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**MANAGING EDUCATION FOR JOB CREATION AND PRODUCTIVITY AMONG
SECONDARY SCHOOL LEAVERS IN RIVERS STATE**

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Abstract

This paper explores the critical role of education in fostering job creation and enhancing productivity among secondary school leavers in Rivers State, Nigeria. As the state grapples with economic challenges and high unemployment rates, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive and strategic approach to managing education to empower the youth for the demands of the contemporary job market. The paper discusses the current state of education in Rivers State, highlighting challenges and opportunities, and proposes a set of recommendations to effectively manage education for improved job creation and productivity.

Introduction

Education has long been recognized as a catalyst for societal development, serving as a powerful tool to foster economic growth, social progress, and individual empowerment. In the context of Rivers State, Nigeria, the management of education plays a crucial role in shaping the future of secondary school leavers and their ability to contribute meaningfully to society. Education is more than the transmission of knowledge; it is a cornerstone for holistic development. In the globalized and rapidly evolving landscape, the importance of education extends beyond academic achievements. A well-rounded education system equips students with critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and adaptability—all essential attributes for success in the contemporary job market.

Youth unemployment is often a critical concern for many regions, and secondary school leavers play a pivotal role in shaping these statistics. Secondary school leavers constitute a substantial portion of the youth population seeking entry into the workforce (Schoon & Bynner, 2019). After completing secondary education, individuals face the decision of whether to pursue higher education, vocational training, or enter the workforce directly. The latter option is particularly relevant in the context of job market dynamics and the immediate needs of the economy. Secondary school leavers entering the workforce contribute to the economic fabric of a region by supplying labor and potential skills to various industries. The choices made by secondary school leavers can have long-term effects on their individual trajectories, as well as on the societal and economic landscape of the region.

Secondary school leavers represent the next generation of the workforce and leaders. Effective education management should aim at cultivating self-sufficiency among these individuals, empowering them to contribute meaningfully to society. Beyond mere employment, education should instill values of entrepreneurship, creativity, and resilience, enabling graduates to navigate the complexities of the modern world and create opportunities for themselves (Bernstein & Osman, 2012). A well-managed education system should address this issue by aligning curricula with the needs of the job market. This involves a collaborative effort between educational institutions, government bodies, and industries to ensure that the skills imparted are relevant and in demand.

According to Noaman, Ragab, Madbouly, Khedra and Fayoumi (2017), efficiency in education management is paramount for achieving the desired outcomes. This includes adequate infrastructure, qualified teachers, updated curricula, and strategic partnerships with industries. Additionally, leveraging technology in education can enhance accessibility and effectiveness, preparing students for the digital era workforce. Continuous assessment and feedback mechanisms should be implemented to ensure that the education system remains responsive to the evolving needs of the economy. This paper delves into the imperative of managing education effectively to enhance job creation and productivity among secondary school leavers in Rivers State.

Clarification of Concepts

Concept of Education

Education, in its purest form, transcends the confines of mere classrooms and textbooks. It is an unyielding force that possesses the unparalleled ability to shape minds, illuminate intellects, and ignite the latent potential within each individual. The concept of education is not confined to the acquisition of facts; it is the transformative journey that empowers individuals to evolve into enlightened beings capable of contributing meaningfully to society.

At its core, education is a beacon of enlightenment, cutting through the darkness of ignorance and opening doors to limitless possibilities (Roberts, 2018). It is the catalyst that propels humanity forward, breaking the shackles of narrow-mindedness and fostering a collective consciousness that embraces diversity, critical thinking, and empathy. In a world constantly buffeted by change, education stands as the bedrock upon which progress is built, empowering individuals to adapt, innovate, and lead.

Rivadeneira (2017) asserts that education is not a static repository of information; it is a dynamic process of exploration, questioning, and discovery. It is the spark that ignites curiosity, encouraging individuals to seek understanding beyond the surface of knowledge. True education goes beyond rote memorization; it cultivates a deep-rooted understanding of concepts, fostering intellectual curiosity that propels individuals to question, challenge, and innovate. It is the great equalizer, demolishing barriers and providing a platform for all to rise. It is a powerful instrument of social justice, offering individuals the tools to break free from the chains of ignorance and oppression. In its emphatic embrace, education recognizes the inherent dignity of every person, irrespective of their background, and bestows upon them the right to dream, aspire, and achieve.

The concept of education extends far beyond the walls of academic institutions. It is a lifelong journey, a commitment to continuous learning that extends from the cradle to the grave (Barnett, 2011). Education is the compass that guides individuals through the labyrinth of life, equipping them with the skills, values, and perspectives necessary to navigate the complexities of an ever-changing world. Education is not confined to a finite period marked by school years or formal degrees. Instead, it is a perpetual expedition that accompanies individuals throughout their entire lives. From the earliest stages of cognitive development to the twilight years of wisdom, the process of learning persists. This lifelong journey transcends the boundaries of institutional settings, emphasizing that education is not a one-time event but a continuous, evolving experience.

According to Oliver (2019), the notion of education as a commitment to continuous learning implies an ongoing dedication to intellectual growth and personal development. It suggests that individuals, regardless of age or circumstance, should remain receptive to new ideas, skills, and perspectives. In a world characterized by rapid technological advancements and societal shifts, the commitment to continuous learning becomes a requisite for staying relevant and adaptable. The phrase "from the cradle to the grave" encapsulates the idea that education is a lifelong companion, commencing with the earliest stages of human development and enduring until the end of one's life. It emphasizes that education is not a

phase to be outgrown but a constant presence that evolves alongside the individual, offering insights, challenges, and opportunities at every stage of life.

Characterizing education as a compass signifies its role in providing direction and guidance amid life's intricate maze. In a rapidly changing and complex world, individuals often face a myriad of choices and challenges. Education, with its emphasis on critical thinking, problem-solving, and ethical values, acts as the guiding force that helps individuals navigate through uncertainties, make informed decisions, and chart their course amidst the ever-shifting landscape (Kumbar, 2018). Education is not merely about the accumulation of facts but the acquisition of skills, values, and perspectives that are indispensable for holistic development. These include cognitive skills, social and emotional intelligence, ethical values, and a broadened worldview. By imparting such attributes, education equips individuals with the tools needed to thrive not only in their professional pursuits but also in their roles as responsible and compassionate members of society.

Concept of Job Creation

Job creation stands as the linchpin of societal prosperity, the force that propels communities forward and transforms economic landscapes. It is not merely a statistical metric but a vibrant, pulsating concept that breathes life into economies and offers individuals the dignity of meaningful work. Emphatically, the concept of job creation heralds the dawn of progress, embodying the very essence of economic vitality and social well-being. At its core, job creation is the heartbeat of a thriving economy (Berry & Guinan, 2019). It injects vitality into communities, fostering a cycle of consumption, production, and innovation. As jobs multiply, so does the purchasing power of individuals, creating a ripple effect that sustains businesses, drives demand, and ultimately elevates the overall economic landscape. It is the catalyst that transforms dormant potentials into dynamic engines of growth.

According to McCabe (2016), job creation is not merely about numbers on an employment report; it is the bestower of dignity and purpose. Meaningful work transcends the transactional nature of labor; it affirms the worth of individuals, giving them a sense of purpose and identity. The concept of job creation, therefore, is a beacon that dispels the shadows of unemployment, replacing despair with the empowering glow of productivity and self-sufficiency. It is the crucible of innovation. As businesses expand and diversify, they create new opportunities for skill development and specialization. This, in turn, fuels a culture of innovation, where individuals are encouraged to explore, experiment, and contribute to the ever-evolving tapestry of industries. In this dynamic environment, job creation becomes a dynamic force, not just absorbing labor but igniting the spark of creativity that propels societies forward (Kabir, 2019).

Beyond its economic implications, job creation weaves the intricate fabric of societal cohesion. Gainful employment strengthens the social contract, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose. It diminishes social inequalities, providing a pathway for upward mobility and fostering a sense of inclusivity. In this context, the concept of job creation becomes a social adhesive, binding individuals together in the pursuit of common goals and aspirations (Plagens, 2011). It is not a transient phenomenon but a cornerstone for sustainable progression. Sustainable job creation involves mindful practices that consider environmental, social, and economic impacts. By promoting green industries, social enterprises, and inclusive business models, job creation becomes a vehicle for progress that respects the delicate balance between economic development and the well-being of the planet and its inhabitants.

Essence of Productivity for Secondary School Leavers

The essence of productivity for secondary school leavers resonates as the thunderous roar of untapped potential, waiting to be unleashed upon the world. It is not a mere abstract concept; it is the powerhouse that propels young minds from the corridors of education into the realms of meaningful contribution. Emphatically, the essence of productivity for secondary school leavers is the clarion call for these young individuals to recognize, harness, and amplify the unique symphony of skills and capabilities within them. Productivity for secondary school leavers is not solely about meeting deadlines or fulfilling tasks; it is the gateway to self-discovery (Bennett & Robertson, 2015). It invites these young minds to embark on a journey of exploration, experimentation, and understanding their inherent strengths and passions. Through productive endeavors, secondary school leavers unearth their talents, refine their skills, and carve out the contours of their identity in the tapestry of the professional world.

According to Hurst (2016), productivity serves as the catalyst for personal growth, urging secondary school leavers to stretch beyond the confines of their comfort zones. It challenges them to embrace challenges, learn from failures, and cultivate a mindset of resilience. The essence of productivity lies not just in the tangible outcomes but in the transformative journey that molds these young individuals into resilient, adaptable, and resourceful contributors to society. For secondary school leavers, productivity is the cornerstone of professionalism. It instills a sense of responsibility, time management, and accountability—the building blocks of a successful and fulfilling career. By internalizing the essence of productivity, these individuals transition from the structured environment of academia to the dynamic landscapes of professional life with confidence and competence (Teichler, 2020).

The essence of productivity extends beyond personal development; it aligns secondary school leavers with the fulfillment of societal needs. In the professional arena, productivity becomes

a tool to address challenges, contribute solutions, and actively participate in the betterment of the community. It is the realization that individual productivity, when harnessed collectively, becomes a potent force for positive change and progress. Productivity is the fertile soil from which the entrepreneurial spirit blossoms. It encourages secondary school leavers to see not only problems but opportunities, to envision not just job roles but ventures of their own creation (Volkman, Wilson, Mariotti, Rabuzzi, Vyakarnam & Sepulveda, 2009). The essence of productivity empowers these young minds to think innovatively, take calculated risks, and embark on the exhilarating journey of entrepreneurship.

The essence of productivity for secondary school leavers is a triumphant anthem that signifies empowerment, self-discovery, and a commitment to societal contribution. It declares with resonance that the potential within these young individuals is not a dormant force but a dynamic energy poised to shape, innovate, and contribute to the world. Embracing productivity goes beyond a mere professional duty; it is a thunderous proclamation affirming that these young minds are the architects of their destinies. Armed with the capacity to leave an indelible mark on the canvas of the future, they stand as harbingers of positive change, ready to sculpt a world enriched by their talents, ideas, and contributions.

Need for Education for Creativity among Secondary School Leavers

The need for education in fostering creativity among secondary school leavers cannot be overstated. In a world that is rapidly evolving and facing unprecedented challenges, creativity is not just a desirable trait; it is an essential skill that empowers individuals to navigate complexities, innovate, and contribute meaningfully to society. Secondary school leavers, on the cusp of their educational journey, stand at a critical juncture where the cultivation of creativity can significantly shape their future and the world at large. Education is the catalyst that propels creativity to the forefront of an individual's capabilities. It provides the fertile ground upon which the seeds of innovation can be sown and nurtured (Kabir, 2019). A curriculum that encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, and imaginative expression equips students with the tools needed to confront real-world issues with innovative solutions. Creativity is not a mysterious talent possessed by a select few; it is a skill that can be honed and developed through proper education. In today's dynamic job market, employers increasingly seek individuals who can think outside the box, adapt to change, and envision new possibilities (Boudreau, Jesuthasan & Creelman, 2015). A solid foundation in creativity empowers secondary school leavers to become proactive contributors to their chosen fields. Whether in science, technology, arts, or business, the ability to approach challenges creatively sets individuals apart and opens doors to opportunities that traditional, rote-learning methods might not. A focus on creativity in education goes beyond vocational

benefits. It nurtures a generation of critical thinkers and problem solvers who can address global issues such as climate change, poverty, and social inequality. Creative minds are more likely to challenge the status quo, question existing norms, and pioneer positive change.

According to Spencer, Lucas and Claxton (2012), education that emphasizes creativity fosters a sense of agency, encouraging secondary school leavers to believe in their capacity to make a difference. Creativity in education instills a passion for lifelong learning. It fosters a mindset that values curiosity, exploration, and the joy of discovery. This is particularly crucial in a world where information is constantly evolving, and adaptability is key. Secondary school leavers equipped with a creative education are not just armed with knowledge; they possess the skills to continually learn, unlearn, and relearn, ensuring they remain relevant and resilient in the face of evolving challenges. The need for education that nurtures creativity among secondary school leavers is not a luxury but a fundamental requirement for success in the 21st century. It is an investment in the future of individuals and society at large (Gerver, 2014). By prioritizing creativity in education, we empower the next generation to not only meet the challenges of tomorrow but to thrive and lead in an ever-changing world.

Need for Education for Capability in Productivity by Secondary School Leavers

The need for education that instills a profound capability in productivity among secondary school leavers is paramount in shaping the future of individuals and society. In a world characterized by rapid technological advancements and an increasingly competitive global landscape, the ability to enhance productivity is not just an asset; it is a prerequisite for personal and collective success. According to Niqab, Hanson, Bangert, Kannan, Sharma and Ghaffar (2019), education serves as the cornerstone for developing the skills and mindset required for enhanced productivity. A curriculum that emphasizes time management, goal setting, and effective work methodologies equips secondary school leavers with the tools to navigate the complexities of the modern world. Productivity is not merely about working harder; it is about working smarter, and education is the conduit through which these crucial distinctions are imparted.

Teaching productivity skills at an early stage empowers secondary school leavers to enter the workforce with a competitive edge (Garmise, 2014). Employers are not just looking for individuals with a wealth of theoretical knowledge; they seek candidates who can translate that knowledge into tangible results. Education that focuses on productivity cultivates a sense of responsibility and efficiency, traits that are highly valued in any professional setting. In an era where information is abundant but attention spans are dwindling, the ability to filter, prioritize, and execute tasks efficiently is a skill that cannot be underestimated. Secondary

school leavers who are adept at managing their time and resources are better positioned to handle the demands of higher education, work, and personal pursuits simultaneously (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2019).

The impact of productivity education extends beyond the individual to the broader community and economy. A workforce that excels in productivity contributes to economic growth and societal progress. Individuals who understand how to leverage their time and skills effectively are more likely to initiate and complete projects that have a positive impact on their communities. In essence, education for productivity is an investment in the collective advancement of society. According to Dyrbye and Shanafelt (2016), the benefits of productivity education extend into personal well-being. By teaching secondary school leavers how to balance academic, professional, and personal responsibilities, education becomes a tool for promoting a healthy and fulfilling life. Students equipped with productivity skills are less likely to succumb to stress and burnout, fostering a generation that is not only successful but also resilient in the face of life's challenges.

In the fast-paced and dynamic landscape of the 21st century, the importance of education in cultivating profound capabilities in productivity for secondary school leavers cannot be overstated (Ackerman & Kanfer, 2020). The skills acquired in managing time, setting goals, and efficiently utilizing resources are essential for individuals to navigate the complexities of modern life. By placing a strong emphasis on productivity in education, we equip students with the tools needed to thrive in demanding environments, preparing them for personal success and contributing to the overall development of a more efficient, innovative, and prosperous society. This approach not only benefits individuals in their academic and professional pursuits but also fosters a collective environment where productivity becomes a driving force for positive change and advancement.

Theoretical Review

Human Capital Theory by Gary Becker (196)

The Human Capital Theory was originally developed by economist Gary Becker in the 1960s. The Human Capital Theory posits that investments in education and training contribute to the development of human capital, which in turn enhances an individual's productivity and earning potential. In the context of managing education for job creation and productivity among secondary school leavers in Rivers State, the theory suggests that by improving the quality of education and skills training, the human capital of individuals can be enhanced, making them more employable and productive contributors to the workforce.

Application to the Study

- i. Investment in Education:** The theory supports the idea that investment in education is an investment in human capital. Therefore, managing education to focus on job-relevant skills can positively impact the employability of secondary school leavers in Rivers State.
- ii. Link between Education and Productivity:** Human Capital Theory emphasizes the direct link between education and productivity. Enhancing the quality of education for secondary school leavers should, in theory, result in a workforce that is not only more skilled but also more productive.
- iii. Job Creation:** The theory indirectly addresses job creation by asserting that a well-educated and skilled workforce is more likely to create opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship, and economic growth.
- iv. Societal Development:** By focusing on managing education to enhance human capital, the study aligns with the broader goal of societal development, as proposed by the Human Capital Theory. It suggests that improving education quality contributes not only to individual success but also to the overall prosperity of Rivers State.

The Human Capital Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how managing education to enhance human capital can lead to job creation and increased productivity among secondary school leavers. This theory supports the notion that investing in education is an essential strategy for promoting economic development and individual success.

Conclusion

The paper concludes by emphasizing the importance of a proactive and strategic management approach to education in Rivers State. By aligning educational strategies with the demands of the job market, the state can empower its secondary school leavers to become productive contributors to the economy, thereby fostering sustainable development and reducing unemployment rates.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion made, the following recommendations were made:

1. School heads and other concerned entities should initiate and implement reforms in curriculum development to support the essence of enhancing creativity for school leavers in the society.
2. School heads and other concerned entities should bring about an enhancement of vocational training programs in secondary schools and beyond to aid individuals in the society for higher productivity.

3. School heads and other concerned entities collaborate with industries to aid in the sufficient exposure of students to the real-life world as regards job and productivity.
4. School heads and other concerned entities should ensure the implementation of comprehensive career guidance initiatives to aid the proper guidance of students in the right career path.

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