial pattern, demographic structures and quality. The population of Bayelsa and Rivers States has been growing steadily since the turn of the last century when the British colonial administration was established. According to the 1931 census of Nigeria, the population of Bayelsa and Rivers states was 375,000. By the 1952/53 census of Nigeria the population of the two states has increased to 748,000. There was a dramatic increase in the population of the two states by the 1963 census when the population rose to 1,545,000. By the 1991 census the population of the two states has further increased to 4,470,176. The 1991 population of Bayelsa and Rivers States has been projected using the linear extrapolation model and 2.83 per cent annual growth rate which indicated the two states have population of 5,909,122 in 2001.

The rapid increases in the population of the two states over the last fifty years are a reflection of the trends in fertility and mortality levels. In the Niger Delta as a whole, crude birth rates fluctuated between 50 and 52 per 1000 in 1950s, and appeared steady to the 1960s before declining to between 48 and 50 in the

1980s. According to the 1991 census, the average crude birth rate for the Niger Delta was 47.9 while that of Bayelsa and Rivers was 45.56. At the same time mortality levels have been declining steadily over the years in the Niger Delta region including Bayelsa and Rivers States. The rates have been declining steadily from 187 per 1000 in the 1960s to about 85 per 1000 in the 1980s. The infant mortality rate fell from 150 per 1000 in the 1960s to about 85 in the 1990s. However, there are variations of 80 to 120 per 1000 in many parts of the two states. The remarkable decline in the crude death and infant mortality rates has been attributed to the following factors: socio-economic advancements, progress through better nutrition, medical technologies, improvement in health and access to education. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), mass campaigns against communicable diseases have made a remarkable contribution to the decline in mortality and morbidity in many countries. In addition, mass vaccinations have played a part in reducing the incidence of yellow fever, small pox, whooping cough, tetanus, diphtheria and tuberculosis. Other cause of mortality in the literature include child birth which multifarious women are exposed to as large family sizes are also closely associated with the incidence of maternal mortality in areas of high fertility where birth intervals are short. Another positive development in the Niger Delta region as far as population dynamics are concerned is the rising level of life expectancy at birth. Life expectancy at birth has

increased from 30 years (for males) and 32.5 years (for females) in the 1950s to an average of 36 years in the 1980s to 48 years in the 1980s. According to the 1991 census, life expectancy at birth for males and females exceeded 60 years in Bayelsa and Rivers States. The implication of the prevailing high level of fertility, coupled with declining mortality levels is the continuing sustained and steady increase in the natural population of the two states over the years. This rapid population growth has posed considerable challenge to the provision of education and employment opportunities for the people of the two states.

Trends in the Age Structure of the Population of Bayelsa and Rivers States and the Emergence of a large Number of Youths

Bayelsa and Rivers States as in other parts of Nigeria present an interesting age distribution typical of a fast growing population. The pattern represents a very young population with children less than 15 years making up about 44 per cent of the population; those between 15 and 64 years make up about 54 per cent while those 65 years and above account for less than 2 per cent. Recent sample surveys in Bayelsa and Rivers States show that within the population aged 15 to 64 years, the proportion of them aged 15 to 29, that is the youths, varies from one locality to another. In the largely rural communities, the proportion of the youths aged 15 to 29 years is about 25.5 per cent while in the urban areas it is

about 35.3 per cent. The average for the two respective states is about 30.5 per cent. In other words as high as 30.5 per cent of the population of the two states constitute the youths that must be catered for in education and employment creation. Relating this ratio to the 1991 population of the two states as reported in the 1991 census of Nigeria, the youths constitute about 1,363,404. By 2001 when the population is estimated at 5,909,122, the population of the youths must have risen to 1,802,282.

Provision of Formal Education and the Youths

Nigerian governments over the years have considered that primary education was necessary to raise the literacy rates among the people *per se*, but more pragmatically to improve the quality of life in rural areas. This view did not have popular support, as many parents and young people perceived that primary education was merely the first stage to secondary education and thus, the passport towards formal sector employment. However, similar increases in secondary provision were not often contemplated by the government and the result was that although ever increasing numbers of young people achieved the required grades for entry to secondary school, only a very small number ascended the ladder. Often less than 45 per cent of those who complete primary education proceed to secondary schools. Of those who progress to secondary education only about 30 per cent go forward to

upper secondary, less than 5 per cent gain a place at a higher education.

Educational provision and access to formal employment since independence can therefore be described as analogous to mapping pins recumbent on their base. In both instances the base represents those who attended primary school and intended by government to work in rural areas, undertaking farming and related occupations. The stem signifies the few who progress to secondary education and the opportunity for formal sector employment. The taper signifies progression to upper secondary and finally, as the point is reached, University entry.

Training for employment in either the formal or informal sectors takes many forms and is carried out in a variety of environments. Since Independence the government's economic policies have resulted in a diversification of provision. Some policies were aimed at strengthening the country's industrial base, while others were clearly part of the drive for rural development and attempts to stem urban migration. In addition, NGO's such as Church organisations and individual employers have made a valuable contribution by providing apprenticeships and semi-skilled training to young people.

Training for employment in the formal sector was until recently based on manpower planning and therefore supply-side driven. However, a recurrent problem with the governments 'supply' driven training policy, was its

inability to adapt to the needs of the marketplace, which resulted in over capacity in some trades and shortages in others. Training in Vocational Training Centres (VTC), for example, emphasized the development of technical competencies and little or no consideration was given to management or enterprise skills. Attitudes are changing, for over-capacity in the formal sector has resulted in retrenchment and greater numbers of VTC graduates are forced to consider employment or become self-employed in the informal sector.

Since the early 1970's increases in the birth rate coupled with improvements in health and social welfare in the Niger Delta as noted earlier, have not been matched by economic growth and as a consequence, unemployment and underemployment, especially among young people, has developed into a major problem in the region including Bayelsa and Rivers States. Frustrated by the perceived lack of opportunity in rural areas, urban migration especially to Port Harcourt and other major cities in other parts of Nigeria has been the solution for ever-greater numbers of young people. Here, faced with the stark reality of little or no opportunity to obtain formal employment, many turned to more resourceful methods of income generation. Some youths earn a subsistence living in the informal sector, while others resorting to crime and other anti-social activities.

Characteristics and Problems Associated with Formal Education Systems

The current structure of Nigeria's formal education is based on 6-3-3-4+ systems i.e. primary, junior secondary, senior secondary and university. Despite significant increases in enrolment rates both at primary and secondary levels, the quality of provision has been deteriorating and is currently regarded as very poor. Increasing numbers of young people either dropout of school early, or fail to achieve a creditable grade at the end of primary level. Much of the blame for this is attributable to an under-resourced system unable to cope with the demands made on it. However there are more fundamental pedagogical concerns which need to be addressed, namely the content of the curriculum and methods of instruction. Basically, the curriculum and the assessment instruments are designed to support the academic progression of the few who advance to secondary education, rather than facilitate the more pragmatic needs of the vast majority of primary school pupils destined for work in the informal or formal sectors.

One subject of direct value to youths who could be artisans in the informal sector is science. But the general consensus among academics is that the primary science curriculum is still highly academic and is intended to prepare pupils for secondary education. The curriculum is devoid of practical examples denoting everyday application. At the secondary level a

similar picture emerges and the emphasis is on the recall of knowledge rather than the application of knowledge. Practical science is limited to demonstrations to verify, rather than concentrating on investigation and application. In the past a number of initiatives have been piloted at both phases, but all have failed mainly due to political reasons. Some elements of the deficiencies associated with the formal education system, which inhibit a young persons' development towards self-employment are outlined below. Factors such as enrolment, supply-side and demand-side difficulties and constraints, the curriculum, institutional and organisational issues and current/future initiatives to assist educational provision are considered.

Vocational and Technical Education and Training

Vocational education in general prepares skilled persons at lower levels of qualification for particular jobs, trades or occupations. It usually covers general education, practical training and related theory in varying concentrations but, more often, emphasis is placed on practical training.

Technical education on the other hand is designed to prepare technicians and middle-level management personnel in secondary educational institutions. Technical education encompasses general education, scientific and technical studies and their related theory, and training in specific skills. The type of personnel being produced and the educational level of training

determine the relative amounts of emphasis and areas of concentration.

The objectives of vocational and technical education in Nigeria are to produce operatives, artisans, craftsmen, technicians and other middle-level personnel with the skills and knowledge required for the country's agricultural, industrial, commercial, and economic development. Of particular importance in vocational and technical education is the emphasis laid on equipping the individual with entrepreneurial skills for self-employment to enable the trainee to adapt easily to changing economic and occupational situations.

Vocational and technical education and training in Bayelsa and Rivers States as in other parts of Nigeria is fraught with many difficulties. The government institutions have a fair share of the frustration, but in the informal sector the problems are legion. A critical observation reveals the common use of inappropriate tools, equipment and training materials, poor infrastructure and other physical facilities, poor remuneration for staff and the use of untrained instructors. Most private training institutions offer their own internal certificates but encourage and prepare their trainees for nationally recognized certificates offered by the National Vocational Training Institute and the City and Guilds of London.

CHAPTER 4

Non-formal Education Systems and their Impacts on Youth Employment in Bayelsa and Rivers States

Introduction

Since Nigeria's independence a number of government ministries, agencies, international donors, Non-Governmental Organisations (both local and international) and private sector establishments in the formal and informal sectors have assisted in the training of the youth in different parts of the country including Bayelsa and Rivers States. Provision has taken a number of forms, financial and technical aid to facilitate training, the provision of practical training, or by providing funds to assist youth groups start their own businesses to mention a few examples. However, in reviewing the literature what becomes apparent is that studies and reports have tended to focus on the work of particular organisations and institutions. Also, after precursory discussions with officials from a number of state and non-state organisations, it became apparent that there was a need to clearly define the key participants and their activities in youth training for employment in Bayelsa and Rivers State so that future planning might be more effective.

In attempting to establish *who does what*, ministries, agencies, organisations and private sector establishments were classified as either

state or non-state actors. This classification was necessary to illustrate the complex interrelationship, which was found to exist between the various institutions in Bayelsa and River States. However, within these two classifications there were found to be varying numbers of institutions engaged in supporting the training of the youth and therefore, within each it became necessary to further sub-divide them.

Public Sector Provision of Non-formal Education

Public sector organs involved in non-formal education in Bayelsa and Rivers States include the National Directorate of Employment of the Federal Government, and the two State Ministries of Agriculture, Education, Health, Economic Empowerment and Employment Generation and Women & Youths in the two states.

The National Directorate of Employment

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) is one of the institutions that were set up after the introduction of SAP in 1986. It was set up to reduce drastically the level of unemployment in the country through the encouragement of self-employment. The focus of attention was to be on school leavers and graduates of universities and polytechnics. The NDE was expected to provide training opportunities, finance and guidance to the

unemployed through its four major programmes, which were launched in January 1987 namely:

- A national youth employment programme, in which the National Open Apprenticeship Scheme and the Vocational Skill Development Scheme form the core;
- The Special Public Works Programme, which provides for the employment of both graduates and non-graduates in the maintenance of public institutions;
- The Agricultural Development Scheme, for unemployed graduates; and
- The small-scale Industries Programme, which provides technical and financial resources to young entrepreneurs and those who have lost their jobs because of economic contraction.

Over the years there has been a rising demand for some of the programmes than the Directorate actually planned for which has been a reflection of the rising unemployment in the country. In the category of rising demand for the services of NDE are the National Youth Employment and Vocational Skills Development Programme, Special Public Works Programme and Agricultural Programme. The magnitude of the unemployment problem in the country was thus further has been clearly exposed over the years

Our interaction with the NDE offices in Bayelsa and Rivers States indicates that the focus of their programmes is designed to reduce unemployment among youths, contain youth restiveness and promote self-reliance in terms of employment generation by the youths themselves. The main features of the programmes executed by the offices are outlined below.

Financing of Training Activities

The financing of skill training activities is provided mainly by the Federal Government of Nigeria, which as noted above established the agency. Some support is also provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which provides some equipment for some of the trades in which the participating youths are trained.

Age and Gender Component of the Training

The training activities of NDE in the two states focus mainly on people between 15 and 30 years of age. Every effort is made to promote gender equity in the training activities as opportunities are provided for both males and females. The number of females is greater in trades like tailoring, hair dressing, auxiliary nursing, cloth weaving etc, while there are more male trainees in trades like welding, stage lighting, driving, tractor driving, surveying, bricks/blocks laying etc. However, experience shows that more men tend to fall out of the

training as they constantly seek admission to higher institutions and when they succeed they abandon the training programme.

Training Methods

- The duration of the training programmes vary between 6 months and 36 months depending on the nature of the trade and the time to acquire the necessary skills.
- Skills on which training are provided are identified through the forms which prospective participants complete so that they can indicate the trades in which they are interested.
- Trainees are generally attached to specific trades and craftsmen for training.
- Regular assessment is carried out during training especially in practical components of the training
- At the end of the training, graduates of the programmes are awarded testimonials at the end of the training and they are further encouraged to acquire trade test since the testimonials are not normally given much importance by employers.
- Graduates of the programme are provided with what is called resettlement loan scheme, which provides money and equipment in relation to the trades in which they were trained. The loans given to the graduates of the programme are

expected to attract a comparatively low interest rate of 8%.

Characteristics of the NDE Training Centres

The field survey shows that there are 75 training centres, which NDE uses for its training programmes in the two states. Our visit to 25 of them provides some insight into the features and facilities of these training centres. The training workshops are managed by the trainers who are either owners or head of the workshops. Training patterns and relationships are generally cordial and informal. In this respect the trainees receive guidance and counselling from their trainers. The enrolment in the training programme is controlled by local government quota system. In other words they are selected from different local government areas, using any criteria, which have been worked out by NDE. The number of trainers is a reflection of the number of trainees sent by NDE to the workshops. The trainers are men and women who have themselves undergone such training and have now established their own workshops. Some of them do not have formal education but they had trained in trades such as cloth weaving, fashion design, etc. Some other trainers such as those providing surveying, accountancy, computer education, auto electrical and general fitting services are professionals who have higher education from Polytechnics and Universities. The general physical

conditions are basically satisfactory in recognition of the largely informal nature of the training centres.

Some of the training centres adopt what is called "school-on-the-wheel" system or mobile workshops, which are taken to villages to train some youths for a period of three to six months before moving to other villages.

Impact of NDE Programmes on Employment

A review of the available data from NDE on the beneficiaries of the schemes indicates that a considerable number of youths have been trained in Bayelsa and Rivers States over the past fifteen years since the programme came into effect in the country. Between 1987 and 1996, the number of beneficiaries of the different schemes of the NDE is as follows:

- Open Apprenticeship Scheme- 21,430
- School-On-Wheels Scheme- 1,036
- Entrepreneurship Development Scheme- 20,156
- Rural Employment Promotion Programme- 62
- Graduate Farmers Scheme- 479
- School Leaver Farmers Scheme- 464
- Crop Processing Scheme- 40
- Special Public Works Programme- 1,254
- School Leaver beneficiaries of Special Public Works Scheme- 5,286

- Beneficiaries of National sanitation Scheme- 30

There is no doubt that these programmes have provided employment training opportunities to a large number of people in the two states. The question is to what extent have these programmes provide employment to the beneficiaries?

Rivers State Ministry of Economic Empowerment and Employment Generation

Rivers State has adopted a multi-faceted approach to generate employment for its teeming unemployed youths and alleviate poverty among the people. This has led to the establishment of the Ministry of Economic Empowerment and Employment generation.

The Ministry now has a data bank of registered unemployed persons in the state. For example in 1999, the Ministry registered 4,750 unemployed graduates, 12,250 non-graduates and 1,350 skilled persons. The aim of the project is to provide unemployed youths with vocational skills to assist them gain employment. The Ministry is involved in the training of youths and other categories of unemployed people in trades such as catering, computer studies, sign writing, hair dressing, wood carving, electrical installation, mechanical repairs etc. The selection of trainees is based on advertisement in which applicants are given opportunity to indicate the trade they are interested in being trained on.

The duration of the training programmes vary from 6 months to 36 months. The trainees are regularly assessed by the Ministry in terms of their practical performance. At the end of the training programme certificate of participation are awarded to participants who successfully complete the training. The number of male trainees tends to be higher than females a reflection of the types of trades in which training is provided. Generally soft loans are given as take off capital to enable them establish their own enterprises. Data on post-training employment indicates that between 25 and 30 per cent of the graduates secure employment in various places.

Bayelsa and Rivers States' Ministries of Education

The main focus of non-formal education provided by the Ministries of Education in Bayelsa and Rivers States is to reduce adult illiteracy rates. The programmes therefore provide a substitute for regular full-time schooling and a second chance for all those who missed out initially, especially to the migrant fishermen. They provide popular education, which focuses on the poor.

Bayelsa and Rivers State Ministries of Women Affairs and Youth Development

The Ministries of Women Affairs and Youth Development in both states have organized various public enlightenment programmes to create awareness among

women and youths on government welfare programmes and various opportunities available to them to become self-employed. So far, the awareness fora and skills acquisition workshops have been held in Port Harcourt and Yenagoa but the Ministries indicate that plans are underway to shift workshops to the grassroots to enhance greater participation of the people at the local level.

The Ministries are responsible for the management of the Skills Acquisition Centres, which was established in the two states to train people in a variety of trades including cookery, tie/dye, cards making, candle making, dressing making, interior decoration, paint making, home management and school chalk making. Candidates are selected for training on the basis of advertisement so that trainees can be selected from all local government areas in the state. The duration of the training depends on the trade but generally the period ranges from 6 weeks to 6 months. Participants are examined on a continuous basis and certificate of participation is awarded to successful trainees. The basic philosophy of the skills acquisition training is the emphasis placed on self-reliance because it is expected that participants who have completed their training in the programme must have acquired skills that will enable them to establish an outlet to practice their trade. After the completion some equipment are given as loans to participants to establish their trade.

Bayelsa and Rivers States' Ministries of Agriculture

The key youth employment programme in these Ministries in the two states is the School-to-Land Scheme, which focuses on the acquisition of agricultural knowledge/practices for self-reliance and employment generation especially for young school leavers. It trains participants for cropping, livestock and fishery. Currently, 300 young secondary school leavers, all from Rivers State, are being trained under School-to-Land Scheme on modern agriculture, livestock and fish farming. About 20 hectares of the School-to-Land farm at Iriebe in Oyigbo Local Government Area have been cultivated while the School-to-Land poultry, piggery, etc, are being revamped for increased output. The training is for a period of one year and testimonials are awarded to successful participants. The successful applicants are encouraged to establish their farms by a loan of N100,000. In Bayelsa State its School-to-Land Scheme is located at Imiringi and carries out similar training facilities for the youths.

Provision of Non-formal Education by Tertiary Institutions

The tertiary institutions i.e. Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education in Bayelsa and Rivers States do provide various types of non-formal education activities. The non-formal education activities are mainly carried out through the Faculties of Education, Business Administration,

Technology and Consultancy Services Units. The non-formal educational programmes cover courses in health, family life, population, environmental and community-related subjects. The programmes have been concerned with integrated rural development; organizing and strengthening women's groups; transfer of improved technologies; leadership training and fostering community action. Specific projects have involved the establishment of experimental farms, community projects and income generating activities of various types, adult literacy campaigns and setting up of centres for trade skills. The non-formal educational programmes provided by tertiary institutions are very diversified and range from one-day programmes to courses of a few weeks' duration.

Support for Non-formal Education by International Agencies

According to UNESCO, donor support to adult basic education has declined since the 1980s because in recent years adult education is not a priority item for external aid. The Jomtien conference did raise global consciousness about the value of adult basic education but in general, funding emphases have remained focused on the formal education system. However some efforts are still being made to support non-formal education in developing countries, which can be of benefit to the situation in the Niger Delta in terms of relevant experiences.

World Bank

Although the World Bank provides considerable support for education in developing countries, non-formal education is hardly mentioned in the World Bank's 1995 policy paper, *Priorities and Strategies for Education*, which interprets basic education mainly in terms of formal primary education. In the past, the Bank's support to non-formal education was targeted at rural education centres, post-primary skill centres, brigades and young farmers' clubs. However, these alternatives were regarded as 'second-best' to the formal system. More recent examples of World Bank support to non-formal education include support for distance learning to isolated populations, project related training, involvement with parents' associations and land rights education. The majority (over 80 percent) of World Bank supported non-formal education and training programmes involved practical skills training, predominantly in agriculture. In Bayelsa and Rivers States these have been carried out through the Agricultural Development Programme in some localities.

European Union

European Development Fund support to education and training in developing countries is governed by the Lome Agreement and must back up the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States' policies and measures in this area. The European Development Council Resolution on Education and Training, stresses the importance of a balanced, programme-based strategy,

tailored to the specific circumstances of the individual developing country. The resolution emphasises that education, particularly basic education, is a fundamental right. Support to basic education is to be given priority and will include increasing the availability of non-formal education. It also states that Community and Member States will seek to promote support for both non-formal and formal vocational training. However, the proportion of European Development Fund (EDF) programmable funds committed to education and training actually fell from 9.4% under Lome III (1985-90) to 6% under Lome IVa (1990-95). Relatively small proportions of EU education and training commitments have been earmarked for non-formal education (7 percent under Lome III (1985-90) and only 0.03 percent under Lome IVa (1990-1995). These programmes have not had any significant impact in Nigeria and consequently there have been effect in Bayelsa and Rivers States.

UNESCO

As the UN agency with responsibility for education, UNESCO promotes both formal and non-formal education. It considers educational provision to be primarily the responsibility of Member States and clarifies that it is neither a financing body nor a research institution but a lead agency, which acts as a catalyst, mobilise and centre for exchanges. UNESCO's action to promote basic education (including adult literacy) centres on its four regional basic education programmes, in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the

Arab States. Nigeria has been a beneficiary of this programme but the effects have been minimal because UNESCO has no defined policy for vocational training in Nigeria. Consequently there are no visible impacts of UNESCO on non-formal education in the Niger Delta region.

UNICEF

UNICEF's contribution to achieving education for all is focused on formal primary education for children but it also supports non-formal education, emphasising particularly girls and women. UNICEF has identified several challenges to working in non-formal education:

- Combining formal and non-formal modalities
- Making adult education affordable
- Meeting the needs of youth
- Educating working children
- Using media and technology for education

UNICEF emphasises the pivotal role played by youth in family, community and national development and argues for the need to move beyond life skills education to focus on life opportunities, "on ways to help young people identify and take advantage of learning to lead to a more rewarding life". UNICEF also states that it is increasingly important to find ways of mainstreaming working children into education systems. Again the impacts of the UNICEF's policies and programmes in Nigeria especially in

Bayelsa and Rivers States have not been of any major significance.

Other multilateral agencies, which give some support to non-formal education, include the World Health Organisation's (WHO) involvement in health education, the United Nations Population Fund Activities (UNFPA) support of population and family welfare education and the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) work in the field of vocational training. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has a programme of support for the training within industry of apprenticeships for youths completing basic vocational training. Our survey shows that the effects of these agencies on non-formal education in Bayelsa and Rivers States have not been of any significance.

Non-formal Education Activities of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

NGOs clearly have an important role to play in non-formal education and training for self-employment among marginal and underprivileged groups such as youths. They have the motivation and the ability to provide basic literacy and skills to those groups, which the formal education and training systems are unable to reach. Thus, NGOs perform the crucial function of mobilising people at the lowest rungs of the social ladder to improve their socio-economic condition by imparting basic literacy and skills outside the formal education

systems. By using a community-based approach to development, the NGOs also help build a social support structure, which enables a certain amount of economic risk-taking, which would otherwise be impossible for the poor who have little or no capacity for risk-taking. Another role which the NGOs perform is that by their direct involvement with the local community, they are able to understand and deal with social and cultural problems, which are major socio-psychological obstacles to economic development.

Formal Private Sector Non-formal Education Programmes: The SPDC Youth Development Scheme

The SPDC Youth Development Scheme (YDS) is one of the most viable private sector motivated non-formal education programmes in the Niger Delta region. It will therefore be given some detail analysis in this section.

In response to the serious social upheavals and tension in the Niger Delta most of which were masterminded by the youths, SPDC initiated the Youth Training Scheme as part of its educational intervention programmes in the host communities of the region. The scheme is a vocational skills training programme whose maiden edition started in Bonny in 1994. Thus the YDS was conceived as a means of channelling the energies of youths in oil producing communities to gainful activities through the acquisition of entrepreneurial, usable and marketable skills that would make them self reliant through gainful employment

for self or industry and thus steer them away from disruptive behaviour. From 1994 to 1997, five of the schemes in the Niger Delta region were implemented in Bayelsa and Rivers States. The schemes were located in Bonny/Ibani, Ogoni, and Soku in Rivers State while those in Bayelsa were located in Nembe and Ogoni. The schemes were implemented through the "Mobile Workshop Model" of training popularly known in Nigeria as "Schools on Wheels".

Institutional Training Model

Arising from the inherent inefficiencies associated with the "model of training", the YTS scheme was reviewed in 1999 and the training model replaced with the "Institutionalised Training Model" in conformity with the National Policy on Vocational Education. The duration of the scheme is months in which on the 'on-the-job' training is provided. In year 2000, two trainings were conducted at the following centres: Orlu (Imo State) and Bori (Rivers).

In addition to core skills youths undergoing SPDC vocational skills training are exposed to enterprise management, peace education, leadership training, feeder courses and On-The-Job-Training (OJT), to prepare them for future challenges of self employment.

From this stage, graduands proceed to establish their own workshops with the tools and take-of money provided by SPDC at graduation.

Since then other youth development programmes have also been introduced. They are:

Youth Oil and Gas Training: The scheme is special technical conversion training for secondary school leavers, designed to address the poor enrolment of youths from Bayelsa and Rivers states into SPDC Special Intensive Training Programme (SITP/2) for technicians. The training is handled by Government Craft Development Centre, Port Harcourt.

Citizenship Education (School Prefect Leadership Training Scheme): This was introduced to build managerial capacities and leadership potentials of the prefects thereby fulfilling developmental needs of the in-school youths.

Peace Education Programme (Youth Leader's Forum): This programme brings together executive officers of community youth associations and student union executives from tertiary institutions in the Niger Delta and equips them with Conflict transformation skills and Alternative Dispute Resolution processes, especially Mediation and Peace Advocacy, to bring about non-violent social and economic changes in the communities.

In order to examine the impact of the Youth Development Scheme on youth employment especially after the completion of training, a simplified structured questionnaire was

administered on 200 available successful participants (graduates) of the scheme in the communities from which participants were drawn in the training centres where the scheme had been completed. Participants were requested to complete the questionnaire truthfully and give whatever suggestions they may wish to give on their experience with the scheme. Informal interview was also used to elicit responses from some of the respondents. The summary of the impressions of the participants are outlined below with respect to their appreciation of the course in general, starter packs and cooperative societies.

The Respondents' Perception of the Course in General

Analysis of the result shows that 65% of the respondents consider the duration of the training too short while 78% consider the course content adequate. About 68% of the respondents say that training met their expectation at least partially but the expectation of 40% was not met. On their choice of trade, 85% think they got it right while only 15% would prefer a different trade if given another opportunity. About 65% of the respondents are now confident to start up businesses on their own or seek employment elsewhere with the training provided by the YDS but 25% think otherwise.

From the above response, it will not be wrong to conclude that the YDS have made a significant impact on the graduates of the scheme. The scheme met the expectations of a majority of

the graduates both in scope and content. They are satisfied with their choice of trade and are now confident to, either be self-employed or seek employment elsewhere with the knowledge gain from the YDS. The main reservation expressed is the short duration of the training.

The Respondents Opinion on Starter Packs

The findings of the survey show that about 40% of the respondents consider the Starter Packs sufficient to start up their own small businesses while 55% consider them otherwise. It also shows that about 38% have been able to establish small businesses with the starter packs they received while 56% are yet to put theirs into productive use. On their preference for either starter pack or a loan of equivalent amount, 21% opted for a loan, 5% for starter packs while 72% wanted starter pack and a small loan.

The fact that 55% of the graduates consider the starter packs to be insufficient to start up a small business implies that the starter packs have no significant impact on the setting up of businesses by the graduates. This conclusion is further supported by the fact that 57% of the graduates have kept their starter packs idle since graduation.

A greater percentage (15% as against 5%) prefer loan of equivalent amount to the starter packs they received on graduation. Also 72% of the graduates prefer starter packs and a small loan to enable them start up their businesses.

Thus it can be concluded that the Micro-Credit and Business Development schemes have a significant role to play in the YDS.

Respondents Perception of Cooperative Society

The survey shows that 65% of the respondents have some ideas of the workings of a cooperative society but 25% do not. About 62% are aware of the existence of a cooperative society in their locality and 15% are already members of a cooperative society. Some 75% of the respondents are willing to join cooperative societies but 10% do not. Considering the importance of cooperatives in promoting successful self-employment among the youths in the study area, the findings show the need to provide more education on the importance and role of cooperatives to the youths during training programmes.

Informal Private Sector Non-formal Education Programmes

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines the informal sector as that part of economic activity which is characterised by certain features like ease of entry, reliance on indigenous resources, family ownership, small scale operation, labour intensive technology, skills acquired outside formal school system, unregulated and competitive markets. In the Nigerian context, a wide range of activities falling within the domain of industry, transport and agriculture, both in the rural and the urban areas, can be included in this

sector. Bayelsa and Rivers States are predominantly agricultural with a largely rural economy. The majority of the total population of the two states derive their livelihood from agriculture and other home based activities. In this context training for employment in the informal sector is a key element of providing employment opportunities for youths in the two states.

As in other parts of Nigeria, training which takes place on-the-job in the informal sector is a common experience for the acquisition of skills by the youths in Bayelsa and Rivers States. There is a highly formalised traditional apprenticeship system entailing largely non-formal education system. The size of the traditional apprenticeship system in the urban centres such as Port Harcourt is one factor, which makes it so worthy of closer examination. It is a mass system, responsible for tens and hundreds of thousands of young people, in the two states. It is also significant that whilst the formal training system must admit to very low rates of labour market absorption for its graduates, the traditional apprenticeship system appears to have little or no such problem.

Characteristics of the Traditional Apprenticeship System

In using the term 'traditional' of apprenticeship we are not so much suggesting that it is unchanging - which is not the case - but pointing to the fact that this is a local variant of skill learning as opposed to the various Western versions of apprenticeship that

were imported during the 1950s and 1960s in many developing countries. With few exceptions, these formal Western apprenticeship systems have remained extremely small as compared with the local, indigenous or traditional systems.

In Bayelsa and Rivers States, as in other parts of Nigeria, the traditional apprentice system is highly formalised. Elaborate contracts are agreed between masters and the families of prospective trainees. The amount to be paid in fees and the allowances provided by the master are agreed upon. When the apprenticeship period is complete a large and costly graduation ritual is enacted.

The training period is not fixed, but is dependent on the master's satisfaction with the quality of the apprentice's work. On average the apprenticeship period is two to four years. There is considerable variation according to the particular trade.

Apprentices learn primarily through observation followed by trial and error. The tasks performed and the skills learned are organised by the master or, on occasion, his journeymen or senior apprentices. Some masters follow training plans, although these are frequently unwritten. Unfortunately, however, theoretical aspects of the trade tend to be ignored. Note taking amongst apprentices is rare and asking too many questions discouraged.

Typically, traditional apprenticeship begins with a period of orientation

during which the new recruit is expected to learn the discipline of the workshop through carrying out menial tasks such as cleaning and running errands. They are then introduced to the tools and materials of the trade and are given increasingly complex tasks to carry out. In the later stages of their apprenticeship they will be given responsibility for finishing pieces of work, dealing directly with customers and supervising junior apprentices. The master may even leave them in charge of the enterprise on occasions. The training thus obtained is more than a simple technical preparation. The managerial and business skills learnt during the apprenticeship period are central to the apprentices' future survival as entrepreneurs.

On completing their training few start their own businesses immediately. Instead, the typical career path after apprenticeship starts with several years of wage-employment, and culminates in establishing an enterprise. This period of employment, usually still in the informal sector, is seen as necessary in order to gain further experience. More importantly, it is a period in which to save the capital necessary to launch a new business.

Advantages

Traditional apprenticeship in Bayelsa and Rivers States is characterised by relative ease of entry. Although fees may be quite high, they are typically more than recovered in the form of allowances from the master during the training period. The fees are in any case

much lower than those of private Vocational Training Institutions. Therefore, the traditional apprenticeship system is far more accessible to the more marginal societal groups particularly the youths than is the formal training system. In certain trades, however, the traditional apprenticeship system has been restricted in the sense that masters have tended to recruit apprentices through traditional social networks. However, it appears that the market is rapidly becoming a more important determinant in trainee selection, and this freedom from traditional obligations is also now more obvious in the cities of the two states. One key advantage enjoyed by traditional apprentices over their formal sector counterparts is that they have far greater opportunity to observe and participate in business activities. Contacts with the masters' clients increase as training continues and can help greatly with the development of the apprentices' own clientele when they go into business on their own.

Barriers of youths' entry into self-employment are significant and are social as well as economic. These economic barriers can be broken by a period of wage-employment, usually working for a master within the informal sector. However, it has been argued that the social barriers are much harder to overcome (Grierson 1993). Small enterprises exist within a series of overlapping social networks of customers, suppliers, creditors, family, etc. A variety of such networks are necessary to establish and sustain a new enterprise. Therefore, access to self-

employment is constrained by the individual's ability to profit from or initiate such networks. Inevitably it is those who are most disadvantaged who have the least access to existing networks. One of the most important advantages of the traditional apprenticeship system is the access it provides apprentices to the well-established networks of their masters. Such access is further enhanced by the existence of vibrant trade associations. Traditional apprenticeship, therefore, provides two essential requirements for youth self-employment: marketable skills and social networks.

Disadvantages

Significantly, apprenticeship is rare in some, although not all, traditionally female areas of activity, e.g. soap-making. Indeed, traditional apprenticeship is usually concerned with artisanal crafts rather than tertiary or service activities. The traditional apprenticeship system experiences significant levels of drop out. Some trainees cannot cope; find that the trade is "not for them", or have bad relations with their masters. Our survey shows that dropout rates are in the region of 22 to 27 per cent. Significantly, rates tend to be lower in more traditional skill areas such as craft occupations. This may be due to the greater survival of recruitment by kinship in these trades, and to a sense of inter-generational commitment to the trade within the kin or family group. However, it may be due equally to the lower levels of education (and, hence, more limited

alternative opportunities) of the typical apprentices in these fields.

The form of training provided also has its limitations. The quality of the skills learned by the apprentice is very dependent upon the skills of the master. It is rare that apprentices have access to the latest techniques or tools appropriate to their tasks. The business skills learnt are also often rudimentary, particularly in the sphere of record keeping. Traditional apprenticeship has been criticised for excessive trade subdivision. This means that traditionally trained workers are good at what they know, that are often poor at adapting to new situations. The tendency is towards producing improvisers rather than artisans with sufficient theoretical knowledge to become innovators.

Possible Links with the Formal Training System

There has been for some 30 years since these local systems of skill training were first noted for their scope and coverage, a sometimes unfortunate temptation to see how connections between formal and informal sector could work to the advantage of one or the other. Projects have been designed to do something about this alleged lack of theory in the informal sector or to provide realistic training or work places for the young unemployed. A possible way of developing links between the informal and formal training systems is through internships for vocational training institutes (VTI) students in the informal sector. This could provide an alternative industrial attachment to the

conventional period of work experience in the formal sector. As a result of the experiences that VTI staff also would gain from visiting their students in the informal sector settings. VTIs might wish to provide short courses, which address particular needs of the informal sector.

Links with the Formal Education System

Levels of formal education amongst trainees within the informal sector appear to have been increasing steadily in Bayelsa and Rivers States. It seems to be the case that a good basic education facilitates access to traditional apprenticeship, and enhances subsequent performance as an entrepreneur. The advantages of better levels of formal education are likely to be most obvious in the more complex and technical fields such as electrical repairs. However, as was noted above, those with higher levels of schooling are the most likely to drop out of their training.

Education levels in the informal sector will inevitably rise as part of any national increase. However, there is a danger in attempts that seek to raise the education levels of the sector independent of such natural increases. Raised educational levels of traditional apprentices in such a context will inevitably lead to reduced access for the most disadvantaged.

Links with On-the-Job Training in the Formal Sector

Although the primary route to the establishment of an artisanal enterprise in the informal sector is perhaps through the various forms of the traditional apprenticeship system, there are a sizeable number of artisans that have entered the sector from formal sector industries. The precarious nature of the formal sector has forced formal sector employees to engage in further activities in the informal sector. Indeed, many of those who eventually leave the formal sector to operate solely within the informal sector, first establish their informal sector enterprises whilst still working in the formal sector.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions and Policy Issues

The governments in Nigeria have historically attempted to ignore the problems of youth unemployment and as such this has exacerbated the problem by producing two generations of parents and their children (youth), which considers petty corruption, embezzlement and recently violence to be part of the culture of survival. Government assistance where it has been given has been largely ineffectual, in part due to a combination of factors, an ineffective civil service, a lack of accurate information and poor communications. Policies, which diversify, training provision within and between different Ministries has resulted in the emergence of different forms of training without any coordination. The current situation demands that responsibility for all training should be the responsibility of an agency in each state. This would enable cohesive policies and programmes to be implemented that would standardise curriculum, assessment and certification within the system. In addition centralisation under a single agency would reduce the bureaucracy and maximise finite resources.

Relevance of Education to Youth Employment

The function of education is to impart in young people, the knowledge and skills necessary to enable them to

contribute to the socio-economic development of their communities and ultimately of the country. Schools in the study area as in other parts of Nigeria operate in isolation of their communities and the views of consumers (pupils, parents and employers) are largely ignored. There is a need for greater accountability at all levels from Ministry to individual institutions to redress consumer concerns about the financing, administration and management of the system. There is a need for decentralised control through a combination of local authorities and individual schools. Local authorities should be responsible for the funding and maintenance of schools, while parents gain a voice through participation on the governing bodies of schools. The actions of Head teachers and staff would be regulated by this body, which would curtail many of the unethical practices commonly found to occur in schools and present the first step in raising the quality of educational provision. In this way schools would become an integral part of the community.

Our field interactions in the study area show that parents and pupils openly question the quality of primary education, yet at the same time demand greater access to secondary school, a panacea and passport to the formal sector. To satisfy this need, an increasing number of private secondary schools are opening and playing a remarkable role in the education of young ones in the two states. Expansion of secondary education is not the

solution, as in the current economic climate this will only provide a short respite as the problems of youth unemployment and under-employment are shifted from Primary school to secondary school and indeed tertiary school leavers. In addition the elitist culture promoted in secondary schools and tertiary institutions would further reinforce the negative views held by parents and pupils towards employment in the informal sector. What is required is that the curriculum of the primary school be congruent to the needs of both the relatively small numbers of pupils who progress to secondary education and the vast majority whose future lies in the informal sector.

Change is not only required within the educational system, but also in the attitudes and expectations of the consumers who are out of step with the realities of socio-economic life. The days when secondary education guaranteed leavers are employed in the civil service and parastatal industries are a thing of the past. Many people (especially in urban areas) are aware of the effects of retrenchment, yet either fails to make the connection, or refuse to acknowledge that employment opportunities in the formal sector (government or private) have declined sharply in recent years. The problem for the policy makers is how to realign the aspirations and expectations of consumers with the realities of life, i.e. striking a balancing between the *needs* of consumers and their *desires*.

The desires of the consumers are well documented, but what are the needs of

Primary school leavers? During the study responses to this question were sought from primary school pupils, street youth, informal sector operators, artisans and formal sector employers. The majority of primary school pupils' responses focused on the aim for a place at secondary school, but when asked what they would do if they were unsuccessful, few responded, as many appeared unprepared to acknowledge their probable fate. Street youth were more realistic and considered that primary education needed to be more relevant to their future needs, and should focus on the teaching of three subjects, Mathematics, English, and Science which were justified primarily in terms of enhancing their opportunities for employment. Youths were also highly critical of the actions of teachers and their teaching methods, in particular the lack of relevance. The responses of representatives from both economic sectors were highly congruent, in that they wanted school leavers who essentially had a command of the 3R's, and transferable skills such as problem-solving, although what they inferred by problem solving was never clearly defined. What was clear though was they wanted young people skilled in *knowing-how* not just *knowing-that*. To conclude, the consensus from all but the primary pupils was that they *needed* a curriculum that emphasised the 3R's, but encouraged the development of transferable skills that would be of value in the work-place, an education that combined academic learning with the development of personal attributes and skills.

The Problems of the Youth

Unemployed and underemployed youth in Bayelsa and Rivers States represent a future threat to the stability of the Niger Delta region and indeed the country. A combination of national economic decline and inflated expectations that are unattainable has forced many young people to resort to informal and sometimes anti-social means of earning a living. However, in the process they are sometimes discriminated against, or exploited, but for a significant number their main problem is earning enough to satisfy their daily needs. This involves subsistence existence for many based on labouring, petty business, hawking, or selling food in bars, or on street corners, while others drift into crime and prostitution. These represent the most unfortunate members of society, for some people through the extended family are able to gain an apprenticeship or other training that better equips them for paid employment, or self-employment. Others form groups and begin self-employment, sometimes gaining financial and technical support from either the government, or an NGO.

The Problems of Co-ordination

The major problem the government, the private sector and NGOs have in attempting to promote youth employment is a lack of accurate information from which to extrapolate trends and future needs and therefore be able to target their resources more effectively. The identification, monitoring and assessment of youth

activities are therefore inefficient. In addition there are no mechanisms for the interchange of data between the three key players i.e. government, the private sector and NGOs. It is the responsibility of the two state governments to set up the machinery for data collection and dissemination on youths and their employment needs and patterns. This would enable the resources and efforts of government, the private sector and NGOs to be more effectively and efficiently targeted and in doing so provide assistance to greater number of young people.

The establishment of this facility would enable educational institutions and agents to gain access to information about a wide range of past, current and future education and training initiatives promoted by the government, the private sector and NGOs. It would reduce the time and effort currently spent by agencies and donors in identifying prospective groups or in developing appropriate policies and programmes, and finally promote closer institutional and personal links between government ministries, the private sector and NGOs.

The establishment of such a bureau could be achieved in four phases; the first phase would involve discussions between the government, the private sector and NGOs to establish the parameters of the database and consider the requirements of the library and archive. The compilation and transfer of existing hard copy to the electronic database would represent the second phase. It is intended that government

would supply data while the private sector organisations and NGOs will supplement that held by the Directorate and would enable it to become effectively operational. The third and fourth phases extend the resources available and by implication the services offered by the Directorate. During this period data relating to formal education would be included.

The system would also directly benefit the youth, as information about training needs based on recent or current data would enable trainers and field-workers to better prepare groups for self-employment activities, reducing the possibility of failure and by implication, maximise the limited resources of funds and manpower.

Members of the Directorate would require training in methods of data collection, computer literacy, sales and marketing. The initial capital costs would be relatively high, but the bureau could become in part self-financing, by selling its services and information to a range of possible client groups. As a precursor to making this recommendation, discussions were held with the Ministries responsible for youth development and employment in the two states and they supported the establishment of such a facility.

Issues Arising from the Various Youth Training Programmes

There are a number of valuable lessons that have been learnt from the implementation of the different youth employment promotion programmes,

which provide some useful pointers for adoption and replication in other situations and environments. The problem of youth unemployment was attributed to lack of skills and steps were taken in the various training programmes to provide these skills. However not enough effort has been made to fully understand what components were needed to address the problem of unemployment fully. It was assumed that training would be a panacea to the problem. Whilst skills are a useful component to self-employment, it is not enough. There is need to develop entrepreneurial skills in addition to basic business management. If the informal sector is the target for the employment creation, information on the dynamics of the sector is also necessary. There is need to have a fully understanding of the key players, the skills required, the nature of clientele and its spending levels. In this case there were no studies undertaken to identify the main economic activities in the sector for which graduates were being prepared for.

It is therefore important to get the right focus and orientation of the various skill development initiatives. All participants, particularly youths, need to be clear on the objectives and expectations of the training. In the many of the training programmes it turned out that a sizeable number of participants joined the training with the expectation of getting jobs in the formal sector, whereas the objective was for them to create their own employment through self-employment. Some parents

were of the same orientation as the participants.

In some of the programmes, planners did not fully recognised that skills that could be used for employment creation could not be adequately imparted in a VTC environment and that some practical industrial experience would be essential to make the training as relevant as possible. While there was full recognition that there were a number of stakeholders whose participation was essential for the success of the training, the identification fell short and excluded those who would have provided loans and stands which were essential for setting up businesses. There was need to create a network in which the responsibilities of each of the members of the network were identified and delineated.

For self-employment ventures to be successful and sustainable the "new" entrepreneurs need post graduation support. Those who have set up their own enterprises need to be followed up to ensure that they continue to apply what they learnt. They continue to need advice on the intricacies of running business. Those who have not should be followed up to determine what assistance they need to set up their own businesses. In many of the programmes, there was not follow up at all. It was as if the graduates were abandoned from the time they left the training programme. In these days of economic hardships "young" businesses remain fragile and will collapse unless continually support is given.

Policy Challenges

The challenge is obviously to build on the strengths that have been identified, and turn the constraints into opportunities, by adopting measures that will address them fully. There is need to adopt a model that will allow the training programmes to go beyond a technical skills training initiative with a sprinkling of entrepreneurial training. There are a number of challenges that the skills development training programmes will face in the coming years in order to improve their contribution to youth employment promotion.

Change of Attitude

Most of the recipients had the attitude that the training should lead to employment in the formal sector, and were naturally disappointed when this did not happen. There is a need for the right orientation at selection of students, so that they fully understand the purpose and objective of the programme they are going to embark on. They should be made to understand that the focus of the training is self-employment and employment creation. Students should learn to be more self-reliant, and not expect things to be done for them.

The selection process should attempt to identify those with the right orientation who will be able to benefit from the programme without too much difficulty. They would act as role models if they succeed. A change in mind set is also required in the lecturers

who teach the students, because they are often accustomed to training students who are already in employment. The attitude change required of the students must be reinforced during the training period. This will not happen unless the attitude changes have already taken place in the lecturers themselves. Attachment to some informal sector enterprises during training can assist with positive attitude change towards self-employment. Proved good economic performance of the enterprise should be the criteria used for the selection of enterprises to attach students

Promoting Employment Creation

In the absence of the training programmes directly contributing to employment creation, participants will continue to aspire for employment in the formal sector. The training programmes should have components that address the problems of employment creation and self-employment. There is therefore a need to incorporate adequate employment support structures as part of the training. An extension service for those who have engaged in income generating projects is essential to ensure that the projects remain sustainable in the long term and to allow for growth.

Access to Serviced Stands

Business stands where graduates of the programme can set up shops are crucial. This removes the need for such students to have to set up businesses in backyards where marketing of goods

and service are difficult. Having them operating at business stands also makes follow up activities easier. The local authority responsible for the allocation of stands should be involved in the project at the right level. Stands need to be serviced and graduates given some preference in the allocation of such stands. Graduates should be encouraged to form an association that will lobby for their interests in the business sector, and in the allocation of stands.

Lack of Capital

Graduates of the skill development programmes highlighted lack of capital as the biggest constraint to self-employment. The only exception here is the Shell programme. There is therefore the need to set up a system that will provide some form of loan either as capital or access to tools, which are necessary for one to establish its enterprise.

Link Between Training and Entrepreneurship

It was noted that provision of technical skills does not necessarily lead to self-employment. There is a need to develop in the student some entrepreneurial skills. There is a need for the integration of technical skills training with business and entrepreneurship training. There is need for in-depth study into the dynamics and operations of the informal sector in each state and to clearly determine the skill requirement of this sector. Attempts should be made to identify ways of attaching trainees

during the training period so that they can be exposed to real customers and the operations of informal sector businesses. A possible apprenticeship programme could be examined so those students spend more time on attachment rather than in the training centres.

Lack of Markets

The success of the employment creation initiative and the strengthening of the informal sector depend on the establishment of viable and sustainable markets for the goods and service provided by the sector and graduates of the programme. Presently markets remain constrained and fluctuate with the spending power of the residents. In these days of economic hardships this remains a serious constraint to a higher demand for goods and services. While graduates should be able to provide their services anywhere, there is need to fully understand the levels of demands for goods and services in the major urban centres of the two states.

Lack of Effective Monitoring and Follow-up Mechanisms

Some of the training programmes do not have an effective and monitoring mechanism. Success indicators were not established. While there were plans to follow-up graduates after completion this has not been done in most cases. There is a need to follow up the graduates of programmes who are not economically active and determine the

type and level of support they need for them to engage in income generating projects. Otherwise the training programmes will remain a waste of time and resources as indicated by a number of the recipients of some of the skill development programmes. Success indicators must be set at the start of the training programmes for evaluation purpose. Impact assessment should also be included as part of the design of the skill training programmes.

Role of Youth Associations and Groups

The existence of these unions in both states provides the opportunity of gaining financial assistance by youths to become self-employed. The reality is that funds to support these groups are limited and only a small number gain the assistance they had hoped for. Regrettably, these youth groups are associated with violence.

What the youth groups require is knowledge and information to be able to find out if the activity they propose to engage in is a viable proposition and then the knowledge to manage their business effectively. In addition to technical knowledge this would include book-keeping, marketing and promotion, as these are essential not only to establish a business, but for future development. Too often the researchers were confronted with artisans manufacturing goods, which

they considered worthwhile, but they lacked a market. There is a need to inculcate a culture in producers, which begins by identifying what the customer wants rather than what she/he thinks they need. They need to realise that the market place is demand driven and not supply driven. Instruction in costing a product or service would serve an important function, for while acknowledging that the predominant method of selling is through negotiation, the ability to estimate the cost of manufacture would provide the artisan with a bench mark for negotiation.

The suggested information system would also directly benefit the youth, as information about training needs based on recent or current data would enable trainers and field-workers to better prepare groups for employment activities, reducing the possibility of failure and by implication, maximising the limited resources of money and manpower.

Gender Aspects of Youth Employment

Nigeria believes in equal opportunity for women and men as reflected in the promotion of female education in different parts of the country including Bayelsa and Rivers States. However this philosophy was not found to be the case in the training or employment of artisans in the informal sector.

Discrimination begins in the home with the attitudes and values held by the parents. Their views govern whether the daughter is enrolled in primary school to learn, or to comply with the law, they influence attendance and such issues as dropping-out or progressing to secondary school. Later parents may attempt to force her to marry against her will.

Pregnancy, or the expectation that a girl will become pregnant, acts as a very visible barrier to equality. In primary school the girl is vulnerable to discrimination if she falls pregnant as this means automatic expulsion from school, with little chance to return to complete her studies after the child is born. There is a relatively high incidence of pregnancy among young women, especially in the rural areas, so there is a need for a concerted programme of family planning to assist women and to counter some of the concerns of employers. This will not in the short term change the attitudes of employers, but it represents one of a number of measures that could directly help women. This begs the question what reasons apart from pregnancy are there for barring women from training and working as artisans? Male chauvinism is undoubtedly one factor, but there are others, the problems of maternity leave and the provision of facilities for returning mothers to feed

their babies, a fear that woman will act as a distraction, sexually enticing fellow workers or clients, were found to be common justifications, similarly protecting women from iniquity was commonly mentioned.

A significant proportion of those operating in the informal sector are women, yet only a tiny percentage are employed as artisans the majority are concentrated in the catering and allied services that tend to offer the least financial rewards. It is unrealistic to assume that the long held beliefs of male employers in artisan trades can be changed in the short-term, therefore alternative strategies to promote greater female participation are necessary. This poses the question; through what mechanisms could female participation be increased in a male dominated environment? The most obvious solution is to establish co-operatives where girls could learn trade skills or join as *journey women* after their initial training and depending on the nature of the trade market and sell their products. Communes training artisans and selling manufactured products would be less problematic to establish and operate, than service industries such as motor vehicle repair or electrical installation, for it was in these areas that discrimination was most pronounced.

One of the findings from the study of primary school pupils and street youth,

was that many of the primary pupils surveyed had little idea what they would do if they failed to gain a place at secondary school. The responses from street youth indicated that when they were in Primary Six they also were unaware of future career options, other than secondary school. The corollary is that primary school leavers require careers guidance and counselling to assist their transition from school to work. Teachers are unsuited to this task, for a number of reasons not least, possible prejudice against informal sector employment, a lack of first-hand knowledge of the workplace and finally their role as classroom managers, precludes them from establishing contacts with prospective employers. This is an area where an outside specialist input is required to provide constructive impartial advice about possible careers if progression to secondary school is not achieved. The introduction of careers guidance could also have other long-term benefits such as fostering more positive attitudes to industry per se and to establishing links between schools and local industries in rural and urban areas. The final comment to make on methods of assisting the youth is that the locale should be encouraged to do more to assist local youth. In addition to providing a site for self-employment activities, villages and towns could promote the activities of the youth by

allowing access to sell their produce in competition with established traders on certain days of the week.

Intervention in the Informal Sector Training

Conspicuous by their absence, are higher education institutions in promoting enterprise and innovation in the informal sector. Little evidence was found of formal institutions providing support services to informal sector operators. This may well be attributable to the elitist culture alluded to earlier in the report, but the absence of such specialist expertise represents a serious disregard for the socio-economic potential of the sector and requires a reappraisal of the situation. There are many examples in other developing countries where the involvements of formal institutions have benefited the sector. In Ghana for instance what is now the Intermediate Technology Transfer Unit (ITTU) funded by the government, began in 1968 with the establishment of a Consultancy Centre at Kumasi University. ITTU units operate within informal sector areas. There is a need for formal institutions in Bayelsa and Rivers States to adopt a similar approach to promote and support the technological development of the informal sector.

Within the informal sector, little emphasis is placed on encouraging

journeymen to continue their studies or attend courses leading to national Trade Test qualifications. The attitudes of trainees and operators is frequently cavalier, reflecting an employment culture where practical skills were acquired by trial and error rather than through structured instruction reinforced through book work. However, such attitudes fail to acknowledge the importance of recurrent education in a time of increasing technological change and pose a threat to the future growth and activities of some parts of the sector.

Another factor that severely inhibits economic development is the absence of a maintenance culture. Throughout Nigeria regardless of the sector, there is evidence of a lack of planned preventative maintenance, the reliability and availability of electrical supply are prime examples of problems that affects everyone. The effects of this attitude seriously impede the formal economic infrastructure.

However this lack of a maintenance culture stimulates a significant demand for informal sector goods and services, e.g. the increasing numbers of vehicle mechanics who repair rather than service, or the artisans who repair and refurbish other electro-mechanical equipment. In both of these examples they rely heavily on cannibalism and recycling for their raw materials and

indeed this form of thrift forms the basis for economic survival for many informal sector operators.

The aspirations of many parents and children are based on a perceived socio-economic pyramid, where a secondary school education precedes *white-collar* formal sector employment, for those unable to gain a secondary school place, or *white-collar* employment, a training course in technical education is considered to be their next option, as this leads to *blue-collar* formal sector employment. In each case, accredited certification accompanies the programme of study. For the vast majority of young people unable to follow either of these routes for whatever reason (academic, financial, social etc), their options are restricted to employment or self-employment in the informal sector.

The results of the study suggest that these perceptions are reinforced in post primary education, through the ethos and programmes of study of secondary schools, and vocational technical schools. This has led to a situation where secondary school leavers and trainees are reluctant to enter the informal sector, while operators are reluctant to employ them. In the case of trainees, there was consensus among operators that the knowledge and skills taught in technical schools, ill-equipped young people to adapt to the working

conditions of the sector. There are no mechanisms for dialogue between the vocational technical schools and informal sector operators and this perpetuates the suspicion and mistrust that exists between the institutions, trainees and operators. There is a need to establish channels of communication, to enable representatives of both communities to develop cohesive strategies that will be of mutual benefit.

Over capacity in some trades training, (i.e. carpentry and tailoring), is contributing to socio-economic difficulties. An example of this was in a small area of Port Harcourt visited in which there were over 100 independent jobbing tailors (many of whom were locally trained) were situated, most waiting for customers. Nearby there was a market where many of the stalls sold finished goods, T-Shirts, dress etc that was worn by many of the residents. Interviews with the tailors revealed that their income was derived mainly from repairing or altering second-hand clothes. However, despite this within the locale, a number of institutions continue to train significant numbers of tailors. There is a need to introduce mechanisms to more closely ensure training provision reflects the demands of the market place and not merely reflecting the capacity and skills of the training providers.

The issue of intervention in the traditional apprenticeship system is a controversial one. However, there appears to be a case for arguing that some attempts should be made to improve upon a system that already works reasonable well. Nonetheless, it is essential that any interventions should be acceptable to the informal sector, affordable, and directed at improvement rather than formalisation for its own sake.

Masters and apprentices are not necessarily opposed to interventions. However, their support is more likely for programmes, which seek to involve them fully in planning and implementation. Furthermore, interventions which respect and, hence, reflect the cultural norms of the sector are needed to minimise the dangers of destroying the vitality that is at the heart of the success of the traditional apprenticeship system. For these reasons, interventions, which seek to strengthen informal trade associations, may be particularly valid.

In all these different kinds of interventions, what is evidently not required is an attempt to over formalise the system. This might happen through the imposition of legislation from the formal apprenticeship model. Alternatively, there is often a tendency for ministry officials to ensure high

standards through a formal testing and certification system.

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About CPED

The *Centre for Population and Environmental Development (CPED)* is an Independent, non-partisan, non-profit and non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting sustainable development and reducing poverty and inequality through policy oriented research and active engagement on development issues. The establishment of CPED is influenced by two major developments. In the first place, the economic crisis of the 1980s that affected African countries including Nigeria led to poor funding of higher education, the emigration of academics to advanced countries which affected negatively, the quality of research on National development issues emanating from the universities which are the main institutions with the structures and capacities to carry out research and promote discourse on socio-economic development. Secondly, an independent institution that is focusing on a holistic approach to sustainable development and poverty reduction in terms of research, communications and outreach activities is needed in Nigeria. CPED recognizes that the core functions of new knowledge creation (research) and the application of knowledge for development (communication and outreach) are key challenges facing sustainable development and poverty reduction in Nigeria where little attention has been paid to the use of knowledge generated in academic institution. Thus, CPED was created as a way of widening national and regional policy and development debate, provide learning and research opportunities and give visibility to action programmes relating to sustainable development and poverty reduction in different parts of Nigeria and beyond. The vision is to be a key non-state actor in the promotion of grassroots development in the areas of population and environment in African. The overall mission is to promote action-based research programmes, carry out communication to policy makers and undertake outreach/intervention programmes on population and environmental development in African.