

Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) and Youth Employment in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria (2012-2014)

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) and youth employment in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) and Vocational Skills Training Scheme (VSTS) of SURE-P in relation to youth employment. The institutional theory (IT) by Scott (2001) served as the theoretical framework for the study. Data were gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The study employed simple random sampling and systematic sampling techniques in the selection of 400 respondents. A 26-item questionnaire titled "Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) and Youth Employment" was utilized to collect data. Statistical analysis was conducted using the chi-square statistical tool. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested at a significance level of 0.05, with a degree of freedom of 3. The findings revealed that the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), specifically through the Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) and Vocational Skills Training Scheme (VSTS), played a significant role in employment and job creation among youths in Calabar Metropolis. Based on the results, it was recommended, among other things, that the current administration should revitalize the SURE-P program and allocate sufficient funds to enhance participation, thereby promoting increased employability and job opportunities.

Keywords: *Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme, Graduate Internship Scheme, Vocational Training Scheme, Youth Empowerment, Calabar Metropolis, Nigeria, well-being*

Introduction

One of the key issues in development is how to deal with unemployment and job creation among the youth. The challenges of unemployment and poverty in most regions of the world have increased significantly. The scenario of rising global youth unemployment has been worsened by the world economic crisis that began in 2009, eroding the gains recorded in the pre-2008 years (Saibi, 2016; Odinka et al., 2023).

The rate of youth unemployment in Nigeria has consistently risen, even during the period of the oil boom of the 1970s, 1980s, and the 1990s. This situation has been worsened by bad governance

and corruption among political leadership in Nigeria since its independence in 1960. No political leadership has fully honoured its promises of job creation. The oil boom provided Nigeria with an opportunity to establish and develop an industrial sector that could have served as the basis for linkages with other sectors of the economy. This opportunity has not been utilized, and the youth are the worst hit, with the unemployment rate on the increase (Attah et al., 2023). The socio-economic prospects of Nigerian citizens have dwindled, and youth employment is at its lowest ebb, even as the earnings and income generated from oil had continued to skyrocket before the recent decline (Ugal, Nwagbara & Uyang, 2011; Abu, 2015; Uyang et al., 2022; Odinka et al., 2023).

Unemployment in Nigeria is defined as the proportion of the labour force that was available for work but did not work in the week preceding the survey period for at least 39 hours. Official figures from the Bureau of Statistics put the figure of unemployed at 19.70 percent, about 30 million, but this figure still does not include about 40 million other Nigerian youths captured in World Bank statistics in 2010 (Ayor et al., 2023). By implication, this means that if Nigeria's population is 160 million, then 50 percent or more of Nigerians are unemployed. The youth constitute about 60 percent of the more than 160 million people in Nigeria. Nigeria's unemployment rate is projected at over 11 percent compared to the average rate of 9.5 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa (Oduwale, 2015; Omang et al., 2022).

The issue of petroleum subsidy is familiar to Nigerians. Over the years, the subsidy on Petroleum Products (Diesel, petrol, and kerosene) has been subjected to progressive reduction as a matter of socio-economic necessity, whereby the price of diesel (AGO) is completely deregulated to zero subsidy level. However, Premium Motor Spirit (PMS - Petrol) and Household Kerosene (HHK) are still being subsidized despite their unsustainability and great threat to the socio-economic health of the nation (Abu, 2015; Ebingha et al., 2019). The partial removal of the petroleum subsidy in Nigeria in a national broadcast on January 1, 2012, by President Goodluck Jonathan has made it possible for the government to set out an important objective and channel much-needed resources to invest in critical areas of need that will stimulate economic growth and citizen empowerment. To cushion the effect of the partial subsidy removal on Nigerians, especially the poor, the government initiated the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P). The program has eight (8) components, namely; Social Safety Net (SSN), Niger Delta Development, Road infrastructure, Rail Transport, Water and Agriculture, Selected Power Projects, Petroleum and NNPC Projects, and Information and Communication Technology (National Planning Commission, 2011; cited in Saibi, 2016; Peter et al., 2020).

The Social Safety Net (SSN) component of SURE-P has three (3) sub-components, namely Maternal and Child Health Services, Community Services, Women and Youth Empowerment, and Urban Mass Transport. As part of the social safety net strategy, the government deliberately placed the community service, women and youth employment (CS/WYE) components of SURE-P on the priority agenda due to the urgent need to engage the teeming unemployed women and youth in labour-intensive service targeted at the rehabilitation and construction of social and infrastructure (SURE-P Document, 2011). The CS/WYE has three sub-components, including community services scheme and other activities identified by communities, which are required or needed to improve access to public social infrastructures. These services entail engaging unemployed youths on a temporary basis to provide needed labour for the improvement of public services. Community services categories and menu are to include infrastructure in health, education, water and sanitation, environment, water transport, infrastructure, and traffic control (SURE-P Document, 2011).

The study investigated the impact of the Youth Empowerment Component of the Social Safety Net of SURE-P implemented in Calabar Metropolis in the years 2012-2014. While the paper makes a contribution to the existing scholarly literature on the subsidy reinvestment and

empowerment program (SURE-P) and youth employment, the specific thrust is to investigate the youth employment program of SURE-P, such as the Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) and Vocational Skills Training Scheme (VSTS).

Statement of the problem

Youth unemployment is one of the major problems confronting Nigeria. This has deprived the economy of vital assets that would contribute to economic growth and national development. Not only does the problem of unemployment deny the individual the opportunity to earn a living, but it also pushes them towards poverty, which has adverse effects on economic growth. Heavy social costs are also involved; the community is deprived in many ways when its workers and their families suffer repeated or prolonged joblessness. The individuals and families involved are hurt, not alone in terms of depressed living standards but by damage to the dignity of the human spirit, which is a matter of great concern in a free, democratic society (Abu, 2015).

Youth unemployment was not, in fact, a problem in traditional African society per se. In traditional African society, 75 per cent of the population engaged in agriculture, while the remaining 25 percent engaged in petty trading, blacksmithing, goldsmithing, moulding, craft, etc., to earn a living. Unemployment as a problem is a feature of the colonial and post-colonial African economy characterized by the massive exodus of people, especially rural dwellers, from agriculture to white and blue-collar jobs created by the colonial situation (Jose, 1979; Cited in Ugal, Nwagbara & Uyang, 2011; Adeniyi et al, 2019).

The alarming rate of youth unemployment has prompted the introduction of various measures and strategies, such as poverty alleviation programs like, National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Industrial Training Fund (ITF), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure, by several past military and civilian regimes (Ukwayi et al, 2018). These measures and strategies seem to have achieved little or no positive outcome, despite the implementation of some of these laudable programs in Nigeria. It is disheartening to state that this catastrophic phenomenon has continued unabated. Rather than youth unemployment reduction, there is an upsurge in this social malaise (Ugal, Nwagbara & Uyang, 2011; Saibi, 2016). The country has recorded about 40 million unemployed people, majority of whom are youths. To a responsive and focused government, the deteriorating unemployment situation in Nigeria should be a source of worry, especially with the attendant dislocation, exemplified by a high crime rate and youth restiveness (Dele et al, 2009; cited in Saibi, 2016; Ugal, Nwagbara & Uyang, 2011).

Objectives of the study

The broad objective of the study was to examine Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) and youth employment in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State. The specific objectives were to:

1. Examine the relationship between Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) and youth employment in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State.
2. Determine the relationship between Vocational Skills Training Scheme (VSTS) and youth employment in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State.

Statement of hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) and youth employment in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State.
2. Vocational Skills Training Scheme (VSTS) has no significant relationship with youth employment in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State.

Literature review

Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) of Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) and Youth Employment

The initiation of the graduate internship scheme through the reinvestment of subsidy funds was meant to reduce youth unemployment. This scheme is part of the Social Safety Net component of the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P). The ultimate goal is to reduce unemployment among graduates and stimulate economic growth as part of the priority transformation agenda of the administration, while also enhancing opportunities towards the attainment of Vision 2020 (Nwosu & Ugwuera, 2014; Okoi et al, 2022). The Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) was inaugurated in October 2012 to create an opportunity for graduates to be attached to firms where they could work for a year and enjoy a monthly stipend of N18,000. Such interns can use the opportunity to gain experience and enhance their employability. The program had over 83,000 beneficiaries, which exceeded the threshold of N50,000 allotted for the scheme. The objectives of the program are to enhance the employability of up to N50,000 graduates through internship programs, reduce the vulnerability of unemployed graduates, and build a manpower base towards attaining national development. The GIS program cost the nation N900 million monthly (Nwosu & Ugwuera, 2014; Okpa et al, 2022).

According to Idris (2014), the Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) was introduced as a youth empowerment strategy in collaboration with the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) to provide a window for building skills and enhancing employability. He maintained that the program seeks to provide unemployed graduate youths with job apprenticeship opportunities that would expose them to skills and experiences relevant to the current labour market and enhance their employability. Since January 2012, the government had to ensure that the proceeds of the subsidy funds are applied to empower youths within the context of the social safety program (Anuforo, 2013; cited in Idris, 2014; Okpa, 2022).

Abu (2015) documented that SURE-P is the GIS, which offers unemployed graduates the opportunity to undergo a one-year internship in firms, banks, ministries, government departments, and agencies, as well as in small and medium enterprises (SMEs), relevant to beneficiaries' disciplines. He argued that the purpose of GIS is to help beneficiaries acquire the appropriate skills and practical knowledge for the job market. He argued further that about N50,000 graduates were selected for the first phase of the scheme out of some N85,000 applicants, and around 2000 firms expressed interest in hosting graduates, although only 293 firms were approved.

The Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) is a program advertised whereby companies (SMEs and large organizations) were invited to participate in this voluntary program. Under this program, successful candidates were placed in eligible institutions where there is a need for training for a period of one year. And that during this period, the program pays a stipend to the candidate. Another advantage provided by the internship program is the acquisition of sufficient experience by the interns to enable them to establish their own enterprise at the end of the internship and form peer networks for empowering other unemployed graduates. Another gainful aspect of the graduate internship is the prospect for incentives to companies, in the form of tax rebates, especially for SMEs willing to retain interns after the period of internship. He concluded that the short duration of the internship and high prospects for job creation place it under short-term measures (Saibi, 2016).

Vocational Skills Training Scheme (VSTS) of Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) and Youth Employment

According to Idris (2014), in order to achieve a viable economy, youths must possess sufficient knowledge and vocational skills to confront the challenges of peace, stability, and development. Chizoba (2011), as cited in Idris (2014), described vocational skill training and acquisition as a process that equips individuals with marketable skills for empowerment and helps others update their job skills and receive instruction in vocational and technical education. He argued that for Nigerian youths to steer clear of maladjusted behaviors and acts capable of impeding the country's development, they must receive sound education and be empowered with employable vocational skills (Idris, 2014). Akpama, Esang, Asor & Osang (2011), as cited in Ekong and Ekong (2016), observed that the acquisition of vocational skills leads to a significant reduction in poverty and increased employability among youth who participate in skills acquisition programs. Given Nigeria's fast transition into a predominantly youthful society with a high rate of unemployment, it is imperative to train the youth in entrepreneurship skills in technical vocational education and training to address the alarming proportions of unemployment (Amadi & Abdullahi, 2012; cited in Ekong & Ekong, 2016). According to Uloko and Ejinkonye (2010), when youths are empowered through the acquisition of vocational skills, there is a high possibility that they will use these skills to create employment and avenues for wealth.

The Federal Government, through the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), developed a Technical, Vocational Education, and Training (TVET) program to be managed by a project implementation unit (PIU) in the Ministry of Labour and Productivity. The goal of this initiative is to foster wealth creation and reduce youth unemployment. The PIU managed the implementation of the TVET program, which has the mandate to invest in the development of vocational and technical education in Nigeria. This scheme is expected to stimulate the economic growth needed as part of the transformation agenda of the administration while also enhancing opportunities towards the attainment of Vision 20:20 (SURE-P Technical Vocational Education Training Programme, 2012; cited in Nwosu & Ugwuera, 2014). The scheme has the mandate to equip young Nigerians with skills in three broad areas: vocational/technical skills, life skills, and entrepreneurship. It aims to bridge the demand gaps in various industry areas, including ICT/Telecoms, creative sectors (e.g., movies, music, fashion, etc.), hospitality and tourism, agribusiness, mass housing/construction, artisans, marine, oil and gas, and mechanical fabrication/woodwork (Nwosu & Ugwuera, 2014). Saibi (2016) maintained that the vocational skills training scheme (VSTS) targets unskilled, semi-skilled, and skilled youths willing to be trained in specific trades for a given period to acquire sufficient skills to establish their own enterprises, with prospects for employing others.

Theoretical framework

The institutional theory (IT)

The roots of institutional theory run richly through the formative years of the social sciences, enlisting and incorporating the creative insights of scholars ranging from Marx and Weber, Cooley and Mead, to Veblen and Commons. Much of the postulation carried out at the end of the nineteenth and twentieth century was submerged under the onslaught of neo-classical theory but has experienced a remarkable revitalization. Contemporary IT has captured the attention of a wide range of scholars across social sciences and is employed to examine systems ranging from micro interpersonal interactions to the macro global framework. The institutional theory was propounded by Scott in 2001. The justification for the choice of this theory is hinged on the fact that the institutional theory will clearly identify the institutional setup of youth employment within which the Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State SURE-P policy is being implemented and how the institutional characteristics of Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State ministries

and agencies and the local government impact on policy output, which is a unique quality of the institutional theory.

Consequently, institutions can either empower or restrain the actor's behaviour, thereby making them more or less capable of operating according to the rules. In youth employment creation, this implies that the actor's behaviour towards implementing SURE-P programs on youth employment can influence employability towards success or failure. In this case, Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State Ministries, Agencies, and local governments as institutions can either empower or restrain the behaviour of their employees towards implementing the SURE-P, and this can influence employment or employability, leading to its success or failure in the state.

In spite of the criticisms of the IT by scholars, it still provides a better framework for understanding institutional internal operations and linkages in Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State Ministries, Agencies, and the local government in regard to youth employment and job creation. In his approach to institutions, Scott identified three main elements or pillars of institutions. These are the regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive, which support and form the basis for distinguishing the characteristics of institutions.

Relevance of the theory

The IT by Scott (2001) provides insight into what an organization or institution should be as a structure and how its regulatory, normative, and cultural-cognitive functions help in the implementation of the Graduate Internship Scheme and vocational skills training programs, leading to empowerment, employment, and job creation among youths. In this case, the SURE - P illustrates its relevance in the study of youth employment in the Calabar metropolis of Cross River State. In reality, the elements of institutional regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive are not clearly aligned, and it is likely that one element may undermine the effect of the other.

The normative element explains how ministries, agencies, and local governments as institutions in the Calabar metropolis of Cross River state define their goals and objectives, as well as the best way to implement the SURE Policy in the metropolis. It also describes how their actions must be in line with the laws establishing it. Consequently, this element identifies how things should be done by the ministries, agencies, and the local government, defining legitimate means to pursue their objectives on empowerment, leading to youth employment and job creation in the Calabar metropolis and the state in general.

Moreover, the cultural-cognitive element or pillar stresses the cultural assumptions of 'the way we do these things.' In this case, the element provides a better understanding of the institutional way and manner in which the ministries, agencies, and the local governments implemented youth employment and empowerment programs in the Calabar metropolis. If the way and manner they implemented these programs seem unsuccessful, the cultural-cognitive element suggests that the way things are done must be changed to address the present realities on the ground, achieving an efficient and effective program implementation on empowerment, leading to youth employment in the Calabar metropolis. This element further assists the ministries, agencies, and local governments in understanding how people's culture influences unemployment and empowerment in the Calabar metropolis and beyond."

Methodology

This was a survey study, and the questionnaire served as the major instrument for data collection. The study utilized a structured questionnaire with both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The closed-ended questions were meticulously crafted to elicit information conducive to easy collation and the testing of hypotheses. The few open-ended questions were designed to enable

respondents to express themselves freely on the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE P) and youth employment.

The study took place in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State. The sample size for this study comprised 400 respondents (males and females), and the selection of the sample was carried out through simple random sampling. To ensure randomization, the balloting method was employed to select ten (10) areas in Calabar Metropolis. In this method, the names of various areas in Calabar Metropolis were written on a ballot paper. Forty respondents were systematically selected from each area, forming a total of four hundred (400) respondents for the study. The sample size was calculated based on the formula developed and popularized by Taro Yamane (1967).

A combination of primary and secondary sources of data was used in the study. The primary source of data was obtained from structured questionnaires, while the secondary source of data included information obtained from internet materials, textbooks, journals, etc. The data obtained through the questionnaires were analysed using the chi-square statistical tool at a 0.05 level of significance. The collected data were thoroughly checked to ensure that all items in each questionnaire were responded to; consequently, responses were edited, coded, and analysed using appropriate statistical methods.

Findings

Data presentation and discussion of findings

The findings from the field were presented and discussed below.

Table 1
Distribution of respondents' socio-demographic data

Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Sex		
Male	224	56
Female	176	44
Total	400	100
Age		
Under 20 years	38	9.60
20-30	255	63.75
31-40	102	25.50
41 and above	5	1.25
Total	400	100
Education background		
Non formal education	44	11
Primary	69	17.25
Secondary	81	20.25
Tertiary	206	51.50
Total	400	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2018.

The result in table 1 shows that 224 (56%) of the total respondents were male, while 176 (44%) were females. This shows that majority of the respondents were male. This is explained by the fact that males were more than females in the sample and they were readily available to fill the questionnaires than females.

For age, it shows that 38 respondents (9.50%) were below 20 years, 255 respondents (63.75%) were between age bracket of 20-30, 102 respondents (25.50%) were between age bracket of 31-40, while 5 respondents (1.25%) were age 41 and above. This implies that age 20-30 were more in the sample and participated in the study. In educational background, the result shows that 44 respondents (11%) had no formal education, 69 respondents (17.25%) only attained primary education, 81 respondents (20.25%) attained secondary while 206 respondents (51.50%) attained tertiary education. This implies that both educated and uneducated people were involved in the study and participated in SURE-P programme.

Results

Hypothesis one

H₀: There is no significant relationship between Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) and Youth employment in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State

H_i: There is a significant relationship between Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) and Youth employment in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State

To test this hypothesis, chi-square statistical analysis was used in testing the variables.

Table 2

Chi-square (χ^2) response distribution of the relationship between Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) and youth employment in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State

Variables	Responses					X ² value
	SA	A	D	SD	Total	
Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS)	70(72.8)	145(120.4)	5(19.6)	4(11.2)	224	46.91
Youth employment	60(57.2)	70(94.6)	30(15.4)	16(8.8)	176	
Total	130	215	35	20	400	

Source: fieldwork, 2018.

Results:

Level of significance = 0.05

Degree of freedom = 3

Critical value = 7.81

Calculated value = 46.91

From the analysis, the calculated χ^2 value 46.91 which was tested in comparison with critical table value 7.81 at 0.05 level of significance with the degree of freedom of three (3). The calculated χ^2 value was greater than the critical values, hence, the result was statistically significant (there is a significant relationship between Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) and youth employment in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State).

Hypothesis two

H₀: Vocational skills training scheme (VSTS) has no significant relationship with youth employment in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State.

Hi: Vocational skills training scheme (VSTS) has a significant relationship with youth employment in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State.

To test this hypothesis, chi-square statistical analysis was used in testing the variables.

Table 3

Chi-square (χ^2) response distribution of the relationship between vocational skills training scheme (VSTS) and youth employment in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State

Variables	Responses					X ² value
	SA	A	D	SD	Total	
Vocational Skill Training Scheme (VSTS)	160(128.8)	59(78.4)	3(12.88)	2(39.2)	224	81.81
Youth employment	70(101.2)	81(61.6)	20(10.12)	5(3.08)	176	
Total	230	140	23	7	400	

Source: fieldwork, 2018.

Results:

Level of significance = 0.05

Degree of freedom = 3

Critical value = 7.81

Calculated value = 81.81

From the analysis, the calculated χ^2 value 81.81 which was tested in comparison with critical table value 7.81 at 0.05 level of significance with the degree of freedom of three (3). The calculated χ^2 value was greater than the critical values, hence, the result was statistically significant (there is a significant relationship between Vocational Skills Training Scheme (VSTS) and youth employment in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State).

Discussion

Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) and youth employment

From the study, the result in table 2 shows that there is a significant relationship between Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) and youth empowerment. This view is supported by Nwosu and Ugwuera (2014) who contend that the ultimate goal of SURE-P is to reduce unemployment among graduates and stimulate economic growth. The result is also supported by Idris (2014) who maintained that Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) was introduced as a youth empowerment strategy in collaboration with Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) to provide window for building skills and enhancing employability.

Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) is a veritable means to achieving experiential learning by the interns. Internship generally and Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) in particular have many advantages ranging from gaining experience and obtaining career-related direction. Intern learns valuable skills which might not be taught or acquired within the classroom setting and this enhances his or her employability.

Vocational Skills Training (VSTS) and youth employment

The result in table 3 rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternate hypothesis. The result shows that there is a significant relationship between Vocational Skills Training Scheme (VSTS) and youth employment. Therefore, the result is supported by Akpama et al (2011) cited in Ekong and Ekong (2016), they observed that acquisition of vocational skills leads to a significant reduction of poverty and increased employability among youths who participated on skills acquisition programmes. The result is consistent with the Saibi (2016) who maintained that Vocational Skills Training Scheme (VSTS) was targeted at the unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled youths, who were willing to be trained in specific trades for a given period, to acquire sufficient skills for establishing their own enterprises, with prospects for employing others.

Vocational Skills Training (VSTS) prepare and equip the youths with appropriate skills that can be beneficial to them in the future. Skills acquired through vocational training is capable of ensuring value-orientation among the youths and transforming them into creation of wealth and employment rather than job seekers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the data presented and analysed as well as the hypotheses tested, the study concluded that SURE-P is an effective policy/programme of empowering the youths as well as creating employability and job creation.

From the foregoing, this study concludes with the following recommendations;

1. Government should provide conducive environment for investors to invest to enable the utilization of the skilled graduates provided by the graduate internship scheme of the SURE-P. The government should invest in infrastructure development to enhance the overall business ecosystem. Accessible transportation, reliable energy sources, and robust communication networks are essential components that not only attract investors but also facilitate the smooth functioning of businesses. By prioritizing infrastructure development, the government demonstrates its commitment to supporting economic activities, which, in turn, benefits graduates seeking employment opportunities through initiatives like the SURE-P Graduate Internship Scheme.
2. The present administration should revamp the SURE-P programme and adequately fund it to increase the number of participants in order to create more employability and jobs. This can be achieved by a meticulous review and refinement of the existing framework of the SURE-P program. The administration should conduct a thorough assessment of the program's strengths and weaknesses, by identifying areas for improvement and streamlining processes to ensure maximum efficiency. This may involve enhancing the program's outreach, simplifying application procedures, and incorporating feedback mechanisms to continuously adapt to the evolving needs of participants. The administration should consider exploring diverse funding sources, including public-private partnerships and international collaborations, to bolster the financial reservoirs of the SURE-P program. By engaging with the private sector and leveraging external support, the government can not only diversify funding streams but also tap into valuable expertise and resources that can contribute to the program's effectiveness.
3. The vocational skills training centres should be well equipped with modern tools, equipment and machines for the training of youths to be abreast with the current technology. In order to bridge the gap between traditional skill sets and contemporary technological advancements, these training centers must prioritize the incorporation of

cutting-edge tools and equipment. This includes the integration of the latest machinery and technology used in various industries, from manufacturing to information technology. By doing so, these centers can offer a comprehensive learning experience that prepares the youth for the challenges of a rapidly changing professional landscape.

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