

## Human Empowerment through Skills Acquisition: Issues, Impacts and Consequences - A Non-Parametric View

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### Abstract

One of the major Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which Nigeria is set to achieve in 2015 is the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger with the target of halving the proportion of people who earn less than a dollar a day through skills acquisition. The study was on non-parametric view on issues, impacts and consequences of human empowerment through skills acquisition in Nigeria.

The aim of this study was to assess the impact and input of various skills acquisition encouraged and engaged by Nigerians especially the youths. The specific objectives are: to identify skills most learned by Nigerians, identify the major contributions of human empowerment through skills acquisition and access if opinion on skills acquisition is gender and education dependent.

The study was cross-sectional in nature conducted in Yaba and Akoka areas using a 21-item questionnaire tagged "Human Empowerment through Skills acquisition Questionnaire" (HETSAQ), designed by the researchers and administered for the purpose. The researchers obtained a very high response rate from the field. Descriptive statistics were presented in tables and charts while Friedman rank test was used to test the hypothesis that skills acquisition has no significant impact on the recipients and to rank the perceived impacts and the Chi square test used to ascertain the influence of education on the responses obtained from respondents.

Results showed that most respondents have learnt one skill or the other and would prefer to be empowered in areas like computer skills, hair dressing, tailoring and soap making, etc. It was discovered that skills acquisition have significant contribution to society through human empowerment and such opinions have no gender bias but differed significantly by educational attainment.

From the discoveries, we therefore conclude that skills acquisition contributes greatly in elimination of joblessness in Nigeria, development of positive attitude towards work, developing entrepreneurial ability, builds self-reliant young people, leads to technological advancement, reduce poverty and crime rate in the society and these were the verdict of both men and women included in the study.

**Keywords:** skills acquisition, entrepreneurial ability, Friedman test, human empowerment, joblessness.

### INTRODUCTION

One of the major Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which Nigeria is set to achieve in 2015 is the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger with the target of halving the proportion of people who earn less than a dollar a day through skills acquisition. Skills acquisition has been described by many as the recipe for eradicating extreme poverty and hunger by creating avenues for employment, thereby creating an avenue for jobs and wealth creation while instilling self-sufficiency and reliance (Isaac, 2011). Gumbari, a member of the House of Representatives opined that "Skills acquisition is the key in the fight for the elimination of hunger and poverty, reduction or elimination of joblessness in the society and reduction of crime through effective engagement of youths. Skills acquisition is the ability to learn a skill, which can be intellectual such as learning to listen, speak, read and write or manual such as learning to build or make something. Skills acquisition has been described by many as the recipe for eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, thereby creating avenue for jobs and wealth creation. Encarta dictionary (2009), defines skill as the ability to do something well, usually gained through training or experience. Skills acquisition involves the development of a new skill, practice or a way of doing things usually gained through training or experience. Skill development has been man's means of materials transformation from the earliest of time. But for development to take place according to Diigbo (1989), it takes trained hands and minds to apply the knowledge and techniques effectively.

Empowerment is the process of increasing the strength of individuals, teams or communities. It covers spiritual, political, social as well as economic strength; it can also be developing confidence in one's own capacities. It encourages people to gain skills and knowledge that will allow them to overcome obstacles in life or work environment and ultimately help them develop within themselves in the society, (Blanchard, 2003). Empowerment can also be defined as an interactive process through which people gain or experience personal and social change enabling them to take decision to achieve influence over the organisation and institution which affect their lives and the communities in which they live. It includes encouraging and developing the skill for self-sufficiency in the individual or a group to do their jobs magnificently with a focus on eliminating the future needs for charity or welfare (Whitmore, 1988a). It is also defined as the process of obtaining basic opportunities for marginalised people. Empowerment emphasises encouraging and developing the skills of self-sufficiency aimed at eliminating the future needs of individual or a group concerned, (Wikipedia, 2011). Empowerment

helps individuals or group to fully access personal/collective power through knowledge, skills and motivation for proper functioning in their society and contribution to the economy.

Keiffer (1984) identified empowerment as a developmental process involving four (4) stages: entry, advancement, incorporation and commitment. The entry stage appears to be motivated by the participant's experience of some event or condition threatening to the self or family an act of "provocation". The advancement stage comprises of three major aspects which are important to continuing the empowerment process: a mentoring relationship, supportive peer relationships with a collective organisation and the development of a more critical understanding of social and political relations. The central focus of the third stage appears to be development of a growing political consciousness. Commitment is the final stage-one in which the participants apply the new participatory competence to ever expanding areas of their lives (Keiffer, 1984). Empowerment in other words is a process whereby individuals achieve increasing control of various aspects of their lives and participate in the community with dignity (Lord and Hutchinson, 1993). Transformations that help develop skill in interpersonal influence and participating competence through group problem solving and collective actions. Individual who attains this level is expected to:

- To increase one's ability in discrete thinking, exchange of views, education and decision making.
- To make decision about prevailing circumstances.
- To increase one's positive self-image and overcome stigma.

The issues, impacts and consequences of human empowerment through skills acquisition was examined with the following objectives:

- a) To identify skills most learned by Nigerian
- b) To identify the major contributions of human empowerment through skills acquisition
- c) To access if opinion on skills acquisition is gender and education dependent

Three hypotheses were resolved through this study as follows:

H<sub>0</sub><sup>1</sup>: Human empowerment through skills acquisition has no significant contribution to society

H<sub>0</sub><sup>2</sup>: Opinions on significant contribution of skills acquisition is not gender dependent.

H<sub>0</sub><sup>3</sup>: Opinions on significant contribution of skills acquisition is not education dependent.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The cross-sectional institution-based designed study was carried out in Yaba and Akoka environs. One hundred and five (105) questionnaires were distributed in each of Yaba and Akoka giving a total of two hundred and ten (210) questionnaires used in this study. The study participants were graduates, undergraduates and learned people. The instrument for data collection, a 21-item questionnaire tagged Human Empowerment through Skills acquisition Questionnaire (**HETSAQ**) was developed by the researcher. It was made up of two sections: section A contains socio-demographic data of respondents while section B contains questions on importance and responsiveness towards skills acquisition. The likert weighting scale: strongly agree (SA); agree (A); undecided (U); disagree (D); and strongly disagree (SD) was used. Respondents were met in their tuft and after due interaction were given the questionnaires to fill. Frequency distribution was employed in presenting the responses of the respondents while the Friedman rank test was primarily used to test whether there was difference in the responses. Howell (2007) opined that Friedman ranks the response of respondents and test if there be difference in the median ranks. The hypothesis tested using Friedman rank test is:

The Friedman Chi square test statistic (*FR*) is obtained as:

$$\chi_f^2 = \frac{12}{Nk(k+1)} \sum_{i=1}^k R_i^2 - 3N(k+1)$$

Where:

N is number of respondents

k is number of variables of interest

R<sub>i</sub> is the sum of ranks for the i<sup>th</sup> variable

## **RESULTS**

This data was analysed using basic descriptive statistics and test statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 20).

**Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	108	52.2
Female	99	47.8
<b>Age Range</b>		
15 – 20	31	15.0
21 – 25	24	11.6
26 – 30	50	24.2
31 – 35	64	30.9
36 – 40	21	10.1
Above 40	17	8.2
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	146	70.5
Islam	61	29.5
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	85	41.1
Married	93	44.9
Divorced	29	14.0
<b>Education Qualification</b>		
NONE	23	11.2
FLSC	27	13.1
WAEC/SSCE	41	19.9
ND	51	24.8
HND/BSC	64	31.1
<b>Occupation</b>		
Student	62	30.0
Civil Servant	46	22.2
Self-Employed	79	38.2
Private Employee	20	9.7

Table 1 shows there was a preponderance of male respondents (52.2%) to female (47.8%) and their age's cuts across 15 – 20years (15.0%), 21 – 25years (11.6%), 26 - 30years (24.2%), 31 – 35 years (30.9%), 36 – 40years (10.1%) and above 40 years (8.2%). Majority of the respondents (70.5%) were found to be Christian, (29.5%) are Muslim and most of them are found to be Single (41.1%) and Married (44.9%). There was also a preponderance of FLSC respondents (13.1%), WAEC/SSCE (19.9%) and ND (24.8%) which was followed by HND/BSC (31.1%) while some have no qualification (11.2%). Many of the respondents are students with (30.0%), while (22.2%) are civil servant, (38.2%) are self-employed and private employee (9.7%).

**Table 2: Skills Acquired.**

DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
<b>Have you learned any skill before?</b>		
Yes	197	96.1
No	8	3.9
<b>What kind of skill did you learn?</b>		
Tailoring	38	19.0
Computer training	63	31.5
Hairdressing	29	14.5
Others	70	35.0
<b>Duration</b>		
2-3 months	22	11.0
6 months	73	36.5
1year	54	27.0
2-3years	40	20.0
Others	11	5.5

Table 2 above shows the skills acquired by the respondent. There was a preponderance of Yes respondent (96.1%) that has learned any skill to No respondent (3.9%). (19.0%) of the respondent choose tailoring, (31.5%) computer training, (14.5%) hairdressing and (35.0%) are other skills acquisition. There was also a preponderance of duration 2 – 3months (11.0%), 6months (36.5%) and 1year (27.0%), preponderance of 2 – 3years (20.0%) and others with (5.5%).

**Table 3: Human Empowerment through Skills acquisition**

	Percentage agreement
Skills acquisition contributes greatly to elimination of joblessness in Nigeria.	100
Skills acquisition reduces poverty	83.6
Skills acquisition influences the society positively	95.5
Skills acquisition helps the youth to be self-reliant and independent.	99.5
Skills acquisition helps the youth to develop a positive attitude toward work and labour.	95.1
Skills acquisition helps to reduce crime rate in the society.	67.2
Skills acquisition helps the society not to depend on white collar jobs.	88.9
Skills acquisition leads to technological advancement in Nigeria.	85.5
Skills acquisition helps to gain more knowledge.	96.5
Skills acquisition involves growth process and changes that is never ending.	83.1
Skills acquisition builds individual self-esteem.	97.1
Skills acquisition helps develop entrepreneurial ability.	91.3

Table 3 above shows the human empowerment through skills acquisition. 100% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that skills acquisition contributes greatly to elimination of joblessness in Nigeria while 83.6% strongly agreed or agreed that it reduces poverty. 95.5% agreed or strongly agreed that skills acquisition exerts positive influences on the society while 99.5% also strongly agreed or agreed that it helps the youths to be self-reliant and independent. Those who strongly agreed or agreed that skills acquisition helps the youths to develop a positive attitude toward work and labour are 95.1% while 67.2% strongly agreed or agreed that it helps reduce crime rate in the society. The table also shows that 88.9% strongly agreed or agreed that skills acquisition builds a society not to depend on white collar jobs and 85.5% agreed or strongly agreed that it leads to technological advancement in the country. 96.5% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that skills acquisition helps to gain more knowledge while 83.1% stated that it engenders growth process and changes that is never ending. 97.1% agreed or strongly agreed that skills acquisition builds individual self-esteem while 91.3% opined that it helps develop entrepreneur ability.

#### **HYPOTHESIS ONE**

$H_0^1$ : Human empowerment through skills acquisition has no significant contribution to society

Table 4a: Test Statistics: Friedman Rank Test

	Mean Rank	Rank
Skills acquisition contributes greatly to elimination of joblessness in Nigeria.	4.73	1
Skills acquisition helps the youth to develop a positive attitude toward work and labour.	5.93	2
Skills acquisition helps develop entrepreneurial ability.	5.94	3
Skills acquisition helps the youth to be self-reliant and independent.	6.01	4
Skills acquisition helps to gain more knowledge.	6.01	4
Skills acquisition builds individual self-esteem.	6.35	6
Skills acquisition influences the society positively	6.72	7
Skills acquisition involves growth process and changes that is never ending.	6.84	8
Skills acquisition helps the society not to depend on white collar jobs.	7.02	9
Skills acquisition leads to technological advancement in Nigeria.	7.09	10
Skills acquisition reduces poverty	7.18	11
Skills acquisition helps to reduce crime rate in the society.	8.19	12

**Table 4b: Test Statistics**

Chi-Square	Df	P-value
197.551	11	.000

The tables 4a and b above looked into the contribution of human empowerment through skills acquisition to the society using the Friedman Rank chi square test statistic. Table 4b showed that the respondents unanimously agreed that human empowerment through skills acquisition contributes **significantly** to the society ( $p < 0.001$ ). Table 4a ranked the contributions with elimination of joblessness as the first followed by developing positive attitude to work and labour and development of entrepreneurial ability. Ranked the least contribution is reduction of crime rate in the society followed closely by reduction of poverty and technological advancement in the country.

#### **TEST OF HYPOTHESIS 2**

$H_0^2$ : Opinions on significant contribution of skills acquisition is not gender dependent.

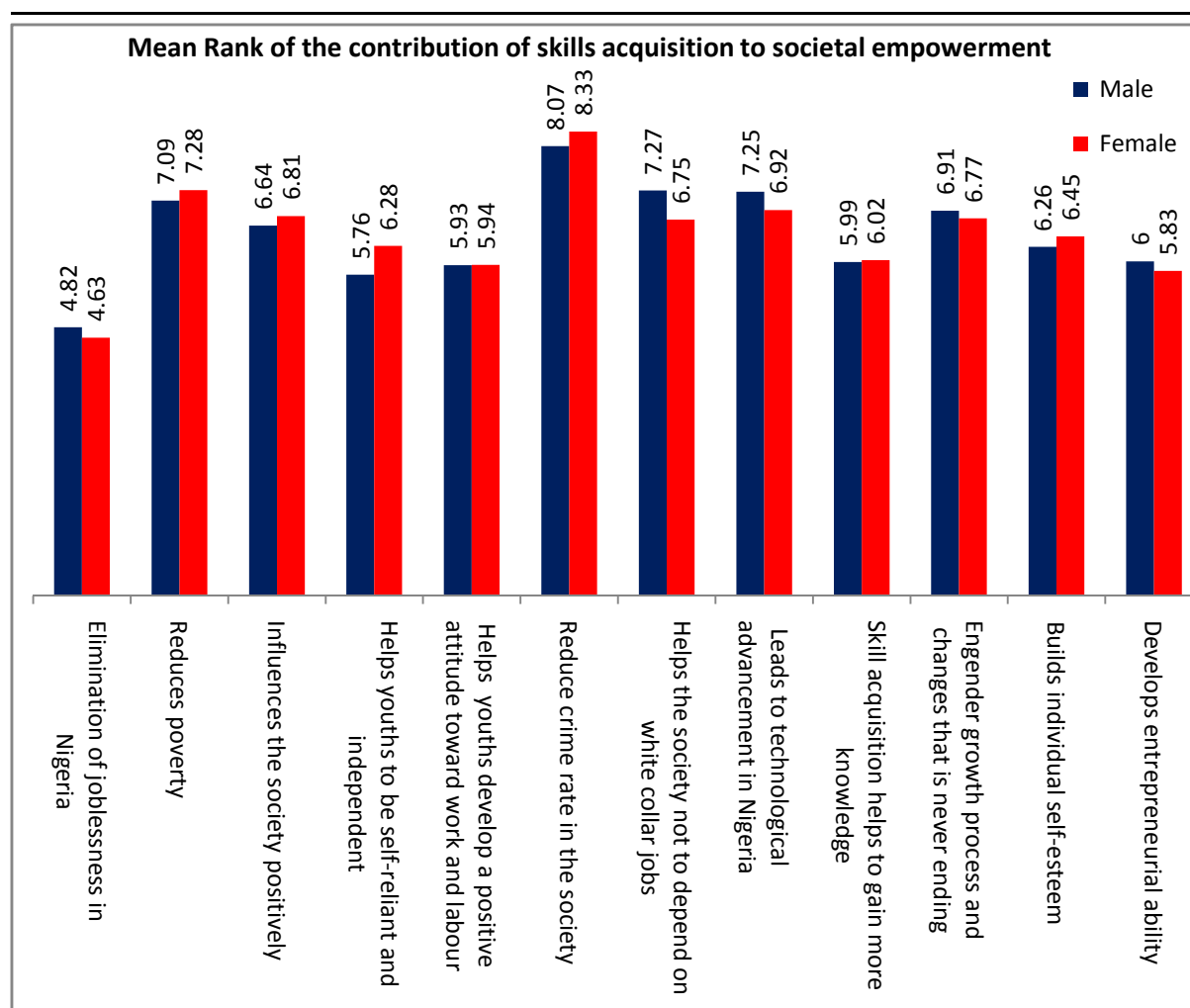


Figure 1: Mean ranking of male and female on contributions of skills acquisition to societal empowerment

**Table 5: Test Statistics using Friedman Test**

	Male	Female
Chi-Square	107.585	96.089
Df	11	11
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000

Figure 1 and table 5 looked at whether male and female differ in the ranking of the contributions of skills acquisition in empowering the society. Table 5 shows that both agreed that skills acquisition contributes **significantly** to empowerment of society while the figure revealed that there is agreement in the ranking of both male and female on the various contributions.

### TEST OF HYPOTHESIS 3

H<sub>0</sub><sup>3</sup>: Opinions on significant contribution of skills acquisition is not education dependent.

**Table 6: Skill acquisition by education**

Education level	Percentage
NONE	11.7
FLSC	11.7
WAEC/SSCE	20.8
Above WASSCE	55.9

Table 6 shows that among those who had learned a skill, 55.9% of them had a tertiary experience, 20.8% of them had Secondary education while 11.7% primary education and 11.7% had no formal education.

**Table 7: Chi – square test of opinions on contribution skill acquisition per education**

Item	Chi-square value	Df	p-value	Remark
Skills acquisition contributes greatly to elimination of joblessness in Nigeria.	44.451	4	<0.001	VS
Skills acquisition helps the youth to develop a positive attitude toward work and labour.	33.288	12	0.001	VS
Skills acquisition helps develop entrepreneurial ability.	40.787	16	0.001	VS
Skills acquisition helps the youth to be self-reliant and independent.	28.581	8	<0.001	VS
Skills acquisition helps to gain more knowledge.	17.684	16	0.343	NS
Skills acquisition builds individual self-esteem.	25.744	16	0.058	NS
Skills acquisition influences the society positively	41.550	16	<0.001	VS
Skills acquisition involves growth process and changes that is never ending.	42.093	16	<0.001	VS
Skills acquisition helps the society not to depend on white collar jobs.	34.979	16	0.004	VS
Skills acquisition leads to technological advancement in Nigeria.	38.581	16	0.001	VS
Skills acquisition reduces poverty	36.543	16	0.002	VS
Skills acquisition helps to reduce crime rate in the society.	33.647	16	0.006	VS

NB: VS = very significant at 1%; NS = not significant at 5%

Table 7 above show that opinions on the significant contribution of skills acquisition to societal empowerment is education dependent ( $p < 0.05$ ) for all the identified contributions except building individual self-esteem and helping to gain more knowledge.

## DISCUSSION

Daniju (2007) opined that the best option for empowerment is skills acquisition as it will ensure financial independence and a better standard of living. This agreed with the findings of this study that skills acquisition will bring about societal empowerment by providing jobs, develop entrepreneurial ability which in turn will ensure financial independence and assure of a better standard of living. Gumbari (2011) declared that skills acquisition is the key in the fight for the elimination of hunger and poverty, reduction or elimination of joblessness in the society and reduction of crime through effective engagement of youths. Persons with relevant skills will be fully engaged in a society like ours where opportunities are many and waiting for the prepared to take them. Such engagements will not only provide them with the basic needs of life but will in turn provide job for others.

Usoro (2010) observed that the failure of Nigeria's higher educational institutions is hinged on their products' (graduates) lack of the skills required by the labour market and that the trend had resulted in mass graduate unemployment, since they would have assisted them to be self-reliant. Youth unemployment appears to be the highest in Africa with First school leavers (14.7%), secondary school leavers (53.6%) and tertiary graduates (12.4%) (FME, 2006). Usoro therefore proposed that youths be equipped with knowledge and skills needed by employers of labour in business offices, industry and public sector agreeing with the Kerala state of India that students be given skill training in addition to their regular academic programme, in the crucial sectors as being demanded by the industry, as a remedy to the mis-match between educational output and requirements of the labour market (World Bank, 2002) and enhance the employability of students passing out of school (ASAP, 2013). There is a high level demand for skills workers in oil, industrial and services sectors, yet the supply is far below expectation and since there are fewer job openings than graduates, the major challenge facing the nation is to equip the graduates in particular and youths in general, with appropriate skills and competencies for self-employment, self-reliance and where possible, employment in the formal sector. The possession of these skills needed by the labour market that will enable them contribute maximally to national development and make our society safer, richer, better and prosperous.

This study also identified that skills acquisition will help the youths develop a positive attitude toward work and labour. A large chunk of our youths roam the streets and it is disheartening that all we do is brandishing them as 'area boys and street urchins'. The government of the day and well-meaning Nigerians should help these young people undertake trainings to acquire relevant skills that will take them out of the streets and make them contribute meaningfully both to their families and the society at large. This is in agreement with Usoro's (2010) recommended that skills acquisition programmes should be organized for new youths in the field of business to train and empower them as that will enable them develop a positive attitude towards work and labour.

Skills acquisition leads to technological advancement of the country. Among the skills recommended by ASAP (2013) are in sectors like hospitality, organised retail, healthcare, ICT, event management, business services, media and entertainment industry, construction, agriculture, banking and finance, transportation, etc. these are intensive training areas in addition to initial soft skills development in communication and IT.

This study revealed that skills acquisition help the youths to be self-reliant and independent and so reduce their reliance on white collar jobs. This is in tandem with the opinion of Nwanaka and Amaehule (2011) that possession of skills is important in preventing youths from becoming social misfits; because, these skilled persons become gainfully employed through vocational training and acquisition of skills. They also opined that vocational and technical training helps to arrest some social ills such as armed robbery, stealing and youth restiveness among others which agreed with the findings of this study that acquiring relevant skills helps reduce crime in the society.

The opinion on the significant impacts and the rankings of these contributions do not differ significantly among the male and female respondents which is in line with the present day realities when both male and female are bread winners and seek equal opportunity in the society. The maxim of this age is 'equal representation' which also translates into search for opportunities

Education plays a very vital role in the society. With the consciousness to be educated today in Nigeria, it is interesting to note that the study showed that 76.9% of those that had undertaken to acquire skills had at least completed secondary school, this was a complete deviation from the finding in Ghana that 74% of those sampled had entered with at most a junior secondary qualification (Courtney *et al*, 2007). It is indeed not surprising that the responses showed significant dependence on education as the majority had at least good educational background. It could be deduced too that the high percentage of those who had formal education in skills acquisition could be as a result of high unemployment rate in the country and the need to acquire additional knowledge which places the acquirers on a better pedestal for employment. Majority of those who acquired the skills go into self-employment as is shown in the occupational distribution of respondents in table 1 where the highest percentage (38.2%) was self-employed. ASAP (2013) also encouraged skills acquisition in higher institutions of learning by the identification of sectors for skill development and the development of curriculum and training methodologies in consultation with the industry as a remedy for the drop in overall employability of graduates. The students will be trained by professionals and well trained skill development executives (SDE) that will ensure continuous knowledge and skill. Korboe (nd) recommended that the assumption among Ghanaian policymakers that skills training is an effective tool for generating employment and growth must make room for the realisation that there are complex links between education, training and the wider enterprise environment. He identified that formal training (education) was not providing graduates with the relevant competencies for the world of work and suggested in terms of the potential for poverty reduction, it is probably more important to have done an apprenticeship than to have completed formal schooling. He therefore concluded that the majority of skills are acquired in the informal economy – specifically within traditional apprenticeships.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study has established the need empowerment through skills acquisition.

The following conclusions were drawn from the findings of this study:

- The majority of skills acquirers spent above six (6) months in such ventures
- Majority of the skills acquirers had a minimum of secondary education
- Skills acquisition contributes significantly to the society in terms of reduction / elimination of joblessness, advancement of knowledge, technological development, reduction in crime, reduction in poverty, etc.
- Opinion on the significant contribution of skills acquisition has no gender bias.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

We therefore recommend the following based on the findings above to improve skills acquisition for human empowerment:

1. We should adopt the skills acquisition programme as stipulated by the Kerala State of Indian to enhance the employability of the products (graduates) of our institution of higher learning with the assistance of the industrial sector.
2. Our educational curriculum should be re-appraised to move away from the theory based learning to more practical (hands-on) training.
3. The entrepreneurial 'fever' in our country today should look away from managerial and salesmanship to being productive. Hence, students will be encouraged to think out of the box and proffer solutions in house to some of the basic needs of our society.
4. The enabling vision and laws setting-up the polytechnics in Nigeria should be fine-tuned and the dichotomy and discrimination of polytechnic graduates be quickly resolved to encourage such graduates focus on their training to acquire the learning and skills required to drive our technological advancement dreams and take the nation to its "Eldorado".
5. Apprenticeship schemes should be formalised in the country to enable those pursuing skills acquisition through that medium have a sense of belonging.
6. The federal, state and local government should join hands together in making available funds for trainees to

be able to set themselves up after acquiring such skills like soap making, tailoring, hair dresser, mechanic, tie and dye, information and communication technology and catering business etc. thereby creating the small and medium scale industries which have been opined to drive economies like China.

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