Is Technical-Vocational Education and Training at Tertiary Level the Answer to Socio-Economic Development and Reduction of Unemployment in Zimbabwe?

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Abstract
Zimbabwe is a developing third world country where unemployment is very high. The majority of Zimbabweans fall below the poverty datum line. However, Zimbabwe is rich in human and natural resources. Institutions of higher learning are producing graduates every year. The majority of the graduates are unemployed because of unavailability of jobs on the market and lack of right skills regardless of the fact that the country is rich in raw materials like minerals and land. Because of lack of employment opportunities, university and college graduates are forced to indulge in both legal and illegal activities in order to irk out a living. The worst forms of illegal activities: debt bondage, prostitution, pornography, drug trafficking, street vending and other illicit activities, likely to be harmful or hazardous to the health, safety or morals of youths who are not capable of making own decisions and are still depending on parents/guardians (Bourdillon, 2003 and ILO, 2002). The topic of Technical-Vocational Education and Training has generated a lot of debate the world over and most pressure comes from politicians, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Christian groups among others. The argument presented by the college and university graduates, their parents and relatives is that the youth are trying to make ends meet since there are virtually no jobs on the market, depending on “who you are and whom you know”. It is hoped that open and distance learning (ODL), with the right programmes and personnel, can train students to acquire “life skills for self-reliance” so that on completion they become job creators not job seekers. The purpose of this study was to find out what ODL and other institutions are doing to reduce unemployment and improve on the socio-economic development in the country. A cross-sectional approach to data collection was employed in this research in order to present a holistic perspective of the nature of technical-vocational training taking place in Zimbabwean ODL institutions. It is hoped that the findings will help reshape the ODL institutions’ curriculum.

Key words: Unemployment, Technical-Vocational Education and Training, and Socio-Economic Development

Introduction
Unemployment in a developing third world country like Zimbabwe is very high. The majority of Zimbabweans live from hand to mouth as most of them fall below the poverty datum line even though human and natural resources are found in abundance. But without the skills which are vital for poverty reduction, economic recovery and sustainable development, these resources are put to waste. As a consequence, policy attention to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is increasing worldwide and Zim-
babwe is included (UNESCO, 2013). Limited TVET has lead to lack of employment opportunities, hence the university and college graduates are forced to indulge in both legal and illegal activities in order to make a living. It is therefore, the duty of institutions of higher learning including Open and Distance Learning (ODL) institutions to bridge this gap in the education system for socio-economic and sustainable development in a developing country like Zimbabwe.

**Background**

In Zimbabwe, quite a number of industries are closing down and others have already downed their tools, locked doors and the former workers have been forced to join the band-wagon of job seekers. As reported in the Zimbabwe Independent of October 18, 2013: A July 2013 National Social Security Authority (NSSA) Harare Regional Employer Closures and Registrations Report for the period July 2011 to July 2013 shows 711 companies in Harare closed down, rendering 8,336 individuals jobless. In addition to this nightmare, many companies are downsizing and have retrenched tens of thousands of their employees, condemning them to a gloomy future which is already flooded with job-seekers. Major companies that have retrenched include platinum miners Zimplats and Unki, Bindura Nickel, Spar supermarkets, Dairibord, Cairns, Olivine Industries and PG Industries.

The growing unemployment rate and reservations in employment for a chosen few has an effect on the choice for recruitment and selection of employees in most organisations today as evidenced by the volume of job seekers. Chiriga (2011) reports that Zimbabwe’s unemployment rate remains one of the highest in the world at 70 percent, with only 850,000 people formally employed out of a 12 million population. Unemployment is not unique to Zimbabwe but it is a common phenomenon the world over (Zinhumwe, 2012). The long economic and political crisis in the last decade forced the unemployed to become dealers and agents in the informal sector. The New ILO report in Work Issues (2005) posits that ‘massive youth unemployment ... is also a social menace which may lead to personally and socially destructive activities’. The report revealed that in 2003 about 88 million youth aged between 15 and 24 were not employed the worldwide. In recent studies, the ILO (2014) argues that in the world of work, the jobs on the market should be quality jobs for them to be key drivers for development. In addition, it has been observed that technology has had a tremendous effect on who is to be employed by whom. Therefore, the bottom line is to be equipped with the right technological skills in line with what is on the job market. On the other hand, schools and institutions of higher learning continue to churn out their products, who, little known to them that the environment is already saturated with job seekers like themselves, eagerly join the unending long queues. The question now is what have learning institutions, put in place to keep pace with technology for relevance. An example of changes in technology is the introduction and wide use of computers which requires a change in the skills of employees to manage computerised machines.

**Unemployment**

Unemployment is an economic indicator that refers to the number or proportion of people in an economy who are willing and able to work, but are unable to get a job; a person in this situation is said to be unemployed (Politics.co.uk, 2014). In other words, unemployment refers to a situation where able bodied and employable people aged between 18 and 65 years are failing to get gainful employment. These people are involuntarily unemployed. Unemployment occurs when a person who is actively searching for employment is unable to find work. It is often used as a measure of the health of the economy and from an economics point of view, unem-
employment is an unbalance between the supply and the demand of working hours resulting in too many people chasing too few jobs.

**Technical-Vocational Education and Training**

The term Technical-Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in this context means educational training that provides practical experience in a particular field, for example, motor mechanics, home economics or agriculture. In other words, TVET is instruction intended to equip individuals with relevant skills for specific industry or trade. The training can be done formally at secondary school level, technical college, university or it can be on-the-job training (apprenticeship). Informally, the training is also possible especially with trades which run in the family, a common practise in the Indian community and among Zimbabwean indigenous and small traders. The skills imparted informally to family members range from basketry, welding, carpentry, pottery and so on. This is supported by the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education (2005) who state that TVET consists of technical education and training which, in addition to its vocational aim, cannot neglect the general objectives of education. Vocational training and education includes training on-the-job and in training centres.

On the other hand, TVET is defined by UNESCO (2014) as “those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupation in various sectors of economic life”. TVET, in addition, equips people not only with vocational skills, but with a wide range of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are useful in work and life. This means that an individual who is knowledgeable and skillful contributes to the development of a country. Therefore, in brief TVET is education that prepares people for specific trades, crafts and careers at various levels in the world of work or a professional position in specialised jobs like engineering, art, tailoring, cake-making, tourism, hairdressing and so forth. Crafts are usually based on manual or practical activities. Traditionally these skills were regarded as non-academic, related to a specific trade, occupation, or vocation. It is sometimes referred to as technical education as the trainee directly develops expertise in a particular group of techniques. Today, in most countries including the UK, some higher technician engineering positions that require 4-5 year apprenticeship require academic study to Higher National Diploma (HND) at Polytechnic colleges, universities or higher City and Guilds level.

**Socio-Economic Development (SED)**

Socio-economic development is a process that brings about changes in locations where people live, work, and share things in common. According to SEDISA (2014),

*Socio-Economic Development is any programme that creates sustainable access to the economy for its beneficiaries. This means that contributions should be providing sustainable benefit, to use the old saying SED projects teach people to fish rather than giving them a fish. If a company is not creating sustainable access to the economy for beneficiaries then they are not involved with SED.*

In other words, socio-economic development contributions should focus on imparting transferable skills, and enabling access to the workplace. Imparting transferable skills ensures that beneficiaries have lasting economic value to the economy besides benefiting as individuals. Socio-economic development also benefits the country through the beneficiaries’ contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Enabling beneficiaries to be employable and access the workplace means that they accrue experience thus making
them more valuable to the economy. For a country to develop socially and economically, there has to be enough schools and colleges to teach children and prepare young people for careers.

**Conceptual Framework**

**Technical-Vocational Education and Training (TVET)**

Technical-vocational education and training, as a foundation for all trades in life, plays a vital role in a country’s socio-economic development. UNESCO (2013) points out that TVET helps learners at different levels in the education system to acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes that an individual should possess in order to fit in the world of work not necessarily basing on who you are or whom you know, a common practice in Zimbabwe’s commerce and industry.

A well designed TVET programme promotes a country’s economic growth as well as contributes to poverty reduction and also ensures the social and economical inclusion of marginalised communities. It is the duty of learning institutions, both ODL and conventional, to revise the curriculum and come up with programmes that lay the foundation to vocational skills. However, according to UNESCO (2013), it is estimated that only 10 per cent of secondary school students worldwide are enrolled in school-based technical and vocational programmes. Vocational training is mainly provided outside the formal school system, an example is the training offered to the Johanne Masowe Apostolic Faith’s children in Zimbabwe, who follow their parents’ trade. If the father is an expert in basketry or metalwork, the skill is passed on to the offspring.

UNESCO is for the development of competency-based and employment-led TVET programmes that are adapted to suit a country’s socio-economic well-being and technological development. For one’s wares to be marketable, the quality should match or prove to be better than what is already on the market. This can be achieved through the introduction of TVET programmes in all learning institutions in order to ‘catch them young’ and allow the learners to make informed decisions on what they can and what they cannot do to irk out a living at the same time developing the country economically.

Poverty may drive people to do the unthinkable with no conscience at all to the repercussions of working in an unsafe environment. The Millennium Declaration (2000) agrees that the aim of the Millennium Development Goals was to cut extreme poverty by half, ensure that every child has the chance to go to school and live a long and healthy life, and bring discrimination against women to an end because women are the primary agents of child welfare responsible for imparting life skills besides ensuring that their children go to school regardless of the problems they are likely to encounter. In a different perspective, according to Mlahleki (1995), individuals and some influential groups are likely to take an interest in educational problems. For example, the introduction of education-with-production as an educational policy in Zimbabwe meant different things to different people. While some people regarded it as provision of cheap labour using pupils for school improvement, others saw it as an attempt to introduce an inferior type of education during the colonial era. Yet the skills acquired were life skills to those with positive attitude.

Mlahleki (1995) further reiterates that since independence, Zimbabwe has consistently argued that education, apart from being a human right and a basic human need, is an economic investment in human beings who are the means and end of all economic activities. In the economic policy statement, “Growth with Equity” (1981) the government declared that education should enable Zimbabwean citizens to acquire a broad range of knowledge which should influence their
attitudes, values and skills and on which they could build in later life… Without the output of the educational system it is impossible to sustain, let alone accelerate economic growth and development”.

But in a way child labour denies youth and children the opportunity to exercise their right to education for economic growth and development.

On the other hand, however, World Vision Zimbabwe in the 2006 Report, states that it works with the poor and the oppressed to promote human transformation and seek justice through sponsoring and supporting community-based development programmes (Area Development Programmes) which include education, health, water and sanitation development, agricultural production, skills training, income generating projects, HIV and AIDS awareness, and relief. The efforts of World Vision Zimbabwe cannot meet the demands of the nation, therefore, the education system must do its part in skills training for self-reliance and job creation.

**Causes of Unemployment**

Zinhumwe (2012) and Vikky (2004) state that causes of unemployment in Zimbabwe are numerous, some of which include: unstable investment and growth; weak export performance; poor macroeconomic policy environment; unfriendly investment/business climate; population growth rate/age structure; the growth path - reliance on primary products instead of trading with finished products is the norm; geographical location where the country is land-locked with no direct access to the sea, incompatibility of curriculum and the needs of industry with the advent of new technology, hence the graduates’ skills are not matched with and not relevant to the community and national needs and to crown it all the tertiary education system is still lagging behind in skills training. On the other hand, the shrinking economy cannot cope with the ever increasing number of job seekers. One can only guess what the end result is when potential employees have a bleak future. It is no wonder that some of these job seekers have decided to engage in such activities as dealing in drugs, promiscuity, violence and crime which is a drawback to the development of a struggling nation like Zimbabwe. Therefore, something has to be done about the curricula to include varied education and training skills.

The current recession being experienced worldwide has, in a way, made policy makers to start thinking about how best to make education system a springboard towards economic development. Pityana (2009) notes that as adults who have been retrenched join the long list of job seekers, most are turning to education and training institutions for skills training for economic relevance and earning power. This, therefore, implies that everybody is looking up to learning institutions to provide solutions to unemployment through the introduction of technical programmes. Already the massive retrenchments and layoffs have forced some individuals with potential to go back to school, that is, the ODL mode of education, in the hope of acquiring technical-vocational skills for them to compete in the world with a shrinking job market. In addition, the ILO report in Work Issues (2005) points out that, economies the world over, are failing to cope when it comes to providing the young population with jobs as their population is increasing rapidly (Growth rate, 10.5% versus 0.2% job opportunities).

Globalisation and the influx of cheaper goods on the market from other countries are affecting the local industry thereby causing local factories to close shop and making the potential workforce jobless. For example, in Zimbabwe, the mushrooming of cheap clothing shops owned by Chinese has had a negative effect on local quality products forcing such well known manufacturing industries like David Whitehead to fold up. In addition, the importation of Japanese cars also has a negative effect on local car manufacturing companies like the Willowvale Mazda Motor Industry who are left with no option but to retrench some of its labour force increasing the
unemployment rate in the country. Another example is the closing down of such big retail shops in Harare as Meikles, Greatermans and TN, which used to be a ‘One-stop-shop’ housing a bank, supermarket, furniture shop and food outlet, and many such companies which were once big employers (An observation made by the researcher). As a result, the unemployment rate will continue to rise unless the business/investment climate changes positively.

When too many people are out of employment they turn to crime in its varied forms, such as, gold panning, debt bondage, prostitution, pornography, drug trafficking, street vending, border jumping and other illicit activities in order to irk out a living. It then becomes difficult to contain the crime rate especially with limited resources to enforce the law and no alternatives to occupy the job seekers with.

Possible Solutions to Unemployment

According to UNESCO (2013), from what has been observed so far, technical-vocational education and training is not just preparation for work but it is also preparation for life and also the skills acquired are vital for poverty reduction, economic recovery and sustainable development in any society. As a result, policy makers are now urged to pay attention to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) the world over.

TVET comprises formal, non-formal and informal learning for the world of work. UNESCO (ibid) is for the idea that youth, women and men learn knowledge and skills from basic to advanced levels across a wide range of institutional and work settings and in diverse socio-economic contexts for sustainable development. For example, the Midlands State University has introduced Communication Skills and Entrepreneurship programmes to be taken by all students in an effort to create awareness of the need to desist from being job seekers but for the graduates to be job creators thereby reducing unemployment rate in the country. In other words, learning institutions in collaboration with parents, should guide learners in focusing on developing those skills which they have a passion for. It is not advisable for parents and guardians to force their children to ‘copy the Jones next door’ as long as it is not their child’s line of interest, otherwise the child would hate the skills the parents intend to impart onto their off-spring.

Fritz (2013) suggests that one of the ways to reduce unemployment and to live better is to distribute the available work by working fewer hours per week thereby employing more people but the employees will have less in the form of wages to take home. On the other hand, some people say that it is better to create more jobs by creating new products. But people can only buy new products if they have money, and to have more money there must be low unemployment and high salaries which can only be afforded by very few companies. It is clear that “solutions” do not seem to help much in the long-run due to the ripple effect each measure has on the unemployment and world of work cycle. However, as the labour market becomes more specialised and economies demand higher levels of skill, governments and businesses are encouraged to consider seriously investing in the future of vocational education through publicly funded training organisations and subsidised apprenticeship or traineeship initiatives for businesses including new players like SMEs and other entrepreneurs who are the upcoming employers (job creators).

Problem Statement

Zimbabwe is rich in human and natural resources yet about 68% of the population falls below the poverty datum line of $1 a day, (Central Intelligence Agency, 2014) while institutions of higher learning are producing graduates every year who join the
already saturated job market. Because of lack of employment opportunities, the university and college graduates are forced to indulge in both legal and illegal activities in order to irk out a living. In order to appreciate the bigger question of whether TVET at tertiary level is the answer to socio-economic development and reduction of soaring unemployment rate in Zimbabwe, the research study sought answers to the following specific questions.

Research Questions

1. Why is unemployment on the increase worldwide, Zimbabwe in particular?
2. What role can be played by institutions of higher learning, including ODL institutions, in order to reduce unemployment?
3. Is the problem of unemployment a result of shrinking industry or curricula at institutions of higher learning which needs revising?
4. Is there a policy on TVET in Zimbabwe?

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research study have been to:
· Establish the causes of unemployment in general and Zimbabwe in particular;
· Find out the repercussions of increasing unemployment rate;
· Establish if there is policy on TVET in institutions of higher learning in Zimbabwe; and
· Make recommendations to policy makers and programme designers in institutions of higher learning on why the curricula should be reviewed.

Methodology

In this research study, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were employed to generate data. The qualitative methodology was meant to get a deeper understanding and gain insights into the views of job seekers, tertiary education programme designers and prospective employers. With this method, participants are not restricted to pre-formulated question but can express themselves freely and the researcher is able to read the meaning in words. The quantitative methodology was employed to solicit demographic data and other statistical information to help clarify issues.

Instrumentation and Procedures

The main instruments for data collection in this study were, questionnaire with open-ended and closed items which were administered to the sampled population. Questionnaires were augmented by in-depth face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and observation techniques. The questionnaire and interview guide were developed and pilot tested to ascertain whether they were well designed to capture the intended data. A cross-section of instruments was necessary in order to triangulate data for checks and balances in a study where participants are likely to withhold information if they feel that the findings will not help them directly. In agreement to the cross-sectional approach to data collection, Bell (1987) purports that no approach to research depends entirely on one method of data collection.

Triangulation, according to Thurmond (2001), is the combination of at least two or more theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches, data sources, investigators, or data analysis methods. The intent of using triangulation is to decrease, negate, or counterbalance the deficiency of a single strategy, thereby increasing the ability to interpret the findings. In addition, Thurmond (2001) gives the advantages of triangulation as: increasing validity in research data, creating innovative ways of understanding a phenomenon, revealing unique findings, challenging or integrating theories, and providing a clearer
understanding of the problem as the concepts are viewed from different angles, which is not possible with a single method. Cohen and Manion (1989) state that the use of triangular techniques helps overcome the problem of “method boundedness”, which restricts the researcher to rules of one method where there is need to probe for more information and present the findings qualitatively and quantitatively. However, each technique has its own weaknesses and the major weakness of a multi-technique is that of financial constraints, which restrict the researcher to concentrate more on the less expensive methodology. Findings in a multi-technique design might not be comparable but reliable results will be obtained as a combination of strengths of varied methods of data collection counter the weaknesses of one method.

Questionnaires, structured interviews and informal discussions were conducted with the identified sample of participants. In this research, data was collected and analysed following qualitative and quantitative procedures. SPSS package was used to analyse quantitative data from questionnaires while content analysis was used to draw up categories, themes and meanings of verbal data from face-to-face interviews. Observation results were used to confirm information from interviews and questionnaires.

Population and Sampling

The target population for this study was 10 university graduates from the University of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Open University, and 10 college lecturers from ODL institutions of higher learning in Harare. Random and stratified sampling was employed to include a wide cross-section of job seekers and the custodians of skills training programmes in ODL institutions of higher learning like the Zimbabwe Open University.

Limitations

The limitations to this study were the geographical location of respondents being scattered across the country as unemployment is evident everywhere in the country. Participants had to be drawn from Harare for convenience. Non-return of questionnaires by 25% of 20 sampled participants and the challenges of travel to follow up on respondents could not be avoided.

Delimitations

The study was confined to Harare which is the capital city of Zimbabwe where participants were likely to provide meaningful answers to questions and possible solutions to the unemployment problem as these participants are more exposed to social and economic goings on of the country.

Presentation and Discussion of the Results

Findings

The findings revealed that all the respondents belong to the employable age group ranging from 21 to 60 years which is the age referred to by Ali, A. (2009) and the ILO report in Work Issues (2005) as the age of job seekers. However, those from 31 years and above are already employed as programme leaders/lecturers of ZOU, while all sampled job seekers were aged between 21 and 30 years, an indication that they are fresh man from college.

Causes of Unemployment in Zimbabwe

An analysis of the responses from job seekers revealed that they were of the opinion that the education system in Zimbabwe is highly regarded outside the borders implying that the programmes offered at institutions of higher learning are appropriate for job creation and employability of college graduates. Therefore, the problem of unemploy-
ment lies with the shrinking job market due to unattractive investment and business climate. Other reasons given for the increasing unemployment rate were that currently the government, which is the largest employer in the country, has frozen all vacant posts burdening the shrinking industry with the duty of absorbing all prospective employees, which is impossible. The job seekers have observed that at the still surviving companies, the recruitment practice seems to be based on whom you know and who you are as there are too many people chasing too few jobs. However, the majority of ODL institution graduates are already in employment as they earn while they work, but for some, going for further studies the ODL way is in the hope of getting better employment once they have acquired new qualifications.

**Review of Learning Programmes**

An analysis of the responses from programme leaders/lecturers’ questionnaire revealed that they strongly believe that if learning programmes offered at institutions of higher learning are revised graduates could not only be employable but become job creators as well. It is hoped that the reviewing will incorporate current trends in technology in line with what is taking place the world over. These respondents indicated that the development of skills learning programmes should involve educationists and personnel from commerce and industry as they know the needs of the people for socio-economic development.

**Availability of Policy on TVET**

Asked whether there is a policy on TVET in higher education system, all respondents said that there is a policy. The existence of a policy is also emphasised in the Report on the TVET Policy Review Framework of 2005 where it is stated that students should go on attachment before they write their final examinations. One programme leader revealed that in Zimbabwean secondary schools, also it is now policy that every child must have at least one practical subject in addition to the core curricula but this was received with mixed feelings even though a more comprehensive policy position was spelt out in the Secretary’s Circular No.2 of 2001 that made at least one of the technical and vocational subjects to be taken at Ordinary level compulsory. However, due to lack of adequate resources to enforce the policy and/or review framework and guidelines for the policy, the Secretary’s Circular 3 of 2002 attempted to reverse this 2001 thrust and shift emphasis towards humanities and the classics and making technical and vocational subjects optional in the secondary school. As a result, the schools that are struggling with finances opted for Humanities, Integrated Science and Agriculture. Those schools that adopted the provisions of 2001 circular have offered some technical and vocational subjects up to Ordinary level and in some schools up to Advanced level offering such subjects as Textile Technology, Food Science, Technical Graphics, Wood Technology, Art and so on.

However, Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education (2005) in support of inclusion of technical-vocational subjects state that:

... in view of this prevarication, the MoESC repositioned itself to ‘national systems of development in the new millennium’ through the Secretary’s Circular 14 of 2004 dated 24 December 2004. The circular reinforces the provisions of Circular 2 of 2001 by making technical and vocational subjects compulsory at junior and middle secondary levels, in line with some of the recommendations of the 1999 Presidential Commission of Enquiry into Education and Training.

**Possible Solutions to Unemployment**

The possible solutions to unemployment in Zimbabwe were given by respondents as follows:
• The government is urged to open the economy to direct foreign investment (DFI), who in turn will create employment for the locals.
• Companies should support youth training programmes to encourage entrepreneurship.
• Government should encourage, build, operate and transfer (BOT) programmes by foreign investors to create more jobs.
• Seriously develop the highly endowed tourism sector in the country to attract more investors.
• Encourage the exportation of local agricultural products such as, beef, tobacco, maize and so on to increase GDP.
• Bright students should be given scholarships for them to pursue their studies in the areas of specialisation and skills training for socio-economic development.
• Government should encourage and support small scale enterprises for employment creation.
• Institutions of higher learning should involve industry and commerce before introducing new learning programmes and revising the existing ones.
• Government should fight against corrupt practices which are destroying the economy of the country (one-man-one-job). If one person is a holder/owner of so many enterprises, for instance, being a farmer, a miner, an industrialist, a teacher, a Chief Executive Officer, a board member of several companies and so on, there is no cross fertilisation of ideas for development purposes.
• Law and order should be enforced to ensure equitable distribution of both material and human resources for socio-economic development.

In a nutshell, what the respondents are suggesting is for the Zimbabwean government to review its indigenisation policy in order to attract foreign investors who would in turn open companies and create employment at the same time developing the economy and improving the welfare of the people. As the new companies pay taxes the government will have resources to revamp the whole infrastructure in the country to include roads, health system, water supply, public toilets and lighting, sewerage system and the education system. The creation of new jobs will have a positive effect on the spending power of the people forcing industry and commerce to produce more goods and services in order to meet demand.

The job seekers’ response to the question on possible solutions to unemployment in the country, they proposed that there should be an equitable distribution of resources among business enterprises, both small and big players, to enable them to recruit more skilled and semi-skilled people and increase production for socio-economic development. Every institution of higher learning should have entrepreneurship programmes for graduates to be job creators not job seekers on completion of their lives at school. The job seekers also proposed that both government and companies could employ people on contract so that every prospective employee has a chance of being employed though on short-term bases but that would be better than loitering on the streets for ages on end. This is in agreement with Fritz (2013) who suggests that one of the ways to reduce unemployment and to live better is to distribute the available work by working fewer hours per week thereby employing more people.

An observation made by the researcher on 23 January 2014 was that at Con Tools Head Office, hundreds of prospective job seekers were seen pushing and jostling outside the premises of this office after word had gone round that one of the Chicken Slice outlets was to recruit chefs and waiters. The large number of job seekers, mostly youths with varying academic qualifications and skills, was an indication that there are very few jobs out there to be taken up by a fortunate few prospective job hunters. A visit to
the National Employment Council in Harare revealed a gloomy picture as to whether unemployment in Zimbabwe is ever going to decrease. Job seekers with varying qualifications, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled jostle the premises to register for employment even prospective house maids join the queues. That is how bad the situation is, hence policy makers and educational programme/curriculum designers really need to do their best for the situation to improve.

On several occasions, the researcher has observed hoards of youths and some middle aged men loitering around a popular place in Harare central business district (CBD), Ximex Mall, making dealings with their wares mostly mobile-phone hand-sets. One wonders where and how they get their stock. To prove that the dealings are illegal these young men are always on the watch out for the police and once in a while one or two are dragged to the police station on allegations of possession of stolen goods and illegal dealings. The pictures taken by the researcher on different days show that formal employment is hard to come by for most prospective employees.

On the other hand, women, some with babies, battle with the city council police as they try to make ends meet by selling an assortment of goods ranging from socks, hair combs, tooth brushes, hand-towels, shoe polish, razor blades, shoes, sweets, fruits and vegetables on the streets, which is a health hazard to the unsuspecting customers. One cannot miss the hive of activity after office hours when street vending is at its pick as council police will have gone end of day. In the pictures taken by the researcher on different days, women display their wears along the street pavement calling upon passersby to come and buy their goods which they claim to be cheaper than what one can get in shops.

An interview, on 25 January 2014, with one of the job seekers, a holder of a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology, who has been looking for employment in vein for the past three years, revealed that her fear was that if she does not get anything soon the frustration will be intolerable. She stated that one of her college mates have had no option but to go for temporary teaching while another one of her colleagues has opted to be a shop assistant. In the past, these jobs were for school leavers not graduates from university. From her observation, this interviewee pointed out that the still surviving organisations seem to have all posts filled with no one resigning or retiring or maybe the supposed to be vacant posts are abolished. The slogan ‘who is who and whom you know’ is frustrating new players in the system. Other interviews with three job seekers on the same date revealed that...
learning institutions are not doing much in guiding learners on the popular careers one may pursue. The learners are failing to make informed decisions on what career path to follow. Learners ought to be channelled and skills developed according to their talents and not to copy what the next door neighbour’s child is doing as line of interest and capabilities differ. One should be able to pursue a career that does not always require an office and a desk but something that can be operated from workplace and home. They also stated that the government and other financial institutions should avail funds to the young people so that they start businesses thereby creating jobs and developing the country. The major hitch to those who are willing to borrow money is the issue of collateral as these upcoming entrepreneurs do not have any assets to talk about which can be tied to their debts.

On another different day, at the Beitbridge Border Post, the researcher overheard a group of young men discussing how some of their relatives managed to illegally cross the border through the crocodile infested Limpopo River risking their lives to get to South Africa, which they hoped is a greener pasture than their mother land Zimbabwe. Unemployment and poverty has lead some people to have courage to do the unthinkable and yet they are fully aware of the consequences if caught by authorities. On several occasions, the unfortunate few end up behind bars for attempting to cross the border without valid travel documents.

**Conclusion**

From the findings it can be concluded that the future economies of countries in the developing world including Zimbabwe, is not bright, so is the livelihoods of the people, unless the potential of these young people is tapped and used in a productive way. This is only possible if there is equitable distribution of material and human resources to enable the young and potential people to be empowered with vocational skills for self-reliance and economic development. The Ministry of Education ought to enforce the implementation of Circular 14 of 2004 for the secondary school children to make right decisions on what career path to follow basing on their capabilities. On the other hand, institutions of higher learning need to review their curricula in collaboration with industry and commerce for the graduates to acquire the right skills before they enter into the world of work.

**Recommendations**

In view of the findings, it is recommended that:
• Institutions of higher learning review their education and training curricula in line with the needs of industry, commerce and society.
• Career guidance sessions should be carried out in learning institutions for learners to make informed decisions on career paths to follow.
• Government, non-governmental organisations and financial institutions should give grants to businesses so that they are able to produce goods thus increase their workforce and buying power of their employees.
• Government should fight against corrupt practices which are destroying the economy of the country.
• Bright students should be given scholarships for them to pursue their studies in the areas of specialisation and skills training.
• Encourage the exportation of local agricultural products such as, beef, tobacco, maize and so on to boost GDP.
• Law and order should be enforced to ensure equitable distribution of both material and human resources for socio-economic development.
• The government is urged to open the economy to direct foreign investment for job creation.
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