

**INFLUENCE OF FUNCTIONAL LITERACY IN REDUCING
UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG YOUTHS IN OVIA NORTH EAST LOCAL
GOVERNMENT AREA OF EDO STATE**

BY

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FACULTY OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

BENIN CITY

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**A PROJECT WORK WRITTEN IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ADULT AND
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CERTIFICATION

We, the undersigned, certify that this research work carried out by Omodara Juliet OMOBONI in the Department of Adult and Continuing Education, Faculty of Education, University of Benin and approve of it as adequate in quality and scope in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Education (B. Ed) Degree in Adult Continuing Education.

DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to my lovely parents, Mr. and Mrs. Omoboni Seyifunmi whose love, sacrifices and prayers were the bedrock of my strength throughout the entire journey.

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the influence of functional literacy in reducing unemployment among youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. In order to achieve the objectives of this study, five research questions were raised. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consists of youths under-going various functional literacy programmes in both public and private organization in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. A census sampling technique was used to select one hundred and twenty-six (126) youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area. A self-structured questionnaire designed with a modified Likert Scale method made up of four-point rating scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), Strongly Disagree (SD) was the instrument adopted for the study. The instrument was validated by the researcher's supervisor and other lecturer in the Department of Adult and Continuing Education. The instrument reliability was determined using the Cronbach's alpha procedure. The correlation of the coefficient of the instrument was found to be 0.71. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics which involved frequency count, percentage and mean score analysis was used to answer the research questions. The findings of the study revealed that functional literacy programmes such as digital literacy, vocational training, entrepreneurship skills, agricultural skills are relatively available for unemployed youths in Ovia North East Local Government of Edo State. The findings also revealed that unemployment has negatively impacted the well-being of the majority of the youths. It was also revealed that there is a significant relationship between functional literacy programmes and economic empowerment of youths, as well as between functional literacy and reduction in youths unemployment. Challenges confronting the effective delivery of functional literacy programmes targeting youths in Ovia North Local Government Area of Edo State ranged from inadequate funding, poor infrastructure and facilities, inadequate skilled trainers and lack of awareness. Based on the findings, it was recommended that government and agencies should expand the reach of functional literacy programmes to more communities within Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. Also, more training centres should be established and adequately equipped to accommodate a large number of unemployed youths.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Unemployment remains a critical global concern, particularly in developing nations where the rate of population growth exceeds the rate of job creation. It represents a critical socio-economic challenge characterized by the inability of individuals possessing requisite capabilities and actively seeking employment to secure meaningful work opportunities. The phenomenon extends beyond mere joblessness to encompass broader implications for individual welfare and societal development. Youth unemployment, defined as the condition wherein young people

within the economically active age bracket remain unable to obtain employment despite their willingness and ability to work, has emerged as a particularly pressing concern in developing economies.

Recent statistical data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reveals significant fluctuations in Nigeria's youth unemployment trajectory. The youth unemployment rate decreased from 8.40% in the first quarter of 2024 to 6.50% in the second quarter of the same year. However, these figures must be contextualized within the broader historical pattern, which shows an average youth unemployment rate of 21.40% between 2014 and 2024, with a peak of 53.40% recorded in the fourth quarter of 2020. The International Labour Organization's estimate of 5.05% for 2024 presents a contrasting perspective, highlighting methodological variations in data collection and analysis across different organizations.

At the sub-national level, Edo State has demonstrated notable progress in addressing unemployment challenges. According to the (NBS) report shown that the state's unemployment rate declined from 25.1% in the third quarter of 2018 to 19% in the second quarter of 2020, representing a 6.1 percentage point improvement. This reduction has been attributed to targeted interventions by the Edo State Skills Development Agency (Edo Jobs) under the administration of Governor Godwin Obaseki. By 2023, the unemployment rate in Edo State had further decreased to 4.4%, indicating sustained efforts toward employment generation and skills development.

The concept of literacy extends beyond basic reading and writing abilities to encompass a comprehensive framework of cognitive and practical skills. According to UNESCO's operational definition, literacy involves the capacity to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate,

and compute using printed and written materials across diverse contexts. This multifaceted understanding recognizes literacy as a dynamic process that enables individuals to pursue their aspirations, expand their knowledge base, and participate meaningfully in community and societal development.

Functional literacy represents a specialized dimension of literacy that emphasizes practical application in daily life contexts. Unlike traditional literacy approaches that focus primarily on basic reading and writing skills, functional literacy integrates these competencies with socio-economic and socio-cultural activities. UNESCO (2020) defines functional literacy as the capacity to engage effectively in activities requiring literacy skills within one's group and community while utilizing reading, writing, and calculation for personal and community development. Similarly, Kasonde and Changala (2019) stated that, functional literacy is when a person has acquired the knowledge and skills in reading and writing which enable them to engage in the activities that will improve their wellbeing. Functional literacy aims at empowering communities with different socioeconomic skills and competencies including reading and writing (UNESCO, 2012). Therefore, being functionally illiterate perpetuates poverty by limiting choices for income generation and also the capacity for individuals and communities to take action and preventive measures against poverty.

Functional literacy programmes are designed to equip both adults and youths with practical skills needed to find employment or start their own businesses, ultimately fostering economic independence and community development. These programmes include; digital literacy, vocational training, entrepreneurial skills, financial literacy, agricultural skills, and many more.

- **Digital literacy:** In today's world, technology plays a pivotal role in shaping economic activities by driving growth in both industrial and service sectors. Digital literacy has the potential to empower youths by providing access to education, economic opportunities, and social participation, thus fostering a more inclusive society.
- **Vocational skills:** Vocational education serves as a practical approach towards career readiness, providing individuals with job-specific skills in a streamlined manner. Vocational training programmes act as catalysts for personal empowerment, equipping individuals with the skills and knowledge essential for flourishing in their chosen fields.
- **Entrepreneurial skills:** Entrepreneurial skills acquisition are said to be skills to become an entrepreneur. In other words, entrepreneurial skills acquisition are those necessary skills an entrepreneur needs to successfully run a business or add value to work. The development of entrepreneurship education for skill acquisition will go a long way in creating employment, give young people the opportunity to develop their enterprising skills, empowering the young to be job creators and not job seekers and by providing them with necessary skills and knowledge to raise their output; income and wealth.
- **Financial literacy:** Financial literacy is the set of skills needed to handle money wisely, invest effectively, and plan for a comfortable future. The range of skills that falls under financial literacy includes; household budgeting, managing debt, evaluating financial products, choosing investments and more.
- **Agricultural skills:** Agricultural skills development has emerged as a crucial factor in enhancing employment opportunities, particularly in rural regions where agriculture serves as a central economic activity. Studies suggest that skills training tailored to agriculture equips youth with the necessary competencies to enter farming and related

sectors, which subsequently boosts employability and contributes to local economic development (Mama, 2020).

Therefore, functional literacy programmes help to equip individuals with necessary skills and knowledge that will enable them gain meaningful employment so as to become functional in life.

Unemployment has significantly impacted the lives of youths socially, psychologically and economically. Socially, unemployment isolates young people from networks that contribute to identity formation and social capital. Educated youth, often coming from middle or lower-middle-class backgrounds, face societal expectations that increase pressure secure employment and contribute economically to their families. Their failure to do so results in social withdrawal, stigma, and deterioration of interpersonal relationships (Godinić & Obrenovic, 2020). Youth unemployment in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State has led to the engagement of youths in anti-social activities such as armed robbery, prostitution, political thuggery, violence, kidnapping, restiveness and other social vices evident among the unemployed youths and this constitutes danger to the stability, growth and development of the state. Prolonged joblessness among educated youth correlates with reduced participation in community life, decreased civic engagement, and strained family dynamics. Furthermore, research has linked prolonged unemployment with increased social deviance and anti-social behaviour, as individuals struggle to assert their identity and relevance within society (Faroa & Mwaba, 2023).

Psychologically, unemployment significantly correlates with increased psychological distress and adverse social effects. Experiencing long-term unemployment has been proven to lead to more anxiety, depression, and hopelessness and to a decline in self-esteem in most people.

People who are unemployed experience more mental health issues on average than people who are employed. The effect on educated youth grows stronger because they may notice their achievements in school do not always pay off financially. Unemployment among youths, especially graduates who are unable to secure employment opportunities for themselves, can lead to depression, which in turn has resulted in suicidal thoughts among many youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. Studies carried out in places such as Pakistan have found that having no job can stress people emotionally and lead to feeling useless, powerless and thinking about taking their own lives (Asplund et al., 2022). Young people who are not employed also experience more mental health obstacles since not having routine, a sense of purpose and community validation intensifies mental health problems.

Economically, Youth unemployment has a direct and detrimental impact on economic growth. When a large segment of the population is unemployed, the economy loses out on potential productivity. This is particularly concerning in countries with a youthful demographic, where the majority of the population is under 30. The inability to harness this potential labour force leads to lower levels of economic output and can hamper a country's ability to compete in the global market. At the sub-national level, the economy of Edo state is currently plagued with several inadequacies. Prominent among these are significant public revenue shortfalls (that is, relative to expenditure requirements), a still-weak private sector and high unemployment and underemployment. Worse still, many of Edo's youths have embraced illegal out-migration as a coping mechanism, with several migrating illegally to countries in Europe through North African routes (notably Libya) in search of better economic opportunities, while others have fallen victim to human trafficking under the guise of getting them employed in lucrative jobs abroad. Moreover, youth unemployment can result in lower consumer spending. Young people who are

unemployed or underemployed have less disposable income, which reduces their ability to spend on goods and services. This decline in consumer spending affects businesses, leading to reduced revenues, lower profits, and, ultimately, slower economic growth.

Functional literacy serves as a catalyst for economic empowerment by equipping individuals with practical skills applicable to income-generating activities. Through targeted skill development, participants gain access to improved employment opportunities, enhanced productivity, and greater capacity for informed decision-making in personal and professional contexts. This contributed not only to the individual's well-being but also to the overall economic development of their communities. However, functional literacy programmes provided an opportunity for women to acquire literacy skills that were directly relevant to their lives, such as learning how to manage household budgets or understand health information. This helped elevate their status in the community and allowed them to participate more fully in the economy. Olaleye & Adeyemo (2012) stated that, functional literacy was conceived of as working or work oriented literacy, they further mentioned that the evolution of the concept over time still focuses on making the new literate person to house his/her skills in changing people's standard of living. The goals of Adult and Non-Formal Education include providing functional literacy for adults and youths, to improve their basic knowledge and skills, provide in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers.

Furthermore, functional literacy has immensely led to a significant reduction in youth unemployment by empowering young people with relevant skills and knowledge that enable them to become self-employed, job creators and not merely job seekers. The World Bank, through the Programme for Result (P4R) operation, however seeks to support Edo's longer-term goal of building an economy that attracts significantly more long-term domestic and foreign

investment inflows to support economic growth and job creation. Such resultant growth and job creation would in turn support stronger internal revenue generation which is of critical importance to Edo state. The P4R Program will focus on strengthening teaching quality/manpower development to ensure stronger education outcomes. While it is the case that Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) or rapid upskilling approaches of existing labour would provide a more direct and short-term link with the jobs market, a pipeline project - Innovation Development and Effectiveness in the Acquisition of Skills (IDEAS). This will help to reduce unemployment among youths and thereby empower youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State as well as other local government areas in Edo State. Functional literacy is linked with human development which propagates creating an environment that will enable people, individually and collectively, to develop their full potentials and have a reasonable chance to lead productive and creative lives. Illiterate people lose chances of employment because they have no employable skills. Even when they get employed their jobs are menial and low-paid. They have no voice. They are excluded in the development process. Literacy skills are therefore needed to enable the poor to perform certain basic functions in a literate world.

The implementation of functional literacy programmes faces numerous challenges, including inadequate funding, shortage of qualified personnel, insufficient infrastructure, poor institutionalization, coordination deficits, and leadership gaps. These constraints limit programme effectiveness and sustainability, necessitating comprehensive approaches to address systemic barriers.

Statement of the Problem

Youth unemployment in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State represents a complex, multifaceted challenge requiring comprehensive intervention strategies. The insufficient availability of employment opportunities relative to the supply of job seekers has created a structural imbalance in the local labour market. This disequilibrium has precipitated various forms of social deviance among young people, undermining their potential contributions to national development.

While functional literacy has been recognized as an instrument for personal liberation and socio-economic advancement, the extent of its implementation and effectiveness in addressing youth unemployment in the study area remains inadequately documented. The gap between skill acquisition and practical application, compounded by limited access to start-up capital and inadequate follow-up support, has potentially diminished the impact of existing literacy programs.

This study addresses the need for empirical evidence regarding the influence of functional literacy programs on youth unemployment reduction in Ovia North East Local Government Area, with particular emphasis on identifying implementation challenges and measuring program effectiveness.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide this investigation:

1. What are the functional literacy programmes available to unemployed youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State?

2. What are the impacts of unemployment on the well-being of the youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State?
3. What are the challenges facing the effective delivery of functional literacy programmes targeting youth in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State?
4. Is there a relationship between functional literacy programmes and economic empowerment of the youths in Ovia North East Local Government of Edo State?
5. Is there a relationship between functional literacy programmes and reduction in youths unemployment in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State?

Purpose of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to assess the extent to which functional literacy programs contribute to youth unemployment reduction in Ovia North East Local Government Area. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Identify functional literacy programmes available to unemployed youth in Ovia North East Local Government Area.
2. Examine the impacts of unemployment on the well-being of youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area.
3. Analyze challenges affecting the effective delivery of functional literacy programmes targeting youth in Ovia North East Local Government Area.
4. Determine the relationship between functional literacy and economic empowerment of youth in Ovia North East Local Government Area.

5. Evaluate the relationship between functional literacy and youth unemployment reduction in Ovia North East Local Government Area.

Significance of the Study

This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on youth development and unemployment mitigation strategies in developing countries. The study's findings will provide evidence-based insights for policymakers, programme implementers, and development practitioners working to address youth unemployment through educational interventions.

Government agencies at the federal, state, and local levels will benefit from the study's recommendations for designing more effective youth empowerment programmes. Non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations will gain practical guidance for implementing sustainable literacy initiatives. Educational institutions and training providers will access valuable information for curriculum development and programme improvement.

The research will also serve as a reference point for future studies investigating the relationship between functional literacy and employment generation, particularly in rural and semi-urban contexts similar to Ovia North East Local Government Area.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study focuses on the influence of functional literacy in reducing youth unemployment, with specific emphasis on vocational training, digital literacy, entrepreneurship skills, agricultural skills and financial literacy programmes. The investigation is geographically delimited to Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria.

The study primarily examines programmes implemented by the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and targets youth participants in functional literacy centers within the designated area. The temporal scope encompasses recent programme implementations and their outcomes, providing a contemporary assessment of programme effectiveness.

Operational Definition of Terms

Functional Literacy: The ability to understand, evaluate, and apply written information to accomplish daily tasks and goals, including personal and professional development within a societal framework that facilitates human potential realization.

Literacy Education: The systematic acquisition of reading, writing, and numeracy skills through formal or informal educational processes.

Unemployment: The condition of individuals who are actively seeking employment but unable to secure work opportunities despite their willingness and capability to work.

Youth Unemployment: The state of young individuals within the economically active age bracket who remain unable to obtain employment despite their availability and eagerness to work.

Economic Empowerment: The process of enabling individuals to gain access to and control over economic resources and opportunities, leading to improved livelihoods and reduced dependency.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter contained the review of the related literature to the influence of functional literacy programmes in reducing unemployment among youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area. It is reviewed under the following sub-headings:

- Concept of functional Literacy.
- Functional Literacy programmes.
- Functional Literacy and Economic Empowerment.
- Impact of Unemployment on the well-being of Youths.
- Role of Functional Literacy in reducing Unemployment among youths.
- Challenges facing the effective delivery of Functional Literacy programmes.
- Summary of Literature Reviewed.

Concept of Functional Literacy

Literacy to a layman is just the act of reading, writing and being able to do simple arithmetic. This could be equated with the basic literacy which is the minimum but adequate ability to read and write and when mention is made of basic literacy, it also describes the programme designed to achieve such basic skills. It is, however, important to note that literacy goes beyond activities designed to teach adults to read and write simple sentences. This is because such restricted skills are of little utility (Titmus as cited in Ayodele & Adedokun, nd). Also, Sichula and Genis (2019) indicated that there has been a shift from seeing literacy as merely the ability to read and write to uses of literacy in everyday life. The Education Development Centre (2012) adds that, ‘the power of literacy lies not only in the ability to read and write, but rather in an individual’s capacity to put those skills to work in shaping the course of his or her own life’. This statement

shows that being literate goes beyond being able to read and write but the application of these skills in order to better one's life. The application of reading and writing skills in people's daily lives to operate and function effectively is called functional literacy. Mkandawire (2018: 46) observed that:

...in a society, literacy can be applied in several ways such as reading a newspaper, medical prescription, bible, receipt from a shopping mall are all examples on the applications of functional literacy in the society. Writing or reading anything such as sign post, letter, poem and others are applications of functional literacy. This quotation above suggests that the extended application of reading and writing skills in people's lives is the thrust of functional literacy.

This quotation above suggests that the extended application of reading and writing skills in people's lives is the thrust of functional literacy. The emphasis on literacy campaign now is functional literacy, which is focused on the achievement of a level of reading, writing and numeracy adequate for effective participation in the life of one's community or society for development. Within the framework of a programme of functional literacy, the mastering of the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic and the professional, socio-economic and civic training are integrated activities oriented towards the solution of the practical problems encountered by the members of the particular groups in their professional and social lives. Functional literacy therefore can be defined as educational action combined with socio-economic and vocational training within the framework of a development undertaking. Functional literacy is sometimes referred to as work oriented, career oriented, occupational oriented literacy and economic oriented literacy. Functionality in this context should be taken to imply an integration of literacy

training – and adult education as a whole – into society as to answer as well economic development as to cultural and social needs and to make it possible for the learners to participate in the life of society and to change it from within.

As a prerequisite, functional literacy is part of adult education, which in its broad sense designates any organized activity whose purpose is to foster in the adult the development of attitudes, knowledge and skills and the internalization of values that will equip him/ her to perform his /her role in society in a more or less critical or creative fashion. Adult education in this sense must be functional. i.e., founded on the relationship between both man and work and man and environment, linking the development of the working individual with general development or the community and so reconciling the interest of the individual with those of society.

Functional literacy is that in which the individual fulfills himself within the framework of a society whose structure facilitate the full development of human personality. In a changing world functional literacy must be lifelong and integrated in order to satisfy all individual and community needs. Beginning from early childhood, people should have access to opportunities for learning. In the same vein, the Nigerian government mandated every parent to enroll their children or wards into formal school at least to get basic education of nine years as stated in the 1999 constitution. However, the national policy on education 2013 mentioned the need for the provision of functional basic education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education (FGN, 2013). Similarly, Olaleye & Adeyemo (2012) stated that, functional literacy was conceived of as working or work oriented literacy, they further mentioned that the evolution of the concept over time still focuses on making the new literate person to house his/her skills in changing people's standard of living. However recent development and

discoveries show that there is distinction between literacy that empowers and literacy that domesticates. They further stated that the functionality of a literacy undertaking is the extent to which it is able to empower the beneficiary. The term functional literacy is in contrast with functional illiteracy which is a term used to describe reading and writing skills that are inadequate to manage daily living and employment tasks that require reading skills beyond a basic level.

UNESCO defines a functional literate person as any person 15 or older who can read and write a simple statement on his everyday life. The 2009 Human Development Report used the percentage of people lacking functional literacy skills as one of the variables to calculate the Human Poverty Index. In order to realize the development that the country is yearning for years Illiteracy must be wiped off in Nigeria realizing that the persistence of illiteracy, which is a consequence of underdevelopment and also a major impediment to development, makes it impossible for millions of men and women to play an effective part in the shaping of their own destinies, therefore efforts must be made to wage a battle against poverty. The implication of this is that functional literacy is the answer to people's plight of shaping their own destinies. With functional literacy, people will have sufficient skills to function for their individual development as well as the development of their communities and Nigeria as a whole (Ayodele, 2011). A study by Olaniyi (2015) on 'Basic and Functional Literacy and the Attainment of Vision 2020 in Nigeria', describes functional literacy as the capability of an individual in reading and writing at a level proficient enough to conduct one's daily affairs. The argument in this statement is that one is only considered to be functionally literate if they have passed the level of basic literacy in term of reading and writing. Meaning that, after acquiring the skills of reading and writing, being functionally literate involves the use of these skills to live and work in society. However, this

study did not just focus on people's views of functional literacy in terms of an individual's ability to possess the reading and writing skills that are adequate to manage daily living and employment tasks, but rather, it encompassed other skills one possesses which qualifies one to be literate and the proficient use of those skills. For instance, farming, businesses, trade skills, such as carpentry and others. These were supported Mkandawire and Tambulukani (2017) who stated that adult literacy programmes should just be centered on reading and writing but focus on other life skills for the survival of adult participants.

A person is functionally literate if he can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group and community and also for enabling him to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community's development" (UNESCO, 2009). Adult may recognize a need to improve their literacy skills when they start a new job, when their children start school and want help with homework, when a relationship ends, or when they lose their usual forms of employment. Societal changes demanding new skills in literacy and numeracy may include economic or forced migration, industrialization and the passing of subsistence economies and traditional forms of labour, social and economic development, and deepening of democracy. All these and several other reasons could help reshaping adults' life and the need to participate in adult literacy programmes.

Functional Literacy Programmes

Functional Literacy is the acquisition of the skills necessary for activities in which literacy is assumed in one's culture. It is tailored towards economic, socio-political and health life of the recipients for performance. When a person is functionally literate, he is empowered to participate

actively in his society. Functional literacy is sometimes referred to as work-oriented, career-oriented or occupation-oriented literacy. Functional literacy programmes are a combination of literacy education with socio-economic activities. The acquisition of functional literacy skills will enable individuals to develop their potentiality and to engage in occupational activities integrated with income generation and vocational skills. In other words, functional literacy skills are to equip recipients with skills and knowledge that could make them employable and useful in other spheres of life on completion of training. These programmes include; digital literacy, vocational training, entrepreneurship skills, financial literacy, agricultural skills, etc.

Digital Literacy: The global economy is becoming more digitalized and depending on innovative technologies. Nowadays, emphasis on supply of cheap labour to drive economic activities is being shifted to sophisticated digital technologies and human capital. The implication of the technological advancement on the landscape of workforce is that employers are seeking for employees with new skills. Therefore, investment in human capital to acquire digital skills aligning with the rapidly changing labour market is a must in this century. To create more jobs and empower the youths, Nigeria needs to produce advanced skilled manpower that will drive innovation, entrepreneurial activities and economic development. They are needed to implement public policies, start digital skills initiatives and attract high value economic opportunities to the country (Bester et al., 2020; World Bank, 2021).

A recent study by World Bank (2021) showed that by 2030, 35 to 45 percent of all jobs in Nigeria are expected to require digital skills as the number of job openings in the digital economy is growing and digital hiring rate is increasing. Thus, a more promising panacea to reduce youth unemployment in the 21st century is for the Nigerian youths to acquire digital and other workplace skills to fill these plausible job vacancies in the near future. Digital skills entail

capabilities and knowledge needed to use digital technologies (device or system) for social, political and economic purposes. The demand for digital literacy and skills cut across different sectors and occupations (IOE, 2024; World Bank, 2021). The import of equipping the youths with digital skills is that innovative services could be created without the need to depend on the developed countries for everything. In addition, digital up-skilling and reskilling are indispensable for employees to be successful in the modern job markets and meet the demand for digital talent. Previous studies showed that digital skills are important to create digital jobs and empower the youths for the new job opportunities in the society. For instance, Leahy and Wilson (2014) examined available digital skills frameworks to understand digital skills and competences, their scopes and how they are related to the soft skills among the European countries. It was found that digital skills are needed to enable individuals to find, evaluate and create information for further training, higher education and employment. Tunji Olayemi et al. (2019) examined the impact of a pilot digital skills training programme on the youths in Nigeria. The results of the study showed that the youths between 19 and 24 years especially the undergraduate students acquire digital skills than any other age group. Most recently, Chinyere and Ifeyinwa (2024) found that online business training by the secondary schools in Nigeria helped to create employment for young school leavers. The authors found that there is a positive correlation between the online business training and employment creation when there is a reliable internet infrastructure, secured electronic payment platform and regular power supply. Digital skills can be categorized into three based on skills complexity framework (Howard, 2023). These are:

- Basic digital skills: They are foundations skills such as digital literacy. Digital literacy entails the ability of individuals to use digital tools and facilities to perform tasks, solve problems, communicate, manage information, collaborate, create and share contents and

build knowledge in all areas of everyday life and for work. It is necessary to tap the productive opportunities and capabilities in the digital economy. It is the basic or elementary aspect of digital skills. Examples include typing, word processing, email, use of apps, access information online, web browsing, social media messaging, create digital contents, apply antivirus, basic financial transactions;

- Intermediate digital skills: These cover the productive use of digital technologies for work such as desktop publishing, digital marketing, digital graphic design, working with spreadsheets and statistical packages, power point presentation, introduction to data science, computer aided design etc.
- Advanced digital skills: They are specialized skills required to work in ICT related professions, such as programming, network administration and complex skills such as artificial intelligence, big data analytics, coding, cyber security, web design and development, Internet of things, mobile app development, block chain, cloud computing, digital manufacturing, Automation and so on.

Vocational Training: vocational education equips adult and youth to the knowledge needed to practice a profession and also serve as a vehicle to prepare individual in basic skill for job entry and for job entry and enhancing social mobility. Vocational training is also concern with the acquisition of skills and knowledge for the world of work. It is very central and expedient for the acquisition of skills, ability, value, attitude and competencies essential for the purpose of employment as well as poverty reduction, social, political and economic empowerment. Vocational training is given to both young people, adult and school drop out in the community to enable them to acquire vocational skills in any trade of their choice. This will help the individual to be self-reliant and independent, thereby contributing to the development of the community and

society at large. Everyone in any vocation should have the ability to locate, manage, evaluate and use information for problem solving concerning their areas of vocational specialization. Familumo and Oyelade (2012) state that social thinkers centuries ago were unanimous in their thought that artisans in any society were the monetary of economy. They also corroborated this view further by stating that Plato in his Republic stated that if society must have peace, its ruling class led by the philosopher king must ensure that artisans find right vocations, trained according to their callings and be fitted to it. When people are trained for right vocations and are literate then they can be said to be perfectly fitted to it as they will have the wherewithal of searching for relevant information that will keep them relevant among their colleagues and in relation to the community. In other words, Vocational training programmes aim to develop employability skills by providing training in specific occupational area.

Vocational skills acquisition will turn out young men and women with productive skills with which they will put food on thousands of tables and contributing to the economy of the nation while at the same time improving their living standard. For their skills to be put to maximum use and with innovative ideas coming up from time to time to improve their on-the-job performance, literacy is of paramount importance (BRF forum). The relevance and utility of vocational skill acquisition lies in the practical application of what they are exposed to. This is why Rogers commented that the economic and social benefits of literacy do not spring from learning skills literacy but from using literacy skills. When literacy skills are applied to vocational practice, the best is what will spring up. Vocational training programmes are often designed to meet the needs of the labour market, with the aim of producing workers who are equipped with the skills and knowledge required by employers (UNESCO,2012). By equipping young people with practical skills and knowledge, vocational training can increase their chances of finding

employment and thriving in the workplace. Vocational training programmes can be delivered through formal education systems, non-formal training programmes, or on-the-job training. Today, over 73 million young people in Africa are jobless. There are several vocational skills training available for youths' empowerment which includes the following: hair styling, fashion designing, arts and crafts, carpentry, makeup artistry, welding, event planning, electrical repairs, plumbing, home cleaning, and so on.

By using lifelong skills as a way out of poverty and unemployment, Nigeria governments and educational planners have invested in vocational education programmes informal education sector (NPE 2004). It was done with the aim of accelerating the process of vocational skills acquisition that are relevant to the individuals and for economic growths of the nation. The school curriculum was designed to ensure equitable quality education that provides opportunity for lifelong learning and giving priority to skills development through Entrepreneurial skills at all levels in order to combat the issue of unemployment, poverty and social vices in the country. Also in the non-formal sector, efforts have been made through series of programmes by non-governmental organisations and Philanthropists in getting adults and youths to be empowered under the coverage of lifelong learning. Such programmes include; conventional farming, clothe weaving, tie and dye, hair-dressing, soap making, fashion designed, cake and confectioneries, (Adeyemo 2014). Also, the importance of Governments and Non-governmental organisations in providing vocational skills for employment opportunities for the poor people in the society was emphasized by (Idowu 2020). The study emphasises that the more government is able to provide poor people with employment opportunity and affordable services, the greater their contributions to poverty reduction through creating small and medium sized enterprises business, which is the main source of generating income for the large sections of the population.

Entrepreneurship Skills: Entrepreneurial skills acquisition are said to be the necessary set of skills required to be an entrepreneur. In other words, entrepreneurial skills acquisition are those necessary skills an entrepreneur needs to successfully run a business or add value to work. Agu, Chiaha and Ikeme (2013) argued that acquisition skills must be nurtured through proper education so that it can be directed to responsible and enriching small business endeavours that will benefit the individuals and the communities in which the entrepreneurs live. Formal descriptions/definitions characterize entrepreneurial skills acquisition as ability to have self-belief, boldness, tenacity, passionate, empathy, readiness to take expert advice, desire for immediate result, visionary and ability to recognize opportunity (Salgado-banda, 2005).

According to Weje (2012), an entrepreneur is one who bears the non-insurable risks of his/her business and also directs all resources (human and materials) towards profit maximization for him/her to earn a living. In other words, an entrepreneur is an individual who conceives and develops business idea, organizes, manages and assumes the risks of the undertaking/venture for profit making and progress. For effectiveness and efficiency, the entrepreneur needs some skills and knowledge, hence training or capacity development is required. Entrepreneurship development entails activities geared towards creating entrepreneurial abilities and capacities among the people. Put differently, it means the inculcation development and polishing of entrepreneurial skills into a person needed to establish and successfully run his/her business undertaking. Essentially, entrepreneurship development programmes are designed to equip a person with the much-needed skills and knowledge for setting up and running a business. The principal purpose of entrepreneurship development programme is to broaden the knowledge base of significant portion of the less privileged sections of the society by acquainting them with necessary functional and utilitarian skills.

Essentially, the drive towards youth entrepreneurship is anchored the belief that it will make good number of the youths create jobs for themselves and also employ others. Isiaka et al (2017) conceived of entrepreneurship as the process of giving birth to a new enterprise. The entrepreneur moves to create a new enterprise(s) rather than seek for employment in an already established enterprise(s). Collins et al (as cited in Isiaka et al 2017), described the entrepreneur as a “risk taker” – a person who braves uncertainty, strikes out on his own through native wit, devotion to duty and singleness of purpose delve into challenging areas to create industry. Such risk takers are needed in Nigeria today to help create robust economic opportunities. To this effect, certain institutions and governments have established specialized agencies to foster entrepreneurship, while others mandate the inclusion of entrepreneurship courses in academic curricula for young individuals at various educational levels – including colleges, universities, and even schools (Adegun, 2013). These initiatives aim to equip them with entrepreneurial skills and enable to establish new business ventures (Adegun, 2013). Such endeavors address interconnected challenges like youth unemployment and poverty reduction (Baxter et al., 2014), thereby striving to enhance the quality of life for these individuals. The fundamental aspects emphasized within entrepreneurship training include learning, earning, and saving (Baxter et al., 2014). This training programme is anticipated to provide young individuals with entrepreneurial skills by enhancing their abilities in various areas such as managerial, decision making, human resource management, financial management, marketing management. It also aims to develop their leadership qualities in problem solving and motivation while promoting professionalism through ethics and social responsibility (Inyang & Enuoh, 2009). However, the deficiency in entrepreneurial skills has resulted in a decrease in the number of start-ups initiated by young individuals (Brixiová, et al., 2015).

According to Odongo (2023), young individuals in certain countries display limited skills, lack confidence in their entrepreneurial potential, desire employment opportunities, and have a weak sense of entrepreneurial identity. As a result, many nations have recognized the significance of implementing structural policies such as entrepreneurship training to equip their citizens, especially the youth, with essential entrepreneurial skills and competencies (Valerio et al., 2014). Consequently, it is evident that entrepreneurship training ought to enhance both the awareness of entrepreneurial opportunities (Baron & Ensley, 2006) and the self-assurance among young individuals regarding their entrepreneurial capabilities (Ho, et al., 2018). In order to achieve effective youth empowerment, it is essential that the entrepreneurship program designed for youth empowerment encompasses all aspects of individual, organizational, and community empowerment (Ledford, 2013). Additionally, the programme should be developed based on an understanding of the distinct needs of various segments of the youth population (Chalasan, 2013; Nor, 2023). Zimmerman (2000) asserts that the potential for empowering young individuals lies in establishing strong connections between individuals, organizations, and their communities. By prioritizing these connections, the objective of fostering positive development among young people becomes more feasible.

Financial Literacy: Financial literacy is the set of skills needed to handle money wisely, invest effectively, and plan for a comfortable future. It generally refers to an individual's ability to comprehend basic economic principles and concepts, such as budgeting, investing, and borrowing, which play crucial roles in making informed financial decisions (Huston, 2020). It goes beyond a mere understanding of financial terms and involves the application of this knowledge in various financial contexts. According to Lusardi and Mitchell (2014), financial literacy incorporates the understanding and application of fundamental financial concepts like

the workings of interest rates, the time value of money, and the risks associated with different financial choices. They highlighted that these core components of financial literacy are the underpinning of an individual's economic decision-making process, impacting how they save, invest, borrow, and plan for the future. Financial literacy also encompasses the ability to understand financial documents, evaluate different financial products, and stay informed about changes in the financial landscape. Remund (2020) noted that being financially literate includes being able to interpret financial information to make decisions regarding personal finances, such as determining the appropriateness of a loan, understanding a credit card agreement, or assessing investment options.

The importance of financial literacy as a key life skill has become increasingly apparent with the proliferation of complex financial products and services globally. Individuals today must navigate loans, credit cards, investments, insurance, retirement plans, and other instruments to meet goals and manage risks (Lusardi, 2019). Those lacking literacy are vulnerable to poor decisions and financial distress. This has spurred research on measuring and improving financial knowledge and capabilities in various contexts (Hastings, et al., 2013). Financial education also benefits the society at large as it helps to prevent financial exclusion. Financially educated individuals will be able to take care of daily finances. Qualified individuals, including those with low income, will be able to plan and save some of their income. In summary, financial education helps to develop skills for a financially less burdened future. The contribution of financial education is reflected both on consumers and on the society as a whole, since informed clients are necessary for the functioning of competitive financial markets.

Financial literate individuals are mathematically literate, they can effectively manage money, understand credit and debt management, are able to assess the need for insurance and protection,

they can evaluate various risks and reimbursements related to saving and investment opportunities, and understand wider ethical, social, political and environmental dimensions of finance. Cognitive aspects of financial literacy include knowledge, education and information on various financial areas of money and resources management, banking, investments, loans, insurance and taxes. It also enables understanding of the fundamentals of managing money and other assets. On the other hand, financial illiteracy is manifested through elements of financial instability, such as over-indebtedness, inadequate savings, poor planning for the future (for example, for higher expenditures expected, security savings for a possible unexpected worsening of the financial situation, retirement savings) and inadequate investment practices. Many individuals do not plan choosing financial products and services that meet their needs. This makes them much more prone to borrowing and difficulties if their personal circumstances change (for example, due to loss of a partner, employment, prolonged illness, etc.). This is also the reason why is it difficult for individuals to ensure a satisfactory standard of living when they retire. Despite numerous confirmations of a low level of financial literacy, individuals are increasingly aware that the understanding of financial matters is very important for them and their families. Therefore, increased financial literacy and awareness of individuals promote competitiveness in the markets of financial products, thus addressing youth unemployment as an incentive for self-employment.

Agricultural Skills: Agriculture is not glamorous because of its entrenched negative perceptions in the minds of many Nigerian youth. A farmer is someone like his parent, doing backbreaking labour in the fields and getting little at the end of production. Nevertheless, agriculture will be the engine for growth of many African economies, if given the same political support and financial investment as the crude oil sector. Agriculture is capable of providing more decent jobs

and filling millions more stomachs with nutritious meals. The Nigerian youth always want white collar jobs immediately after their graduation; thereby neglecting agriculture which is the basic source of youth empowerment and employment generation. Youth also believed that agricultural sector is only for the adult and old people. This challenge has drawn the attention of many scholars who attributed the problem to several factors including poor educational programmes which produce job seekers instead of job creators. Yakubu, (2012) identified lack of productive and marketable skills as the major causes of unemployment as many youths are not adequately prepared to fit into the productive sector of the economy. However, the agricultural sector is endowed with several opportunities that will provide skills for business enterprises as well as production of goods and services if well harnessed. An efficient agricultural sector would in no doubt enable a country to generate employment opportunities that will stimulate economic growth and development. The dynamism of the agricultural sector is undoubtedly a springboard for youth empowerment towards a sustainable socio-economic development. The Youth empowerment in Agriculture has four (4) main components namely:

- Crops empowerment: Cotton provides employment and means of livelihood to about two million Nigerian families. A total of 24 states of the federation produce cotton. Cassava is grown in all the states of the federation with the current production level being about 45 million tonnes per annum. Cocoa is the second major non-oil foreign exchange earner in Nigeria after leather, cocoa is being produced in 16 states of Nigeria and Sesame seed ranks third after cocoa in terms of volume of export and foreign exchange earnings. With all this opportunities youth have a means of employment in crop production. However, other aspect of crop's empowerment in Nigeria includes the following: farm and ranch managers, farmers and ranchers, Farm management advisors, farm workers and labourers,

crop, nursery, and greenhouse managers, managers of landscaping, lawn service, and grounds keeping workers, managers of retail sales workers. floral designers, grounds maintenance workers, landscaping and grounds keeping workers, pesticide handlers, sprayers, and applicators, vegetation tree trimmers and pruners (Abdullah, 2010).

- Livestock empowerment: Almost all rural households raise poultry as a subsistence meat. Chickens are predominantly of indigenous origin, and there is some cross breeding with foreign stock. Egg production was low but with the Private commercial poultry operations that recorded rapid increase between 2011 and 2013 especially near urban areas which provide employment to the large number of the Nigerian unemployed youth and also providing a growing source of eggs for the cities. Other aspect of livestock empowerment in Nigeria includes the following: animals ranchers, animal breeders, animal trainers, farm and ranch managers, farmers and ranchers, non-farm animal caretakers, animal butchers, animal sellers, disease control agents or veterinary workers.
- Fisheries/Aquaculture empowerment: Nigeria artisanal sector is the largest in the region, with thousands of vessels along the coast, in estuarine areas, and inland that use nets, hooks, traps and seines. Amao (2006) opined that, several hundred small to medium sized trawlers, operated principally by smaller firms, fish in coastal waters, mainly in the eastern part of Nigeria can empower the teeming youth in the country. Aspects of fisheries empowerment in Nigeria include the following: First-Line Supervisors/Managers of fish Farming, Fishing, and pond constructors, fish sellers and veterinary workers.
- Agribusiness empowerment: FAO (2014) Agribusiness development programme, which advises on policies and strategies to improve agribusiness competitiveness, including

fostering better coordination and linkages among business partners particularly youth. The agribusiness sector includes a diverse group of interest: crop producers, livestock and meat producers, poultry and egg companies, dairy farmers, timber producers, tobacco companies and food manufacturers and stores.

Agriculture is a dynamic rapidly changing industry that has an exciting future. The “New Agriculture” is made up of the intriguing new frontiers of biotechnology. Agricultural education has a long tradition of preparing students who continue their education in agriculture at the post-secondary level. The program concentrates on the development of essential skills that are vital to the success of people entering a career in agriculture. Just as important as the technician skills, are the skills developed in leadership through the comprehensive nature of the program. Since its inception, agricultural education has trained youths in the skills necessary to assume leadership positions in agriculture. As agriculture addresses controversial issues such as genetic engineering, leadership training takes an increasing importance among our youths (Oke & Fabamise, 2018). Therefore, the level of attainment of any industrialized and developed nation depends on the extent to which the youths have been trained with skills particularly in agriculture and applying such skills in meeting societal demands.

Functional Literacy and Economic Empowerment

Functional literacy (work-oriented literacy) was a child of development born in the Third World. The introduction of functional literacy was most visibly implemented through UNESCO’s Experimental World Literacy Programme, which began in 1965. This initiative aimed to address the needs of adult learners in developing countries, where high illiteracy rates

were seen as a barrier to economic development. The 1960s and 1970s represent a key period in the history of adult education, as functional literacy became recognized as a fundamental tool for economic development. However, its impact was not just limited to this period. The lessons learned from the World Literacy Programme and similar initiatives have continued to shape adult education policies and strategies in developing countries throughout the decades. Functional literacy is programme of literacy education tailored toward a particular skill and taught within the content of vocational skills acquisition. It is the application of basic literacy skills of reading, writing and arithmetic skills. It is the ability to read, write and calculate meaningfully in the day-to-day occupational activities of the learners and to apply the skills to become empowered and function well in such vocation or skills. It involves a continuum of learning that empowers an individual to achieve his goals, develop his knowledge and potentials in order to contribute significantly to the development of the society. Through functional literacy, youths and adults would function economically, socially and culturally to develop his personality and at the same time bring measures of reputation to his society. Economic empowerment on the other hand, involves both the ability to succeed and advance financially and the power to make and act on economic decisions.⁸ To succeed and advance economically, young people need the skills and resources to compete in markets, as well as fair and equal access to economic institutions. To have the power and agency to benefit from economic activities, young people need to know how to choose from various options, control resources and profits, etc.

One of the most important legacies of functional literacy is its role in economic empowerment. By focusing on practical literacy that could be applied in daily work, it empowered individuals to improve their own economic conditions. As people acquire basic skills, they were able to access better employment opportunities, improve their productivity, and make

more informed decisions in their personal and professional lives. This contributed not only to the individual's wellbeing but also to the overall economic development of their communities.

Functional literacy encompasses a broad range of cognitive abilities, practical skills, aptitudes, and attitudes necessary for individuals to actively and adeptly participate in a specific profession or occupation within the dynamic labor market. It surpasses basic reading and writing proficiencies and encompasses a diverse set of essential competencies essential for successful performance in various professional contexts. These competencies include critical thinking, problem-solving, information literacy, numeracy, digital literacy, and effective communication and collaboration skills. Possessing functional literacy equips individuals with the necessary tools to navigate and adapt to the intricate demands of their chosen field or trade.

However, economic empowerment is ultimately a reflection of young people's ability to succeed and advance economically, particularly through decent work, and of their power to make and act on decisions that affect their lives. Functional literacy, therefore, involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, develop her knowledge, and participate fully in the community in which he or she lives. This, therefore, means literacy is a powerful tool in empowering artisans and others in thanking communities to perform their functions very appreciably in the community. Today literacy can be understood as an indispensable means for effective, social and economic participation contributing to human development and poverty reduction. Hence, a way for the social, economic, cultural, and political emancipation of individual members of society, (World Literacy Foundation, 2018).

Furthermore, as the global economy moves more towards a knowledge economy, literacy is an essential skill for individuals and states to compete in the global economy. When a high proportion of the adult population has poor literacy skills, many positions remain vacant as

insufficient individuals are adequately skilled to fulfill those roles. This results in slower GDP growth in the long term (Lal, 2015). Youth economic empowerment is of ultimate urgency, and the costs and risks of not addressing it are too high to ignore. Young people face multiple forms of exclusion, including barriers to education and employment, poverty and exclusion from global, regional, national and local-level decision-making processes. However, the goal of functional literacy is to support the creation of productive jobs and provide employment opportunities for labour market entrants. Decent work and livelihood creation, including through economic development, are seen as key determinants in the socioeconomic empowerment of youth by creating a sense of identity and dignity to help better integrate young people into their communities. The focus on empowerment is based on the understanding that to participate in the labour market (as well as civic processes), young people need to be able to articulate their needs and propose solutions. They need to have the right capabilities – skills, sufficient resources and enabling environments – to thrive.

Therefore, functional literacy is seen as a powerful tool for the empowerment of young women and men and has the potential to alleviate poverty among them and their families, communities and societies. However, sustainable job creation which offers decent work for young people is a worldwide challenge. In many contexts, young men and women have difficulties both establishing themselves on the labour market and securing stable, quality work. There are a number of reasons for that: for example, countries lack the optimal macroeconomic and sectoral policy mix (especially fiscal and social protection frameworks) to unlock inclusive economic growth; educational systems do not adequately prepare youth with the skills needed to succeed and companies do not do enough to combat labour trafficking and abuses, debt bondage and other forms of offences across their global supply chains. These are issues we need to

urgently address for today's children to be protected in tomorrow's world of work and properly qualified to access the jobs of the future – particularly given fast-paced technological developments. These are also conditions to ensure girls and boys are given the opportunity to build and thrive in economically healthy and cohesive societies.

Impact of Unemployment on the well-being of Youths

Unemployment is a very serious issue in Africa particularly in Nigeria. It is a situation in which persons capable and willing to work are unable to find suitable paid employment.

Unemployment has negatively affected the lives of youths socially, psychologically and economically.

Socially: Unemployment isolates young people from networks that contribute to identity formation and social capital. Educated youth, often coming from middle or lower-middle-class backgrounds, face societal expectations that increase pressure secure employment and contribute economically to their families. Their failure to do so results in social withdrawal, stigma, and deterioration of interpersonal relationships (Godinić & Obrenovic, 2020). Youth unemployment has led to the engagement of youths in anti-social activities such as armed robbery, prostitution, political thuggery, violence, kidnapping, restiveness and other social vices evident among the unemployed youths and this constitutes danger to the stability, growth and development of the nation. Prolonged joblessness among educated youth correlates with reduced participation in community life, decreased civic engagement, and strained family dynamics. Furthermore, research has linked prolonged unemployment with increased social deviance and anti-social behaviour, as individuals struggle to assert their identity and relevance within society (Faroa & Mwaba, 2023).

Psychologically: Unemployment significantly correlates with increased psychological distress and adverse social effects. Experiencing long-term unemployment has been proven to lead to more anxiety, depression, and hopelessness and to a decline in self-esteem in most people. People who are unemployed experience more mental health issues on average than people who are employed. The effect on educated youth grows stronger because they may notice their achievements in school do not always pay off financially. Unemployment among youths, especially graduates who are unable to secure employment opportunities for themselves, can lead to depression, which in turn has resulted in suicidal thoughts among many youths in Nigeria. Studies carried out in places such as Pakistan have found that having no job can stress people emotionally and lead to feeling useless, powerless and thinking about taking their own lives (Asplund et al., 2022). Young people who are not employed also experience more mental health obstacles since not having routine, a sense of purpose and community validation intensifies mental health problems.

Economically: Youth unemployment has a direct and detrimental impact on economic growth. When a large segment of the population is unemployed, the economy loses out on potential productivity. This is particularly concerning in countries with a youthful demographic, where the majority of the population is under 30. The inability to harness this potential labour force leads to lower levels of economic output and can hamper a country's ability to compete in the global market. At the sub-national level, the economy of Edo state is currently plagued with several inadequacies. Prominent among these are significant public revenue shortfalls (that is, relative to expenditure requirements), a still-weak private sector and high unemployment and underemployment. Worse still, many of Edo's youths have embraced illegal out-migration as a coping mechanism, with several migrating illegally to countries in Europe through North African

routes (notably Libya) in search of better economic opportunities, while others have fallen victim to human trafficking under the guise of getting them employed in lucrative jobs abroad. Moreover, youth unemployment can result in lower consumer spending. Young people who are unemployed or underemployed have less disposable income, which reduces their ability to spend on goods and services. This decline in consumer spending affects businesses, leading to reduced revenues, lower profits, and, ultimately, slower economic growth.

Role of Functional Literacy in Reducing Unemployment among Youths

Youth unemployment is one of the most cancerous problems inhibiting sustained economic growth and development in Nigeria. Youth unemployment is not a recent phenomenon; it has become the bane of the Nigerian economy and social life without any lasting solution in sight. Salami (2013) described unemployment in Nigeria as a ‘time bomb waiting to explode’ if effective intervention is not put into place. The youthful years are prone to taking advantage of training in entrepreneurship if offered and properly channeled as opposed to falling into self-destructive behavior which has become the norm because such opportunities are not readily available to a large majority both in the rural areas and the cities. Adult education happens to be a veritable tool for entrepreneurship development that should be explored to the fullest capacity. Youth unemployment has led to a lot of the social vices. Prominent among them include internet and other frauds, kidnapping, armed robbery, destitution, prostitution, terrorism, political thuggery, among others (Okoye, et al., 2014). In order to affect change, this requires overseeing, managing and coordinating all the educational activities intended to improve the professional or technical qualifications and skill acquisition of adult learners. The management of adult education will make it an integral part of national development planning especially in addressing unemployment problems as well as eliminating illiteracy. Without sustainability, management of

adult education cannot be said to be effective and efficient as a solution to youth unemployment. The level to which objectives of eradicating illiteracy, unemployment and empowerment of youths and adults out of school learners is attained, is the determining factor of how successful the management of adult education will be. Sustained management of adult education by the government especially in planning, funding and supervision is proof of the commitment of tackling the massive youth unemployment and restiveness in the country. Securing and maintaining the interest and motivation of beneficiaries through administration and supervision is needed to evaluate participant's achievement and provide information for adult educators to both plan and implement programmes. Every country's growth and development depend on the level of the resourcefulness of its citizens, majorly the youths (Olajide & Akojenu, 2017). This corresponds to the quality of the training levels and planned entrepreneurs' development in the country in question. Growth and development could also be encouraged when youths in the society are gainfully employed and a rise in per capital income of the economy is seen. Job creation and also self-reliance of youths could be enhanced through deliberate government policies geared toward a functional literacy programme. It is no gain saying that functional literacy is the antidote to unemployment problems in developing countries.

Functional literacy also known as work-oriented literacy, involves the acquisition of skills that enables its recipients to qualify for and be involved in productive work. Every society has varying occupations that offers various individuals the opportunity to choose any vocation or economic activities that will enable them make ends meet. This will help the unemployed youths to be self-reliant and they can create wealth by themselves and ultimately bring about a sustainable future for them. The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) has done and still doing a lot in this area. Through its sub programmes such as vocational skill development,

national open apprenticeship scheme has assisted a lot of youths to gain skills that have made them to be gainfully employed. (Functional literacy) Skill acquisition is a major tool for extreme poverty and hunger eradication with the aim of creating an avenue for jobs and wealth which will bring self-reliance and sufficiency and, contribute to the growth and development of a country's economy (Isaac, 2011 in Ndubuisi, et al., 2021). Skill acquisition is the ability to be trained on a particular task or function. According to Idoko, (2014) in Ndubuisi, et al., (2021) posited that skill acquisition requires the gathering of various abilities that enhance task execution through the coordination of both theoretical and practical forms of knowledge. It involves the training of people in different fields of trade under a legal agreement between the trainers and the trainees for a certain duration and under certain conditions. According to the Development Education Center (2019), reported in Ndubuisi, et al., (2021) skill acquisition and youth development are emphasized in Nigeria to meet the following needs: reduction in the youth unemployment rate, diversification of job opportunities, effective function, crime reduction, employment generation, and national development.

By using functional literacy skills as a way out of poverty and unemployment, Nigeria governments and educational planners have invested in vocational education programmes in the informal education sector (NPE 2004). It was done with the aim of accelerating the process of vocational skills acquisition that are relevant to the individuals and for economic growths of the nation. The school curriculum was designed to ensure equitable quality education that provides opportunity for lifelong learning and giving priority to skills development through Entrepreneurial skills at all levels in order to combat the issue of unemployment, poverty and social vices in the country. Also in the informal sector, efforts have been made through series of programmes by non-governmental organisations and Philanthropists in getting adults and youths

to be empowered under the coverage of lifelong learning. Such programmes include; conventional farming, clothe weaving, tie and dye, hair-dressing, soap making, fashion designed, cake and confectioneries, (Adeyemo, 2014). Also, the importance of Governments and Non-governmental organisations in providing vocational skills for employment opportunities for the poor people in the society was emphasized by (Idowu, 2020). The study emphasises that the more government is able to provide poor people with employment opportunity and affordable services, the greater their contributions to poverty reduction through creating small and medium sized enterprises business, which is the main source of generating income for the large sections of the population.

Moreover, the introduction of information and technology makes acquisition of basic skills becomes popular. Computer and ICT have assisted individuals to cope with changes and development in various skills. ICT knowledge also assists individuals to develop himself and also participate in community development projects. ICT skills have equipped recipients with jobs and employment opportunities, poverty reduction to the barest minimum and also help curbing social vices in the society (Adeyemo, 2014). Thus, functional literacy skills do not only bring out the skills in an individual, but also develop their proficiency and productivity for self-development and the development of the community. Also, Nigeria whose mainstay economy is agriculture, needs to train enlightened farmers those whose literacy will transform them from subsistence farmers to large scale farmers. With functional literacy for farmers, they would easily grapple with the modern technology and improve on their farming for development. The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) through its training programmes has given non-agricultural graduates farming schemes that have enabled young school leavers to be empowered and it also provides loans for agricultural business for them. Thus, functional literacy skills do

not only bring out the skills in an individual, but also develop their proficiency and productivity for self-development and the development of the community.

The roles of functional literacy in the development youths in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized. Functional literacy plays significant roles in changing people's orientation and attitudes as well as in assisting people to cope with socio-economic and psychological challenges in life. Being functionally literates help to add values to individual's personality and personal development. It is very clear that someone who is literate will have the understanding of developing himself, he will not only impact his life, but also affects his family and the communities positively. This corroborates Adeyemo (2019), who declares that literacy and lifelong skills are significantly important and needed for sustainability, employment purposes and improvement of one's community and the nation at large. Literacy and lifelong skills have also been found to solve individual and societal problems, by a way of passing the knowledge acquired to others for effective functioning of such individual and running of the community. It is evident that functional literacy provides essential skills that can enable youths address the challenges faced in life. It was found out that skills, such as carpentry/furniture making, fashion design/sewing, hair-dressing, hat making, wire works, conventional farming, art and craft/designs, computing/designing, photography and confectionary/baking were found to have great impacts, as they equip beneficiaries with specialized skills and techniques to independently engage in practical production to make them self-reliance and contribute positively to the development of the society, (Olofintoye & Adeyemo 2018).

Therefore, making functional literacy programmes available to people generally will empower the citizenries. Also, such community and nation will get rid of its poverty and unemployment status,

and they will look ahead for economic breakthrough in the nearest future. However, below are some of the benefits of functional literacy programmes to youths which includes:

- Functional literacy skills will help to equip youths with qualitative education and skills needed to develop their critical thinking skills and to function effectively in their career development. Functional literacy for instance will provides opportunity for acquisition of knowledge, values and learning experiences needed by all in a rapid changing world for socio-cultural, political and economic empowerment. They will also provide the needed skills to enhance youths with employability and jobs mobility.
- Functional literacy skills will make youths become gainfully employed, they will become productive and earn better income to provide for themselves, take care of their families and develop the community.
- Functional literacy skills will also increase the socio-cultural and economic status of adults and youths. It is the gateway to fuller participation in social, cultural, and political life by individuals. Functional literacy would be of great benefits to communities as they would help to tackle the issues of poverty, unemployment and dependency among youths to the barest minimum.
- Other areas of benefits of functional literacy skills include wealth creation and poverty reduction for youths in the society through the provision of employment opportunities that will help to develop and sustain them. This will provide them with regular income and improves their standards of living.
- Moreover, functional literacy skills will transcend to healthy living conditions among youths. This is because educated populace are prone to enjoy good health, have longer

life expectancy and enjoy healthy environment. They are also better equipped and protected from diseases and environmental pollution.

- Literacy education and lifelong skills on the long run will stem down the rate of restfulness among youths in the community. It will also curb idleness and yield the anticipated dividends of self-reliance, poverty reduction, enhance employment opportunities and at the end bring development to the community and the nation.

Challenges Facing the Effective Delivery of Functional Literacy Programmes

Achieving functional literacy in Nigeria will mean resuscitating Adult and Non-formal education which had hitherto been neglected in favour of the formal education system in Nigeria.

Establishment of more centres for Adult education in the country should be embarked upon so that everybody will have easy access to education and thus become more functional on their job performance and in the society in which they live, so that the national objectives will be realized and constitutional provision will also be realized which mandated every Nigerian to acquire basic education without discrimination i.e young, adult, male, female, physically challenged and disadvantaged group etc. (FGN, 1999).

Kadiri, (2006) pointed out some challenges of functional adult literacy in Nigeria;

1. Poor political will by the government
2. Untrained facilitators
3. Low image from the people
4. Inadequate learning centers
5. Poor funding

6. Non-involvement of stake holders in the planning of functional illiteracy programmes.

Poor political will by the government: Lack of political will on the part of the government has always been an underlying problem facing the effective implementation of functional literacy programme in Nigeria. When the government lacks political will to prioritize functional literacy, it often results in inadequate allocation of resources, including funding and infrastructure. This, in turn, affects the quality and reach of the programmes, making it difficult to achieve desired outcomes.

Untrained facilitators: One of the critical factors of functional literacy is the quality of the teachers. Alarming, many teachers do not have adequate content and pedagogy knowledge. In Edo years of underinvestment in teacher development and management has led to poor quality graduate teachers from the Colleges of Education (COEs) and when these poorly prepared teachers are employment into basic education schools, they are ineffective and unable to deliver good quality teaching and learning opportunities for the students. Critical reforms and investments are thus required to boost the quality of education and thus, the quality of skills of Edo's youth. Therefore, developing facilitation skills through relevant training may take long time. After several practices, people involved in facilitation become confident in their skill. Trained facilitators are expected to use different teaching methods, assessment technique, classroom management, and reaching learners with learning difficulties. The purpose of using all this instructional input is to address the needs and emotional feeling of adult learners. The skill and ability to summarize others' ideas and ability to ensure group participation among adult learners are some important qualities of facilitators.

Low image from the people: In many societies, functional literacy is often associated with illiteracy, backwardness, or poverty, and as a result, people who enroll in these programmes are sometimes looked down upon or stigmatized. This social stigma makes potential learners reluctant to participate, as they fear being labeled as uneducated or inferior. Furthermore, because of this low image, community members may not see functional literacy as a serious or valuable educational opportunity but rather as a remedial activity for those who “missed out” in life. This perception discourages both adults and youths from joining, even when they genuinely need the skills to improve their livelihood.

Inadequate learning centres: Many of the poorest local, rural, and urban kebeles in the region do not have access to adequate financial resources necessary to establish appropriate training center for adult education program. The government has given much emphasis to the child education. Community mobilization, awareness creation and motivation mostly focus on child education. Providing training materials along with recruiting and training facilitators cost money, and the allocated financial fellow from formal school budget generally is not sufficient to establish an education system for adult learners. An adult learner attendance is not moving forward because of different reasons added to lack of attractive learning and training environment that has contributed lack of access to adult education.

Poor funding: Another problem of hindering effective implementation of the functional literacy programmes is lack of adequate finance. The budgetary allocation of non-formal education at all levels of government is grossly inadequate, especially when compared it with the formal sector. More importantly non formal education is excluded in the share of two percent Consolidated Fund meant for Basic Education in spite of the policy provision. However, it is noted that there is problem of accountability and transparency in the management of funds allocated of NFE.

Non-involvement of stake holders in the planning of functional illiteracy programmes: It has been assumed that functional literacy programme implementation was supposed to involve different stakeholder. Education sector by virtue of its position to the formal education has owned the program as one of the major stakeholders and involved in the implementation compared to other sectors. Leaders, expert, and coordinator in the sector including facilitators in the classroom are not possessed with a positive mindset or show positive attitude towards the programme. It seems to show the stakeholders at different levels are not able to influence adult learners toward more positive, meaningful, and brighter life. An adult overall satisfaction in their lives is observed through engagement in learning and changing their life situation. The classroom scenario and people who received the training could not improve their livelihood. The result could have impact on the newly lineup adult learners for attending the programme. In this regard, a positive mindset of all concerned stakeholder can more likely to overcome the failures.

Some other challenges of functional literacy education in Nigeria include;

1. Lack of consideration for Socio cultural values and economic patterns of the recipients into the programme.
2. Poor consideration to train indigenous facilitators who will specifically work and integrate adult functional literacy with community development and for effective communication.
3. In adequate learning materials.

Therefore, it should be said that it is not functional literacy that should get blame for having failed those in the policy making culture of development. On the other hand, it was policy makers, planner and practitioners all together who failed functional literacy. Functional literacy was never given the attention and resources it needed to succeed. Of course, we should not continue to make the same mistakes as we work on functional literacy programmes, old and new. Future projects, programmes and campaigns of functional literacy should be given the conceptual, institutional, materials, and personal resources necessary for their successful implementation. Literacy teachers should be carefully chosen, trained well both in the ideology and the pedagogy of functional literacy, and should be appropriately compensated. Teacher should not be expected to carry the whole burden of teaching the functional literacy curriculum all by themselves. Economic skills should be taught by extension workers who are themselves skilled. The political awareness component should be taught by a “Third force” of community leaders who can challenge both bureaucratic establishment and the local pyramids of social privilege.

Summary of Literature Reviewed

The reviewed literature highlights the critical role of functional literacy in reducing unemployment among youths. Functional literacy is the acquisition of the skills necessary for activities in which literacy is assumed in one’s culture. It is tailored towards economic, socio-political and health life of recipients for permanence. When a person is functionally literate, he is empowered to participate actively in his society. Functional literacy is sometimes referred to as work-oriented, career-oriented or occupational-oriented literacy, as well as economic-oriented

literacy. Functional literacy programmes are a combination of literacy education with socio-economic activities.

Functional literacy empowers individuals to improve their own economic conditions. As people acquire basic skills, they were able to access better employment opportunities, improve their productivity, and make more informed decisions in their personal and professional lives. This contributed not only to the individual's wellbeing but also to the overall economic development of their communities. Functional literacy encompasses a broad range of cognitive abilities, practical skills, aptitudes, and attitudes necessary for individuals to actively and adeptly participate in a specific profession or occupation within the dynamic labor market. It surpasses basic reading and writing proficiencies and encompasses a diverse set of essential competencies essential for successful performance in various professional contexts.

The roles of functional literacy in the development youths in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized as it plays significant roles in changing people's orientation and attitudes as well as in assisting people to cope with socio-economic and psychological challenges in life. Being functionally literates help to add values to individual's personality and personal development. It is very clear that someone who is literate will have the understanding of developing himself, he will not only impact his life, but also affects his family and the communities positively. The acquisition of functional literacy skills such as; digital literacy, vocational training, entrepreneurial skills, financial literacy, agricultural skills and many more. Will help to reduce unemployment among youths and empowered them to become job creators and not merely a job seeker.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter present the method the researcher uses in gathering and analysing data for the study.

It is presented under the following sub-headings:

- Research Design
- Population of the Study
- Sample and Sampling Technique
- Research Instrument
- Validity of the Instrument
- Reliability of the Instrument

- Method of Data Collection
- Method of Data Analysis

Research Design

The research design that will be adopted for this study is a descriptive survey research design. This study is most appropriate for this study because, it will afford the researcher to have a first-hand information about the phenomenon and variables of interest in the study (Nwangu, 2004).

Population of the Study

The target population of interest in this study will be all the youths under-going various functional literacy programmes in both public and private organization in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. From the researcher’s field survey, the population was estimated to be a total of 126.

Sampling and Sampling Technique

The entire population will be adopted as the sample size of the study. The study will therefore adopt a census sampling technique. The sample of the study is a presented in Table 1

Table 1: Sample Size of the Study

S N	Organization	Population	Sample (100%)
1	Vida’s Beauty World	17	17
2	Riemen’s Cakes & Pasteries	30	30
3	Vivi Beauty World	8	8
4	Jolino Prints House & Media	2	2
5	AJ Furniture	5	5
6	Jacob Furniture & Wood Works	4	4
7	Jstand Fashion Home	6	6
8	Chi-Best Tech	2	2
9	D-White Wear’s	6	6
10	Ebony Unisex Signature	40	40
11	Kokolet Footwears	6	6

	Total	126	126
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Source: Researcher's Field Survey.

Research Instrument

The research instrument for this study will be a self-design questionnaire titled Functional Literacy and Reduction of Unemployment among Youth Questionnaire (FLRUYQ). The questionnaire will be divided into two sections. The first section will contain the demographic data of the respondent. While the second section will contain items to provide answers to the research question that were raised. Furthermore, the questionnaire will be design using the modify Likert's scale format containing strongly agree (SA=4), agree (A=3), disagree (D=2), strongly disagree (SD=1) respectively.

Validity of the Instrument

The instrument will be validated using face and content validity whereby the initial draft of the instrument will be submitted to the project supervisor with three other lecturers in the department of Adult and Continuing Education for scrutiny. Their corrections and observation will be effected and the final draft of the instrument will be produced for administration.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was determined using the internal consistency reliability. In doing this, the instrument was administered to a sample of 20 respondents who were not part of the final study's sample. After computation, a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.68, 0.70, 0.77, 0.73 and 0.69 respectively was produced for each of the five (5) domains as they were designed in the instrument. The average weight was determined by summing each of the weights and divided by the number of domains expressed as: $0.68+0.70+ 0.77+0.73+0.69/5$ and thus, a Cronbach alpha co-efficient of 0.71 was obtained.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher will personally administer the instrument to the respondent and will be retrieved immediately. In doing this, the researcher will visit the various functional literacy centres to collect the data and whereby the respondent are not clear, explanation will be given to enable them fill the information correctly.

Method of Data Analysis

The data will be analysed using descriptive statistics. These will include frequency count, percentages and mean score analysis. A criterion mean of 2.50 will be use for decision making, whereby items with a mean score that is less than 2.50 will be rejected and items with 2.50 and above will be accepted.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study assessed the extent to which functional literacy programmes contribute to youth unemployment reduction in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. However, this chapter contained the presentation of the results of the data that were collected and analysed for the study. The presentation was followed by the discussion of the findings.

Research Question 1

What are the functional literacy programmes available to unemployed youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State?

Table 2: Data on the Functional Literacy Programmes Available to Unemployed Youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State

S/N	Items	Level of Responses	
		YES (%)	NO (%)
1	Digital Literacy Programmes	79 (74.5)	27 (25.5)
2	Vocational Training Programmes	106 (100)	Nil (0)
3	Entrepreneurship Skills Programmes	106 (100)	Nil (0)
4	Agricultural Training Programmes	86 (81.1)	20(18.9)

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 revealed the functional literacy programmes available to unemployed youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. It was found out that all the variables that were measured in the checklist as were rated above 50% threshold. These include Digital Literacy Programmes 79 (74.5), Vocational Training Programmes 106 (100), Entrepreneurship Skills Programmes 106 (100); and Agricultural Training Programmes 86(81.1). It was therefore concluded that majority of the cotemporary functional literacy programmes are relatively available to unemployed youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State.

Research Question 2

What are the impacts of unemployment on the well-being of the youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State?

Table 3: Data on the Impacts of Unemployment on the Well-being of the Youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State

S/N	Statement	N	Mean Score	Std. D	Decision
1	Unemployment has not contributed to increased frustration and depression among youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State	106	1.95	.2189	Disagree
2	Lack of employment opportunities is not what has led some youths into criminal or anti-social activities.	106	2.48	.9073	Disagree
3	Unemployment does not negatively affect family relationships and integration.	106	1.87	.3321	Disagree
4	Many unemployed youths face economic hardship due to lack of income	106	3.06	.2354	Agree

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 3 contained the respondents' mean rating on the impacts of unemployment on the well-being of the youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. It was

however revealed that the participants disagreed that unemployment has not contributed to increased frustration and depression among youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State with a mean score and standard deviation of 1.95 and 0.2189 respectively. They also disagreed that lack of employment opportunities is not what has led some youths into criminal or anti-social activities with a mean score and standard deviation of 2.48 and 0.9073 respectively. Furthermore, the participants also disagreed that unemployment does not negatively affect family relationships and integration with a mean score and standard deviation of 1.87 and 0.3321 respectively.

Finally on the Research Question Two (2), the respondents agree that many unemployed youths face economic hardship due to lack of income with a corresponding mean score and standard deviation of 3.06 and 0.2354 respectively. It was therefore concluded that the scourge of unemployment has negatively impacted the well-being of the majority of the youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State.

Research Question 3

What are the challenges facing the effective delivery of functional literacy programmes targeting youth in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State?

Table 4: Data on the Challenges Facing the Effective Delivery of Functional Literacy Programmes Targeting Youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State

S/N	Item	N	Weighted Mean	Mean Score	Std.	Decision
1	Inadequate funding does not limit the effectiveness of functional programmes.	106	336	3.8	105	Agree
2	Poor infrastructure and facilities hinder proper training programmes delivery.	106	444	3.4	.214	Agree
3	Inadequate skilled trainers reduce the qualities of functional literacy programmes.					

		106	372	3.1	.792	Agree
4	Many youths are not aware of the various functional literacy oppotunies in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State.	106	384	3.2	.738	Agree

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 4 showed the mean rating of respondents on the challenges facing the effective delivery of functional literacy programmes targeting youth in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. It was found that the respondents positively affirmed all the variables that were considered. Specifically, the participants affirmed that inadequate funding does not limit the effectiveness of functional programmes with a corresponding mean score and standard deviation of 3.8 and .105 respectively. They also agreed that poor infrastructure and facilities hinder proper training programmes delivery with a corresponding mean score and standard deviation of 3.4 and 0.214 respectively. They agreed too that inadequate skilled trainers reduce the qualities of functional literacy programmes with a corresponding mean score and standard deviation of 3.1 and .792 respectively. Finally on the research Question Three (3), the participants unanimously agreed that many youths are not aware of the various functional literacy opportunities in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State with a corresponding mean score and standard deviation of 3.2 and 0.732 respectively. It was therefore concluded that there are a lot of challenges are confronting the effective delivery of functional literacy programmes targeting youth in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State and these challenges ranged from inadequate funding, poor infrastructure and facilities, inadequate skilled trainers and lack of awareness.

Research Question 4

Is there a relationship between functional literacy programmes and economic empowerment of the youths in Ovia North East Local Government of Edo State?

Table 5: Data on the Relationship between Functional Literacy Programmes And Economic Empowerment of the Youths in Ovia North East Local Government of Edo State

S/N	Item	N	Mean Score	Std	Decision
1	Functional literacy programmes have improved access to job opportunities.	106	3.2	.441	Accepted
2	Functional literacy does not promote creativity and innovation among youths.	106	3.4	.782	Accepted
3	Financial literacy helps youths to make informed business and investment decisions.	106	2.9	.597	Accepted
4	Skills acquired through literacy programmes have increased self-reliance.	106	3.1	.344	Accepted
Grand Mean			3.15		Significant

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 5 showed the relationship between functional literacy programmes and economic empowerment of the youths in Ovia North East Local Government of Edo State. The participants in the study posited that functional literacy programmes have improved access to job opportunities with a mean score and standard deviation of 3.2 and .441 respectively. They also agree that functional literacy does not promote creativity and innovation among youths with a mean score and standard deviation of 3.4 and .597 respectively. The respondents agreed too on the fact that financial literacy helps youths to make informed business and investment decisions

with a mean score and standard deviation of 2.9 and .344 respectively. Finally, the respondents agree that skills acquired through literacy programmes have increased self-reliance with a mean score and standard deviation of 3.1 and .782 respectively.

Since the grand mean of 3.15 is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50 that was set for the study, it was therefore concluded that there is a significant relationship between functional literacy programmes and economic empowerment of the youths in Ovia North East Local Government of Edo State

Research Question 5

Is there a relationship between functional literacy programmes and reduction in youths unemployment in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State?

Table 6: Relationship between Functional Literacy Programmes and Reduction in Youths Unemployment in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State

S/N	Statement	N	Weighted Mean	Mean Score	Std .D	Decision
1	Functional literacy programmes directly reduce the rate of unemployment among youths.	106	412.0	3.3	.4976	Accepted
2	Digital literacy does not provide youths with opportunities for online and remote jobs.	106	459.0	3.8	.3816	Accepted
3	Vocational literacy does not equip youths with relevant employability skills	106	452.0	3.6	.4247	Accepted
4	Entrepreneurship development through literacy programmes reduces overdependence on government jobs.	106	394.0	3.9	.9525	Accepted
Grand Mean				3.65		Significant

Source: Field Survey (2025).

Table 6 revealed the relationship between functional literacy programmes and reduction in youths unemployment in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. It was found that functional literacy programmes directly reduce the rate of unemployment among youths with a mean score and standard deviation of 3.3 and 0.4976 respectively; digital literacy provide youths with opportunities for online and remote jobs had a mean score and standard deviation of 3.8 and 0.3816 respectively; vocational literacy does equip youths with relevant employability skills pooled with a mean score and standard deviation of 3.6 and 0.4247 respectively. Finally, the respondents agreed that entrepreneurship development through literacy programmes reduces overdependence on government jobs with a corresponding mean score and standard deviation of 3.9 and 0.9525 respectively.

Since the grand mean of 3.65 was found to be greater than the criterion mean of 2.50 that was set for the study, it was therefore concluded that there is a significant relationship between functional literacy programmes and reduction in youths unemployment in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that majority of the Functional Literacy Programmes are relatively available to unemployed youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. This finding corroborates Bester et al. (2020) when they mentioned digital literacy programme to create more job opportunities and empower the youths. In the same vein, Familumo and Oyelade (2012) stated that vocational education equips adult and youth with the knowledge needed to practice a profession and also to serve as a vehicle to prepare individual in basic skill for job entry and enhancing social mobility. They further stated that social thinkers

centuries ago were unanimous in their thought that artisans in any society were the monetary of economic. UNESCO (2012) stated that vocational training programmes are often designed to meet the needs of the labour market, with the aim of producing workers who are equipped with the skills and knowledge required by employers. Baxter et al. (2014) mentioned entrepreneurship training programmes which help to provide young individuals with entrepreneurial skills by enhancing their abilities in various areas such as managerial, decision making, human resource management, financial management, marketing management. Adegun (2013) stated that entrepreneurship skills programmes aim to equip youths with entrepreneurial skills and enable them to establish new business ventures. Also, Oke and Fabamise (2018) mentioned agricultural training programmes. They opined that the level of attainment of any industrialized and developed nation depends on the extent to which the youths have been trained with skills particularly in agriculture and applying such skills in meeting societal demands.

It was also found in the study that the scourge of unemployment has negatively impacted the well-being of the majority of the youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. This finding agrees with Faroa and Mwaba (2023), who explained that unemployment has social impact that isolates youths from networks that contribute to identity formation and social capital. prolonged unemployment with increased social deviance and anti-social behaviour, as individuals struggle to assert their identity and relevance within society. In the same vein, Asplund et al. (2022), stated the psychological impact of unemployment on the well-being of youths. They posited that having no job can stress people emotionally and lead to feeling useless, powerless and thinking about taking their own lives. Also, youth unemployment has a detrimental impact on economic growth. Nweze (2019), investigated the effect of youth unemployment on economic growth in Nigeria.

The findings of the study revealed that there are a lot of challenges confronting the effective delivery of functional literacy programmes targeting youth in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State and these challenges ranged from inadequate funding, poor infrastructure and facilities, inadequate skilled trainers and lack of awareness. This finding agrees with Kadiri (2006) who identified poor funding as one of the major problems affecting functional literacy programmes. Kadiri (2006) also identified inadequate skilled trainers as a challenge to functional literacy programmes. It is alarming that many teachers do not have adequate content and pedagogy knowledge.

The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between functional literacy and economic empowerment of the youths in Ovia North East Local Government of Edo State. The finding agrees with World Literacy Foundation (2018), which identified that in today, literacy can be understood as an indispensable means for effective, social and economic participation contributing to human development and poverty reduction. In the same vein, Lal (2005), identified that when a high proportion of the adult population has poor literacy skills, many positions remain vacant as insufficient individuals are adequately skilled to fulfil those roles.

The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between functional literacy programmes and reduction in youth unemployment in Ovia North East Local Government of Edo State. This finding agrees with Olajide and Akojenu, (2017) who identified that every country's growth and development depend on the level of resourcefulness of its citizens, majorly the youths. According to Idoko, (2014) in Ndubuisi, et al., (2021) identified that skill acquisition requires the gathering of various abilities that enhance task execution through the coordination of both theoretical and practical forms of knowledge.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter focuses on the summary, conclusion and recommendation of the study.

Summary

This study investigated the influence of functional literacy in reducing unemployment among youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. Five research questions were raised to guide the study which include the following:

1. What are the functional literacy programmes available to unemployed youths in Ovia North East Local Government of Edo State?
2. What are the impacts of unemployment on the well-being of the youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State?

3. What are the challenges facing the effective delivery of functional literacy programmes targeting youth in Ovia North East Local Government of Edo State?
4. Is there a relationship between functional literacy programmes and economic empowerment of the youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State?
5. Is there a relationship between functional literacy programmes and reduction in youths unemployment in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State?

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study constitutes all the youths under-going various functional literacy programmes in both public and private organization in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. The study adopted the sample selected using a census sampling technique to select a sample of 126. However, 106 was used for the analysis. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled: Functional Literacy and Reduction of Unemployment among Youth Questionnaire (FLRUYQ). It was however subjected to face and content validity by the researcher's supervisor and one other expert in the Department of Adult and Continuing Education, Faculty of Education, University of Benin. The reliability was determined using the internal consistency method which was measured using Cronbach alpha statistic. The instrument yielded an alpha value of 0.71. the data collected were analyzed using mean (\bar{X}), standard deviation (SD).

Findings

The study made the following findings:

1. The first finding was concluded that majority of the contemporary functional literacy programmes such as digital literacy, vocational training, entrepreneurship skill,

agricultural skill and so on are relatively available to unemployed youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State.

2. The scourge of unemployment has negatively impacted the well-being of the majority of the youths in Ovia North East Local Government of Edo State.
3. It was concluded that there a lot of challenges confronting the effective delivery of functional literacy programmes targeting youth in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State and these challenges ranged from inadequate funding, poor infrastructure and facilities, inadequate skilled trainers and lack of awareness.
4. It was found that there is a significant relationship between functional literacy programmes and economic empowerment of the youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State.
5. There is a significant relationship between functional literacy and reduction in youths unemployment in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, the following conclusions can be drawn: the prevalent functional literacy programmes are digital literacy, vocational training, entrepreneurship skills and agricultural skills available for youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. These programmes help to reduce the negative social, psychological and economic impact that unemployment has on the well-being of youths which has led many youths into various social vices, depression, suicidal thought due to lack of job or employment opportunities. The effective delivery of functional literacy programmes to youths has not been hindered due to poor funding, inadequate skilled trainers, inadequate infrastructure and facilities. Nevertheless, functional

literacy has help in the reduction of unemployment among youths by empowering them with employability skills which help to improve their standard of living as well as nation development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. In the first place, it was found that programmes such as digital literacy, vocational training, entrepreneurship skills, and agricultural skills are available but not fully maximized by youths. Therefore, government and relevant agencies should expand the reach of these programmes to more communities within Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. Also, more training centres should be established and adequately equipped to accommodate a larger number of unemployed youths and programme schedules should be flexible and youth-friendly to encourage maximum participation.
2. Secondly, the study established that unemployment has severely affected the well-being of youths in the area. In order to address this, government and NGOs should introduce psychosocial support systems such as counselling, mentorship, and career guidance services as well as community-based empowerment activities should be intensified to rebuild youths' confidence and motivation. Thereby prioritizing policies aimed at job creation and youth empowerment at the local government level.
3. In addition, the study revealed that inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, lack of skilled trainers, and low awareness hinder programme effectiveness. Government should increase funding to adult and non-formal education centres to enhance training quality and existing facilities should be renovated, while new ones should be built and equipped

with modern learning tools. Skilled trainers should be recruited, and periodic capacity-building workshops should be organized for facilitators. Massive awareness campaigns should be conducted through radio, social media, community leaders, schools, and religious institutions to ensure youths are well informed.

4. Finally, the study established a significant relationship between functional literacy programmes and economic empowerment. Functional literacy programmes should integrate practical, hands-on training tailored to local economic opportunities. Government should partner with private sectors to offer internships, apprenticeships, and practical exposure for trainees. Graduates of these programmes should be provided with start-up kits, micro-credit facilities, and mentorship to help them start income-generating ventures.
5. Furthermore, functional literacy was found to significantly reduce youth unemployment, government should formally integrate functional literacy into local development policies as a strategic tool for tackling unemployment. Programmes should be continually reviewed and updated to match labour market demands and emerging sectors. Youths who complete training should be linked to employment opportunities, cooperatives, agricultural clusters, and business networks to ensure sustainability.

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APPENDIX I

**DEPARTMENT OF ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
BENIN CITY.**

**FUNCTIONAL LITERACY AND REDUCTION OF UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG
YOUTH QUESTIONNAIRE (FLRUYQ)**

Dear Respondents,

This questionnaire solicits information from you. It is designed to find out the “The Influence of Functional Literacy in Reducing Unemployment among Youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State”. The information supplied will be treated in confidence and this exercise is purely for research purpose. Please tick the appropriate answer to each question. Thank you

Omodara

Section A: PERSONAL DATA

1. Sex: Female [] Male []
2. Age: 18-24 years [] 25-31years [] 32 years and above []

Section B

S/N	Functional Literacy Programmes Available for Youths	YES		NO	
1	Digital Literacy Programmes				
2	Vocational Training Programmes				
3	Entrepreneurship Skills Programmes				
4	Agricultural Training Programmes				
	Impact of Unemployment on the Well-being of youths	SA	A	D	SD
5	Unemployment has not contributed to increased frustration and depression among youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State				
6	Lack of employment opportunities is not what has led some youths into criminal or anti-social activities.				
7	Unemployment does not negatively affect family relationships and integration.				
8	Many unemployed youths face economic hardship due to lack of income.				
	Challenges Facing the Effective Delivery of Functional Literacy Programmes				
9	Inadequate funding does not limit the effectiveness of functional programmes.				
10	Poor infrastructure and facilities hinder proper training programmes delivery.				
11	Inadequate skilled trainers reduce the qualities of functional literacy programmes.				
12	Many youths are not aware of the various functional literacy opportunities in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State.				
	Functional Literacy and Economic Empowerment	SA	A	D	SD
13	Functional literacy programmes have improved access to job opportunities.				

14	Functional literacy does not promote creativity and innovation among youths.				
15	Financial literacy helps youths to make informed business and investment decisions.				
16	Skills acquired through literacy programmes have increased self-reliance.				
	Functional Literacy and Reduction in Youths Unemployment	SA	A	D	SD
17	Functional literacy programmes directly reduce the rate of unemployment among youths.				
18	Digital literacy provides youths with opportunities for online and remote jobs.				
19	Vocational literacy does equip youths with relevant employability skills				
20	Entrepreneurship development through literacy programmes reduces overdependence on government jobs.				

APPENDIX II

CRONBACH ALPHA RELIABILITY TEST RESULTS

Reliability

Notes

Output Created	24-NOV-2025 20:24:51
Comments	
Input	Active Dataset DataSet2

	Filter	<none>	
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	N of Rows in Working Data File		20
Missing Value Handling	Matrix Input		
	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.	
	Cases Used	Statistics are based on all cases with valid data for all variables in the procedure.	
Syntax		RELIABILITY /VARIABLES=Item1 Item2 Item3 Item4 /SCALE('ALL VARIABLES') ALL /MODEL=ALPHA.	
Resources	Processor Time		00:00:00.00
	Elapsed Time		00:00:00.00

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	20	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	20	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.69	4

Reliability

Notes

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	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	Statistics are based on all cases with valid data for all variables in the procedure.
Syntax		RELIABILITY /VARIABLES= Item5 Item6 Item7 Item8 /SCALE('ALL VARIABLES') ALL /MODEL=ALPHA.
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Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary

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Cases	Valid	20	100.0
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	Total	20	100.0

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Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
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Reliability

Notes

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	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.	
	Cases Used	Statistics are based on all cases with valid data for all variables in the procedure.	
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Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	20	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	20	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.77	4

Reliability

Notes

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	Matrix Input		
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.	
	Cases Used	Statistics are based on all cases with valid data for all variables in the procedure.	
Syntax		RELIABILITY /VARIABLES=Item13 Item14 Item15 Item16 /SCALE('ALL VARIABLES') ALL /MODEL=ALPHA.	
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Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	30	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	30	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.70	4

Reliability

Notes

Output Created	24-NOV-2025 22:26:25
Comments	

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	File		
	Matrix Input		
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.	
	Cases Used	Statistics are based on all cases with valid data for all variables in the procedure.	
Syntax		RELIABILITY /VARIABLES=Item17 Item18 Item19 Item20 /SCALE('ALL VARIABLES') ALL /MODEL=ALPHA.	
Resources	Processor Time		00:00:00.00
	Elapsed Time		00:00:00.00

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	30	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	30	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.68	4