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Can Zimbabwe's Education System Pass the Fitness for Purpose Test? An Examination of the Education System's Ability to Address the Unemployment Problem among Educated Youths.

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Abstract

This study sought to find out if Zimbabwe's education system met the fitness for purpose test and to examine if the nature of the curricula was not one of the contributory factors to high unemployment among educated youths in Zimbabwe. The study adopted the form of a survey which is in the realms of Scientific Research where questionnaires were used to collect data from the unit of analysis in this study, 955 unemployed educated youths from the country's ten provinces. The research found out that most of the unemployed educated youths who were respondents thought that the education system was biased towards theory and that practical subjects were taught in a manner which did not inspire students to use the skills after completing school. The study also found out that the education system does not expose students to: entrepreneurial skills, self-employment skills, venture creation skills, technopreneurship skills and project management skills. It was also found out that the education system does not train students how to draw bankable project proposals yet most respondents indicated that they were eager to start their own self-employment venture. The study further established that the range of practical subjects offered in schools is narrow. In light of the findings, this study concludes that Zimbabwe's education system is not fit for purpose as such it could not pass the fitness for purpose test. The current education system fuels unemployment among educated youths who discover that they are armed with a lot of theory which they cannot deploy to address real life challenges. The study recommends a complete overhaul which would make those who go through the education system enjoy practical work, dignity of labour and self-employment creation as opposed to perpetual job-seeking.

Keywords: youth unemployment, fit for purpose, education system, practical subjects, unemployment

INTRODUCTION

The economy of every country is a product of its most critical resource, the human resource. It is people who develop a country, institution, organization or home. The potential of every country can be measured through the skills that reside in its human capital and the skills are a product of an education system – poor education system means poor human capital skills and this leads to institutionalized poverty which is hard to eradicate. This study is under the auspices of macro-economics. The interest to carry out this research was premised on several facts and research findings based on the reality in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe Economic Policy Analysis and Research Unit (ZEPARU, 2013) analyzed Zimbabwe Statistical Agency's (ZimStat) Census Report (2012) and noted that paradoxically, most uneducated youths are employed but most educated youths are unemployed in Zimbabwe. This reality meant that those youths who did not further their education are better-off because at least they are employed, whereas those who chose to advance with education are enduring the pains that go with unemployment. This did not add up as it was unusual for an education system to deliver a disadvantage to its recipients. It called for a research which centred on interrogating the education system to see if it is fit for purpose.

Zimbabwe has the highest literacy rate in Africa of 92% yet it has the highest unemployment rate in the world according to the Economist Global Capital Report (2012). Zimbabwe's education system is highly regarded the world over, yet it produced high rate of unemployment among educated youths. Zimbabwe is the richest country in the world in terms of untapped natural resources per person with endowments of the highest diamond reserves in the world, the second highest platinum reserves in the world, the fourth largest producer of chromium in the world, the largest known coal reserves in Sub-Saharan Africa and the sixth largest gold producer in Africa. Zimbabwe has 40 other exploitable minerals which have a potential to turn the country into the jewel of Africa. Zimbabwe also has some of the best soils in the form of 8.6 million hectares of potentially arable land and has the best climatic conditions in Southern Africa (International Monetary Fund's Natural Resources Per Capita Index, 2013).

What is surprising is that it was mainly the uneducated youths who saw business opportunities in the mining industry and in agriculture yet the educated youths continued to post job application letters with impressive curriculum vitae (CVs) in a country whose industry capacity utilization had dropped to 10% by 2008 and by 2015 it stood at 30% amid reports that retrenchments and company closures continue to make it clear that there are simply no formal jobs (CZI, 2015). The fact that industry was operating at low capacity would mean that there are extensive opportunities for educated youths to deploy their skills to start small and grow big to be employers until they re-opened those closed companies.

A lot of questions come into play: Why are the educated youths seeing obstacles in an environment where the uneducated youths see opportunities? Why should there be more graduates roaming the streets with envelopes containing good CVs hoping to bump into a job in an economy where the uneducated are seeing endless opportunities? What makes our graduates educate themselves into unemployment? Is the education 'recipe' or 'dosage' which Zimbabwe feeds to its youths in schools, colleges or universities the right one?

In order to define the word 'Youths', this study turned to the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No. 20 Act, 2013 on Chapter 1, Section 20:

The State and all institutions and agencies of Government at every level must take reasonable measures, including affirmative action programmes, to ensure that youths, that is to say people between ages 15 and 35 years:

(a) have access to appropriate education and training ...

(c) are afforded opportunities for employment and other avenues to economic empowerment (Constitution of Zimbabwe, pp20-21).

The above citation was also supported by the Ministry of Youth Development, Indigenization and Empowerment in Zimbabwe's National Youth Policy (2013) which defined 'Youth' as follows:

In Zimbabwe, youth are defined as persons between 15 and 35 years of age. This age range is stipulated in the Constitution of Zimbabwe and is also in line with the continental definition of youth as defined in the African Youth Charter.

Educated youths in this study are those who successfully completed Ordinary Level including those who went on to further their education to Advanced Level with some obtaining certificates, diplomas and degrees.

The purpose of the study was to find out if the education system in Zimbabwe is fit for purpose. The study sought to investigate if the education system was a contributor to high unemployment among educated youths in Zimbabwe by establishing if the skills set possessed by the unemployed educated youths could lead to self-employment.

The study was based on the hypotheses that the nature of the curriculum in particular the study of practical subjects, was significantly associated with employability and that the learning of entrepreneurial and self-employment skills influenced the desire by educated youths to start their own businesses.

Unpacking the Tenets of a Fit for Purpose (FFP) Education System

One of the greatest educational philosophers of all time, John Dewey advised that 'Education is not a preparation for life but it is life itself' (Dewey, 1939). This study understood this to be implying that an education system should concern itself with developing skills directed at solving real life problems. In simple terms, fit for purpose refers to something which is appropriate, acceptable, suitable, up to standard, well suited for its designated role or intended use (https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/fit_for_purpose). A fit for purpose education system is that which produces graduates who are able to use the knowledge and skills obtained from it to survive. In this dynamic world, there should be nothing like education for education sake, or knowledge for knowledge sake. Education should not be the game of seeking the truth for the sake of it but seeking to know the truth so as to apply it in real life to improve life. Universities can only be knowledge societies if they are hubs of churning out practical useful knowledge as supported by theory and not only theory for theory sake because Martin Luther King Jnr as quoted in Bhebhe, Bhebhe and Nikisi (2015) advised that life is not a textbook of theories but rather it is a battlefield of realities. Education and training which is fit for purpose is fit for application in real life. There should be a line of best fit between educated people and their standard of life. Educated people should know and appreciate the importance of practical skills, hard work and manual work more than the uneducated people. The curriculum at school, college or university should produce thinker-doers who can relate theory to practice in real life. Such is what schools, colleges and universities were established to do. Schools, colleges and universities which only concentrate on theory are departing from their mandates and they are renegeing on what they were established to do – to equip the youths who make up 60% of the population with skills that can make their lives better. If such schools, colleges and universities were established on tax-payers' money, then such money should be used to best advantage by equipping the youths with appropriate education.

It is the duty of every educational institution at every level to craft or apply its curriculum in practical terms in order to marry theory and practice in a more pronounced way (Braslavsky, 2003). The word curriculum has its root in a Latin word '*curr*' which means 'to run'. A curriculum should be understood to mean a programme

of studies which students at whatever level run through so that at the end of the race (learning programme) they are skilled to tackle life. Braslavsky (2003) states that a curriculum is an agreement amongst communities, educational professionals, and the State on what learners should take on during specific periods of their lives. It is common knowledge that such agreement in Zimbabwe centres on a useful education which can improve the lives of its recipients. Kerr as cited in Kelly (2009) states that a curriculum outlines the skills, performances, attitudes, and values pupils are expected to learn from schooling. In this study, the phrase 'education system' and the word 'curriculum' are used interchangeably to refer to the same thing. They both mean everything that happens under the auspices of a school, college or university.

An education system or curriculum can only be fit for purpose if it relates to the dictates of real life in whatever field. Put simply, during the process of education, educationists in schools, colleges and universities should be teaching how to relate the theories, formulae, models, approaches, computations and concepts to solve real life challenges. The education given should be applied education such that students who graduate from the classroom or lecture room have clear competitive advantage over those who did not go through the education system. After 11 years of full-time education up to O' level and beyond, educated youths should be able to apply the skills acquired through education to real life situations and survive much better than those who did not go up to that level. Thus a fit for purpose education system concerns itself with sharpening and re-sharpening the thinking processes as they relate to doing/ application/ practice and not to overload students with theory only until they concentrate on regurgitating and memorizing notes to achieve high percentage pass rates in examinations. Reality was such that students go to school to acquire survival skills. Even a PhD degree holder is uneducated if he/she can not apply the skills learnt at university to real life situations.

Education the world over is all about sharpening just three things which Mavhunga (2002) called the **3H**. It is about sharpening the **Head** (*Cognitive skills – sharpening brains*), sharpening the **Hands** (*Psychomotor skills, practical hands-on survival skills*) and the **Heart** (*Affective skills - instilling good citizenry, ubuntu, obedience, fear of sin, love for one another, respect, empathy, love for smartness etc*). This was supported by Benjamin Bloom (1956) in his famous Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. If schools, colleges and universities ignore one of the three aspects outlined above, the result is half-baked good-for-nothing graduates who fail to seize opportunities in life. After running through a fit for purpose education system, the outcome should be graduates who love and enjoy practical work. The dignity of labour concept should be deeply embedded in graduates who come out of a fit for purpose education system.

Zimbabwe needs to complete the three phases which internationally form the best practice to educational planning; the Popular Demand Approach [PDA] (also called the Social Demand Approach), the Rate of Return Approach (RRA) and the Manpower Approach to Educational Planning (Longer, 1987). Whereas between independence in 1980 to mid-1990 Zimbabwe embraced the Popular Demand Approach to Educational Planning through opening schools, colleges and universities across the country using the Education for All Policy (AFA) which was underpinned by free education, automatic progression and payouts at universities and colleges, the Government then did very well to abandon PDA from mid-1990s onwards by moving to embrace the Rate of Return Approach to Educational Planning which emphasized on paying fees in return for education. The findings from this study will determine if Government had now move to the last leg, the Manpower Approach to Educational Planning where all schools, colleges and universities are directed to direct their curricula towards imparting practical job oriented skills (manpower skills) so that educated youths at every level graduate with a wide range of relevant practical skills to fit in a wide array of jobs in the form of

multi-skilling. (Angheta, 1987). Such is an education system which would benefit for purpose in this day and age.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a dearth of information on educated youth unemployment in Zimbabwe let alone its causes with most researchers among them Kanyenze (1997), Chirisa and Muchini (2011), Luebker (2008), Ncube (2000), Muradzi (2014) and Hamauswa (2012) concentrating on unemployment among youths in general. This specific group, (educated youths) were probably left out in the earlier studies because they are the least expected to suffer from the unemployment debacle given that they are armed with internationally recognized impressive certificates, diplomas or degrees, but ZimStat Census Report (2012) proved that they are the most affected by the unemployment scourge in Zimbabwe. More-so given that the very reason for going to school, college or university is to acquire skills and ideas about how to survive in life after graduating. It is least expected that an individual who completes a degree after 17 years of full-time education (Grade 1 to 4th year at university) fails in 17 years to come up with a small idea on how to use the learnt skills to raise small income to get three square meals a day (average cost in Zimbabwe being US\$1 per meal by 2015). If educated youths fail to use their education to survive, then the education system should be interrogated.

Educated youth unemployment is fertile ground for research given that Zimbabwe's highest budget allocations since 1980 to date (2015) have been to the combined Ministries of Education (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development). There is more need now than ever before to critically examine whether the nation was putting its money to good use by funding the human capital development of youths who if they graduate were burning with the desire to do something to develop and plough back to the nation which funded their education at high cost rather than churn out youths who realize that they cannot come up with an idea, however small on how to create income.

Jamoussi and Gassab (2011) found out that unemployment has forced many students to choose to continue their studies in an attempt to increase their chances of getting employed. However, continuing with education further minimized chances of being recruited due to over qualification except for a few specialties such as medicine, law, engineering and architecture (Jamoussi and Gassab, 2011)

The Presidential Commission of Enquiry into Education and Training (1999) also referred to as the Nziramasanga Commission, noted that Zimbabwe's education system was not in tandem with modern global best practice in that the education system entrenched poverty in the educated youths through its emphasis on theory at the expense of practice for students to pass examinations instead of helping them to pass life. As noted by Desai (2008), the Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, Singaporeans and Malaysians are just but a few examples of nations which made hard decisions to realign their education to make it more relevant by imbedding practical components and the rewards were there for everyone to see - fast economic development, a population which enjoys and lives by the tenets of hard work and an increase in the standard of life for citizens. All this was happening at a time when most schools in Zimbabwe were doing away with practical subjects while colleges and universities were shifting to commercial subjects most of which focused on management.

As noted by Chakamba, Jumo, Edziwa and Misozi (2013), the demise in the teaching of practical subjects in secondary schools in Zimbabwe was partly to blame for the current high unemployment among the educated youths. Bhebhe et al (2015) carried out a study in five secondary schools and found out that even in cases were

practical subjects were still being taught, the practical subjects were being taught theoretically and that affected the impact of the practical subjects. For instance, such practical subjects as agriculture were being taught using textbooks in classrooms in schools that had neither a meaningful garden nor plot. The whole aim being to prepare students to pass examinations and indeed they passed, but after graduating, such students could not make a living. Such education would not pass the fitness for purpose litmus test. Students must be inspired to love and cherish fieldwork, manipulating and solving practical problems in the field and only come to the lecture room for matching theory and practice. If practical components are taught correctly by skilled people, students' moment of high excitement should be in the field and not in the lecture theatre. Vakalisa (2008) also blamed schools and universities for fuelling unemployment among educated youths through a theory-based curriculum, a mismatch between the educational systems and the skills needed in the labour market, creation of a mindset that educated people must be employed in white-collar jobs and to attain higher qualifications is a faster way to avoid manual work in life.

Kanyenze (2008) saw an opportunity where educated youths see an obstacle when he advised school-leavers to turn the non-functionality of industries in Zimbabwe to their advantage by starting small until they grew big to become credit-worthy to such a level that they would re-open the closed industries themselves. Once this happened; schools, colleges and universities would have become more relevant to the needs of Zimbabwe and thus they would have proven to be fit for purpose. The World Bank (2003) acknowledged that agriculture remained the largest employer and earner of foreign currency in Zimbabwe up to 2000 but it expressed surprise that only 2% of the Secondary Schools in Zimbabwe offered Agriculture as one of the practical subjects. The World Bank Report (2003) further noted that Zimbabwe's urban population grew by 88% between 1980 and 1990. This created serious housing crisis as all urban councils and municipalities failed to cope with housing backlogs, yet only 1% of the urban Secondary Schools offered Building as one of the practical subjects. Such an education system which does not craft its curriculum to dovetail with societal needs cannot pass the fitness for purpose test. The same goes for university education. Universities in provinces with high mineral reserves do not offer Mining Engineering.

After a study of the education system in Zimbabwe, Materu (2007) noted that giving relevant education was the first step towards achieving quality education when he advised that a range of factors affect the quality of education in institutions including their vision, goals, admission and assessment standards, the teaching or learning environment, the talent and expertise of the teaching staff and the employability of its graduates. It is clear from Ibid (2007) that the issue of employability of graduates of an education system and relevance of the education should be clear if such education were to pass the fitness for purpose test. If education is not relevant, we cannot even discuss about whether it is quality education because the first benchmarks of quality education are relevance and employability of graduates.

FMSI (2011) noted that the curriculum in Zimbabwe's primary and secondary schools lacks relevance to the development needs of not only the learners but the nation as a whole. FMSI (2011) advised all players to ensure that the curriculum in secondary schools reflects the needs of students which include science, technology (vocational education) and mathematics commonly called STEM. A worrying phenomenon though is how mathematics and science subjects are poorly taught in Africa such that students are made to believe that they are difficult and should be left as a preserve of the intelligent students and intelligent lecturers (UNESCO, 2009); but Dewey (1939) warns 'If you cannot explain it simply, then you do not know it'. In the same vein, it is the role of leaders in educational institutions to ensure that teachers and lecturers who stage manage the difficulty of mathematics and science subjects by making the learning process difficult should be

retrained first to avoid further damage. A highly knowledgeable mathematics teacher is himself/herself fit for purpose if he/she can explain concepts simply, building from known to unknown in a manner which excites and inspires students to like the subject. For Zimbabwe, the importance of science, technology and mathematics (STEM) is like a matter of life (national survival) because without them, the education system cannot pass the fitness for purpose test.

Besides science and mathematics, this study singled out technology and entrepreneurship as the other facets and barometers to measure and qualify an education system as fit for purpose especially in the Zimbabwean context of dwindling formal employment opportunities because of multiplicity of reasons which include low industry capacity utilization/ company closures, poor economic performance, low foreign direct investment, corruption, droughts, liquidity crunch, economic sanctions and mismanagement of natural resources to mention but just a few.

In this study technology is viewed as science in action. Imparting skills in technology makes an education system fit for purpose. Technology is also defined as the application of practical scientific knowledge for the understanding, operation, maintenance and production of useful devices and machinery to support human survival (Sahlman, 1997)). In this discourse, technology, techno vocational subjects, practical subjects and technopreneurship have been grouped together as part of technology because of their practical component. Every student needs practical skills training and an education system which allows students to graduate into life after 17 years of full-time education without exposure to technological training is viewed in this study as not fit for purpose. Even a medical doctor would one day want to fix a screw on his door while a lawyer will also need fresh vegetables from his own garden in the home.

'Technopreneurship' is a new word in English and its usage has been gaining prominence in recent years. Technopreneurship is also called 'Techno-entrepreneurship' by other authorities such as Whittaker (2001). It is a compound word which is a derivative of two words; 'Technology' and 'Entrepreneurship'. Lee-Pei and Chen-Chen (2008), view Technopreneurship as the use of technological ideas to come up with entrepreneurial plans and actions. Technopreneurship refers to training students to acquire hands-on or practical skills for purposes of making money so that they become self-employed and self-sustaining (Kirby, 2006).

According to Kaplan (2002) the word 'entrepreneurship' comes from the 17th Century French word *entreprendre*, which refers to individuals who undertook the risk of forming new enterprises. In its today's usage, 'entrepreneurship' is more than mere creation of a business; it also includes generation and implementation of a business idea from any knowledge which one may possess. Entrepreneurial education could be introduced at an early stage so that students may appreciate the benefits and grow up to be wealth creators and ultimately become employers and not perpetual job seekers (Msipa, 2015).

Project management skills are also needed among the skills set which an educated youth should carry out of the education system. With it are issues planning, goal-setting, financial management and human capital management. Thus an education system which lacks training in entrepreneurship, technology, techno vocational or practical skills and project management skills is according to this study not fit for purpose.

METHODOLOGY

Brannick and Roche (2011) argue that no particular research method has clear superiority over another because what is important is what the chosen method reveals about the problem. This study took the form of a survey under the realms of Scientific Research and the study was basically quantitative with few qualitative

questions. In justifying the choice of the method, the study took into cognizant the advantages of Scientific Research as pointed out by Sekaran and Bougie (2013) who stated that it is purposive, it has rigor, it has testability, replicability, objectivity, generalizability, parsimony, precision and confidence as such it fitted well given the importance of this study and the impact of its findings. Self-completing questionnaires were used to collect data from unemployed educated youths across the country's ten administrative provinces with the aid of 20 well trained research assistants.

The population in this study was the unemployed educated youths in Zimbabwe. In order to arrive at the population (z), statistical calculation using findings from the Zimbabwe Statistical Agency (ZIMSTAT) Census Report (2012) which gave the national population (u) and stated that the population of youths (v) (those aged 15 – 35 years) was 43.7% of the population, and given the implications of automatic progression and the Education for All Policy which led to a literacy rate of 92% (w) and the average annual pass rate at Ordinary Level of 15% (x) and the average unemployment rate of 90% (y) as deduced from many sources. In light of the foregoing, the population of the unemployed educated youths was calculated thus:

$$Z = u \times v \times w \times x \times y = \underline{708,904}$$

Simplified as

$$\text{Population of educated youths in Zimbabwe} = \frac{13,061,237 \times 437}{1 \times 1000} \times \frac{92}{100} \times \frac{15}{100} \times \frac{90}{100} = \underline{708,904}$$

The sample was computed using the sample size calculator www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm at 99% confidence level (being the highest confidence level any researcher can aspire) and at 4% margin of error. The computation produced a result of 1040 being the computed sample size which was used in the study.

An overall response rate of 92% was achieved. By and large, 92% response rate (955 completed and returned questionnaires out of 1040) was a high response rate which went a long way in aiding to the validity and reliability of findings.

Pre-Testing, Validity Testing and Reliability Testing of the Data Collection Instrument

Pre-testing of the questionnaire which was the main data collection instrument was done on 20 subjects selected among the unemployed educated youths. Fixed response questions were tested for construct validity using Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), Bartlett's Test of factor analysis and the Principal Component Analysis. Using Kaiser's scale, the sampling adequacy value of 0.860 was achieved and that according to Kaiser (1974) is superb. Bartlett's test was also found to be highly significant implying there were some relationships between the variables included in the analysis. Cronbach's alpha correlation coefficient was used to test for reliability and internal consistency and the global scale was 0.784 which indicated a high correlation between the items and that showed that the questionnaire was consistently reliable because all alphas were greater than • 0.70.

Socio demographic profile of respondents

Gender of respondents

Out of a total of 955 unemployed educated youths who were respondents, 552 (57.8%) were male and 403 (42.2%) were female. The slight bias towards male respondents could be explained by the random sampling technique which used social places at townships, Growth Points, churches and street corners to get respondents yet in accordance with culture female respondents could be expected to be busy in homes with household chores. The slight gender bias could also be attributed to the general gender imbalance among the educated youths in Zimbabwe where the number of females reduced as the levels of education increased. This

makes the gender imbalance of respondents noted in the study to be a true reflection of the real situation in Zimbabwe

Distribution of Unemployed Educated Youths (UEY) by age group

Table 1 :The distribution of UEY respondents by age group

Age of UEY Respondents	Frequency	Percentage frequency
15 - 20 years	247	25.9
21 - 25 years	361	37.8
26 - 30 years	210	22.0
31 - 35 years	137	14.3
Total	955	100.0

Most unemployed educated youths are in the 21-25 year age range (37.8%) followed by the 15-20 year age group (25.9%), the 26-30 years (22%) and the 31-35 year age range comes last with 14.3%.

Distribution of Unemployed Educated Youth respondents by highest educational attainment

It is largely acknowledged the world over that employment is a function of possession of requisite skills by the one seeking employment. The question on highest educational attainment was therefore crucial in this study as it helped to denote the skills and levels of education the unemployed educated youths possessed.

Table 2: The distribution of respondents by highest education level attained

N=953

Highest level of education attained	Frequency	Percentage frequency
'O' level	435	45.6
A' Level	242	25.4
National certificate	58	6
Diploma	63	6.6
Higher National Diploma	20	2
Bachelor's degree	123	12.9
Masters' degree	9	0.9
PhD	3	0.3
Total of those who responded	953	100

Most of the unemployed educated youths who were respondents in this study are those who had passed O' level (45.6%), followed by those who had passed A' Level (25.4%) and holders of Bachelor's degrees (12.9%). Diploma holders constituted 6.6% of the respondents and holders of National Certificate were 6% of the respondents. Table 2 above shows that any policy directed at resolving unemployment among educated youths should create employment opportunities that were in sync with the above qualifications.

DISCUSSIONS

Responses to whether the education system which the unemployed educated youths went through provided them with employment skills

Out of 952 unemployed educated youths who responded to this question, 398 (41.8%) stated that the education system they went through provided them with employment skills while 554 (58.2%) indicated that the education they went through did not provide them with employment opportunities. An education which does not provide youths with employment opportunities is not fit for purpose. Employment skills include job hunting skills and interviewing skills among others.

Education should prepare youths for life because education is all about life. If education is not serving its purpose, it lowers the rate of return to education (RORE). DIAL (2007) concluded that once education is looked down upon by a nation then its development prospects for the present and the future gets a knock. If the findings on this response were anything to go by, then educating youths in the Zimbabwean education system would be synonymous with inviting poverty in the home because for all the financial, time and opportunity costs, the family which educates the youths gets nothing in return and such situations cause institutionalized poverty in the homes of such families.

Whether the education curriculum which the unemployed educated youths went through was balanced.

Out of 952 respondents, 532 (55.9%) indicated that the curriculum they went through was biased towards theory. 277 (29.1%) of the respondents indicated that the education system they went through was biased towards practicals. 143 (15%) of the respondents indicated that the curriculum they went through was balanced and catered for both theory and practice with equal emphasis.

One of the major problems of the education system according to Chakamba, Jumo, Edziwa and Misozi (2013) is being biased towards theory. Chakamba et al (2013) indicated that lack of emphasis on practical subjects was one of the major causes of high unemployment among educated youths and invariably such a system fails the fitness for purpose test.

Whether the unemployed educated youths studied any practical subjects during their days of full-time education.

Out of 949 respondents 737 (77.6%) of the unemployed educated youths studied practical subjects at one time while 212 (23.4%) indicated that they never studied practical subjects during their years of full-time education. The percentage of those who studied practical subjects (77.6%) is high which shows that the curriculum adequately caters for practical subjects which by their nature should teach students to like manual work, have dignity of labour instilled in them and be able to use their hands and practical skills to survive after schooling. However, what is emerging from the statistics was that even when armed with practical skills acquired during lessons on practical subjects, educated youths still failed to get jobs. A research carried out by Bhebhe et al (2015) noted that students did not like doing practical subjects and teachers taught the practical subjects in the same manner as theoretical subjects in the classroom or lecture theatre using the talk and chalk lecture method to help students pass examinations with little regard to the practical aspect. Such findings affect the impact of practical subjects. This could be an area for further study because it would have been important to ascertain the depth achieved given that while 77.6% responded that they did practical subjects at school, in response to a previous question, 55.9% had indicated that the curriculum was biased towards theory. This would appear to be a contradiction. 212 (23.4%) of the respondents who indicated that they never studied practical subjects during their years of full-time education were a very significant. If such students who never did practical subjects in schools graduate into a world which is mostly composed of practical realities, there are most likely to face unemployment.

The Practical subjects studied by respondents

It was not possible to tally the responses to the number of respondents as some respondents studied one subject while others studied two or more.

Table 3: Practical subjects studied in school

N=737

Practical subject studied during full-time education	N
Computers	93
Food and Nutrition	80
Fashion and Fabrics	126
Wood Work	60
Agriculture	200
Technical Graphics	45
Building Studies	72
Art	15
Metal Work	43
Mining	1
Environmental Studies	2
Beauty Therapy	2
Motor Mechanics	15
Entertainment	3

Table 3 above shows that the most popular practical subject as studied by the unemployed educated youths was Agriculture (200), followed by Fashion and Fabrics (126); Computers (93), Food and Nutrition (80), Building Studies (72), Woodwork (60), Technical Graphics (45), Metal Work (43), Art (15) and Motor Mechanics (15). Mining, Environmental Studies, Beauty Therapy and Entertainment had 1, 2, 2 and 3 respectively. On a national scale, the range of subjects could be viewed as narrow and too basic or traditional to fit into the requirements of modern industry given the fast changing world of technology. While Kahyarara and Teal (2006) contrasted the above argument of valuing practical subject more than theoretical subjects when they compared returns to vocational (practical) and general (theoretical) education of workers in Tanzanian manufacturing firm and concluded that general (theoretical) education was more rewarding than vocational (practical) education, that should be viewed as applying in economies which are dominated by the service industry of teaching, nursing, the police force, army, banking and finance etc. The Zimbabwean scenario of low industry capacity utilization is unique. It called for educated youths to embrace practical subjects as these are better placed to equip them with practical skills to create jobs for themselves. Bhebhe et al (2015) postulates that all fast developing economies among them Japan, China, Malaysia, Singapore, Korea to name but just a few, had a deliberate policy to infuse practical skills in the their curricula.

Whether learning institutions contributed to the problem of high unemployment among educated youths.

Out of 955 unemployed educated youths who were respondents, 327 (34.6%) believe that the problem of high unemployment among educated youths was caused by educational institutions. Such a perception were unfortunate because educational institutions were primarily established to assist youths to gain skills which are relevant and useful in life.

618 (64.7%) of the respondents stated that educational institutions were not responsible for the problem of high unemployment among educated youths. That was the ideal situation where educational institutions cannot be guilty of not doing what they were established to do i.e. to help youths to get survival skills. However, findings as presented in earlier responses show that educational institutions were providing an education system which is biased towards theory as such this response could be taken as a contradiction. It could also be a case of unemployed educated youths not knowing the role of educational institutions while on

the other side it could be proof that the problem of unemployment is affected by many other factors and not the learning institutions alone. The standard human capital theory measures the effectiveness of training by not only the outputs of schools, colleges and universities but also by the outcomes of the education received and this includes whether the educated youths who pass through such institutions get employed. Using this model of analysis, the schools, colleges and universities can still be viewed as being part of the problem notwithstanding the responses from respondents.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

There was need to do computations to test the hypothesis: *The nature of the curriculum in particular the study of practical subjects was significantly associated with employability.*

H₀: The nature of the curriculum in particular the study of practical subjects is not significantly associated with employability.

H₁: The nature of the curriculum in particular the study of practical subjects is significantly associated with employability.

A Chi-square test was used to test for independence between employability and the inclusion of practical subjects in the curriculum and a p-value 0.09 was achieved and that is greater than 0.5. We therefore fail to reject H₀ and conclude that the nature of the curriculum in particular the study of practical subjects is not significantly associated with employability. This means there are several factors that contribute to unemployment of educated youths, not necessarily the issue of practical subjects. For instance, the issue of having practical subjects in the curricula may not influence the employability of educated youths, but the way the practical subjects were taught may affect the employability of educated youths. For instance, when practical subjects like Agriculture which are supposed to develop self employment skills in youths are taught from textbooks and chalk boards in the classroom with no strategies to inspire the students to enjoy going to the fields to till the land, educated youths may continue to suffer under unemployment yet the family has fifty hectares of fertile agricultural underutilized land.

Whether the unemployed educated youths studied entrepreneurship or basic venture creation during the years of full-time education.

Out of 947 unemployed educated youths who were respondents, 414 (43.4%) acknowledged having studied entrepreneurship or venture creation while 535 (56.4%) indicated that they never studied entrepreneurship or venture creation during their full-time education. While 43.4% who studied entrepreneurship or venture creation is a significant figure, it would have been better if entrepreneurship or venture creation were made compulsory. Kaplan (2002) defines an entrepreneur as an individual who undertook the risk of new enterprise. Taking risks and seizing opportunities are the bedrock of today's harsh economic environment. Such skills are not inborn, they are acquired through training. Entrepreneurial skills include financial management, feasibility study, budgeting skills, human capital management skills, goal-setting, auditing and stock-taking skills among others.

535 (56.4%) of the respondents who indicated that they never studied entrepreneurship or venture creation during their full-time education are likely to contribute to the problem of high unemployment among educated youths and such an education system is not fit for purpose. The global village is a world of business. Ideas should be translated to money to support survival. Allowing youths to leave full-time education without learning the basics of entrepreneurship makes them not to appreciate the world around them.

Whether the unemployed educated youths studied technopreneurship during their years of full-time education.

It was necessary to find out whether the unemployed educated youths studied technopreneurship in school. Chen (2008) defined Technopreneurship as the use of technological ideas to come up with entrepreneurial plans and actions while Kirby (2006) says it is training students to acquire hands-on or practical skills for purposes of making money so that they become self-employed and self-sustaining. An education system which does this is fit for purpose

Table 4: Whether respondents studied technopreneurship in school

N=952

Did you study technopreneurship during your years of full-time education?	Frequency	Frequency Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent
Yes	370	38.9	38.9
No	582	61.1	100.0
Total	952	100	

Table 4 above shows that out of 952 respondents 370 (38.9%) indicated that they studied technopreneurship while 582 (61.1%) indicated that they never studied technopreneurship during their years of full-time education. The 582 (61.1%) of the unemployed educated youths who indicated that they never studied technopreneurship are quite a large number and a major cause for concern. Youths who did practical subjects at school but never learnt how to turn such practical knowledge to business plans remain incapacitated and that may drive unemployment. On the other hand, an education system which allowed students to pass through it without exposure to technopreneurial skills cannot pass the fitness for purpose test.

Whether the unemployed educated youths studied how to draw up business proposals for funding during their years of full-time education.

Of the 950 unemployed educated youths who were respondents, 386 (40.6%) acknowledged that they studied how to draw business proposals while 564 (59.4%) indicated that they never studied how to draw up business during full-time education. The 386 (40.6%) who studied how to draw bankable business plans (proposals) are quite a significant percentage although it was desirable that such skills be made compulsory so that all educated youths were equipped with skills to come up with bankable business proposals which can attract funding from banks and the corporate world.

The 564 (59.4%) of the respondents who indicated that they never studied how to draw up business proposals for funding during their days of full-time education were at a disadvantage as banks cannot finance their ideas. Youths who have the practical skills but have no knowledge on how to draw business proposals remain incapacitated as they cannot get funding/ capital to start their own self-employment ventures. Such situations fuel unemployment among educated youths. An education system which did not train youths on how to draw business plans would condemn youths to a life of job seeking instead of being self-employed and such an education was not fit for purpose.

Possession of Project management skills

A project is an undertaking which has a definite start and definite end date. This study considered that if students were to survive after their full-time education, they must leave school with solid knowledge and skills on how to plan, manage and operate projects. The skills on how to monitor using Gantt charts, evaluate

and do financial management are necessary skills which only come through training and an education system which offered such skills could be viewed as fit for purpose.

Figure 1: Whether the respondents studied project management during their days of full-time education.

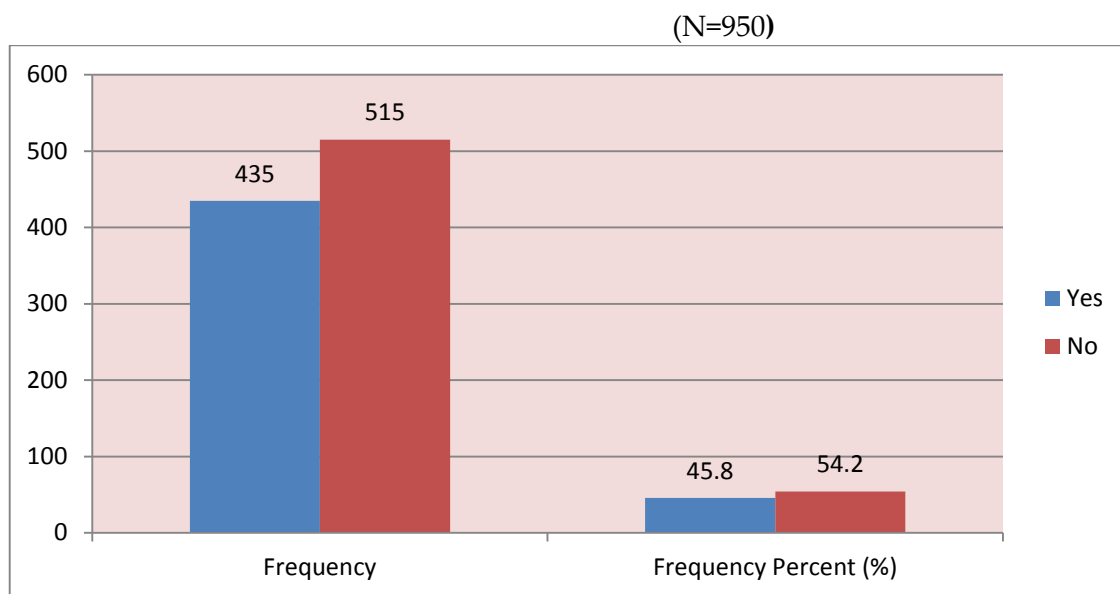


Figure 1 shows that out of 950 respondents 435 (45.8%) indicated that they studied project management during their years of full-time education while 515 (54.2%) had not. Those who studied project management (45.8%) were a significant percentage which entailed that such youths had learnt the importance of goal setting, planning, monitoring, evaluation, financial management and time management. The 515 (54.2%) who indicated that they never studied project management during their time in full-time education would find it difficult to manage projects or any ventures with clear timelines, Gantt Charts and specific deliverables. If educated youths leave the school system without such skills it fuels unemployment and such an education system is not fit for purpose.

Interest in starting own business venture

N=944

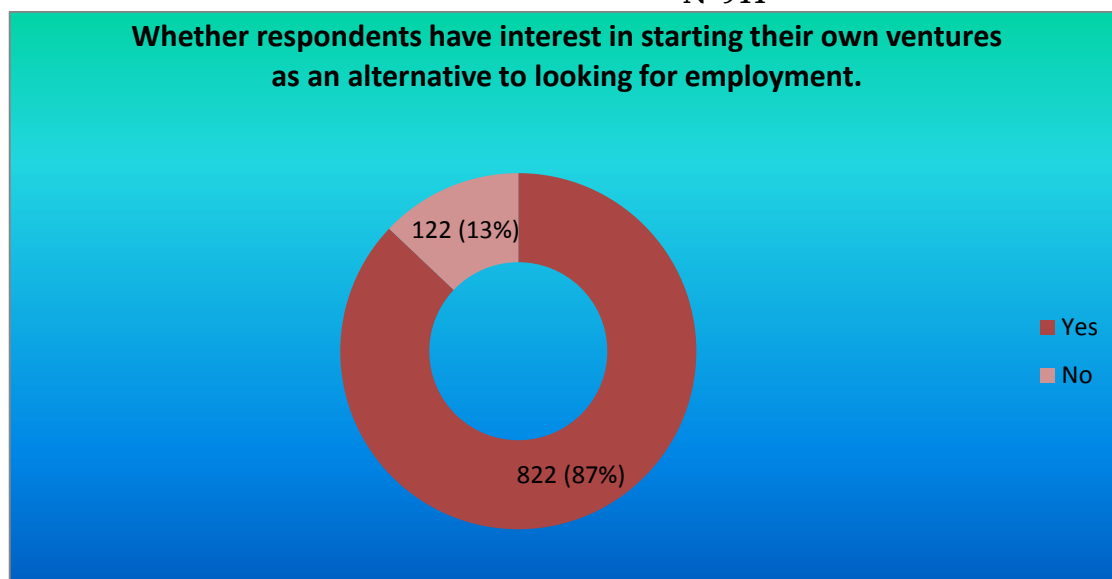


Figure 2: Whether the unemployed educated youths have an interest in starting their own business as an alternative to looking for employment.

Figure 2 shows that 822 (87%) out of 944 respondents indicated that they have interest in stating their own businesses as an alternative to looking for jobs which they knew were hard to come by while 122 (13%) of the respondents indicated that they had no interest in starting their own businesses.

The high number of respondents eager to start their own businesses 822 (87%) was a positive development. Such state of mental readiness should be nurtured by giving unemployed educated youths an opportunity to start their own business ventures as a way to address the high unemployment among educated youths. However, experience from earlier attempts noted that most educated youths who were supported to start their own businesses soon closed shop because of failure to manage such ventures. That is why the knowledge of project management, technopreneurship, entrepreneurship and venture creation becomes very vital. If the unemployed educated youths do not have such pre-requisite skills, their interest to start their own businesses would count to nothing. As a remedy this study recommends that those without such basic skills should first be sent for short training to equip them with the same.

The 122 (13%) of the respondents who indicated that they had no interest in starting their own businesses are at a disadvantage. While it is appreciated that not all educated youths can be entrepreneurs. It is advisable that even those who end up doing white collar jobs should be taught entrepreneurship to widen their chances in life and to appreciate the world around them. Educated youths who have no interest in starting their own businesses may fuel unemployment in a country such as Zimbabwe where industry capacity utilization stood at 30% in 2015 (CZI Reports) to mean that there are not enough job opportunities. Jobs have to be created by those who have a mindset for creating their own businesses.

Hypothesis Testing

This study was premised on its hypotheses one of which was: *Learning of entrepreneurial and self-employment skills influenced the desire by educated youths to start their own businesses.*

H₀: Learning of entrepreneurial and self-employment skills does not influence the desire in educated youths to start own businesses.

H₁: Learning of entrepreneurial and self-employment skills influence the desire in educated youths to start own businesses.

The hypothesis needed to be tested using Chi-square test to prove the dependability of possession of entrepreneurial, technopreneurial, business proposal drafting skills and project management skills to the interest to start own business. The results are summarized in Table 6.8 below:

Table 5 Chi-square Test: Possession of Skill*Interest in starting own business

Skill	p-value	Decision
Did you study basic entrepreneurship during your years of full-time education?	0.000	Associated
Did you study any technopreneurship during your years of full-time education?	0.000	Associated
Did you study how to draw business proposals for funding during your years of full-time education?	0.000	Associated
Did you study project management during your years of full-time education?	0.000	Associated

The Chi-square test Table 5 above shows that the desire by youths to start own businesses is not independent of the study of entrepreneurial, technopreneurial, business proposal writing and project management skills. The results above were subjected to a regression test being a more powerful test than the Chi-Square test above.

Table 6: Regression Model Variables in the Equation

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1 ^a q14.1 Did you study basic entrepreneurship(X ₁)	-.808	0.272	8.830	1	0.003	0.446
q14.2 Did you study technopreneurship(X ₂)	-.384	0.252	2.315	1	0.128	0.681
q14.3 Did you study how to draw business proposals(X ₃)	-.322	0.286	1.271	1	0.260	0.724
q14.4 Did you study project management(X ₄)	-.973	0.265	13.433	1	0.000	0.378
Constant	3.599	0.296	148.220	1	0.000	36.546

(Y) a function of the desire to start own business= $a+B_iX_i$

The Table 6 above yields the equation: $Y=3.599-0.808X_1-0.973X_4$

The regression model shows that entrepreneurial skills and project management skills are key in influencing youths to start their own businesses. We therefore reject H₀ in favour of H₁ and conclude that the teaching of

entrepreneurial skills and project management skills influence the desire in educated youths to start their own businesses or self-employment projects.

This finding is very critical if Zimbabwe was to resolve the high unemployment problem among educated youths. Faced with low industry capacity utilization, Zimbabweans themselves have to start small and grow big until they re-open and run the closed businesses and industries themselves. Given the results of this analysis, one would advocate for making the courses in entrepreneurship and project management compulsory in the education curricula in Zimbabwe so that by the time students reach O' level, they would at least have been exposed to training in these skills.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Most of the responses from respondents pointed to the fact that Zimbabwe's education system cannot pass the fitness for purpose test as most students who graduate from it lack certain basic skills to survive on their own. Such findings are very worrisome given the high unemployment rate among educated youths and the highest annual budget allocations to the Ministries of Education since independence in 1980. Cognizant of the fact that an education system which is not fit for purpose is a burden to the nation and a waste of resources, this study proposed the following recommendations to make the education system in Zimbabwe fit for purpose:

1. Teaching and learning of practical subjects in schools should be made compulsory and practical subjects must be taught by skilled people who inspire learners to enjoy the practical aspects which are useful in real life situations. In the same regard, teaching of any subject be it mathematics, languages or sciences to mention but just a few, should emphasize on the applied aspects of the subject which relate the theory to real life practice.
2. The education system should offer balanced curricula which gives equal weighting to theory and practice bearing in mind that in real life, practical skills were important to support survival.
3. The range of practical subjects offered in schools should be widened with a view of moving with the dictates of modern technology. Offering of the traditional subjects of building, agriculture, food and nutrition and metal work while good, is not enough and research on what successful nations are offering would be a welcome move.
4. Skills in entrepreneurship, drawing project proposals, technopreneurship, financial management and project management should be imparted to all youths so that when they leave full-time education, they can be able to create self-employment ventures which can grow until they become employers themselves.
5. The interest to start self-employment ventures that resides in most unemployed educated youths should be nurtured by providing training and access to funding.
6. Zimbabwe should embrace the full tenets of the Manpower Approach to Educational Planning which emphasizes imparting education as a preparation for the world of work (and not knowledge for knowledge sake) from Secondary level (Form 1) upwards. If that happens, even those educated youths who fail to get formal jobs will use the acquired skills to get self-employment.

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