

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES FOR YOUTH ON TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN ELEME LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examined problems and prospects of Empowerment Programmes for Youths in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State. The study adopted the descriptive survey. The population of the study comprises 3000 registered members of youth organizations in the five (5) randomly sampled communities in Eleme. A 25% proportionate sampling of the registered members of the community administration association was applied to realize a sample size of 750. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire tagged 'Empowerment Programme on Technical and Vocational Training Questionnaire' (EPTVTQ). The instrument was face-validated by two experts in measurement and evaluation, University of Port Harcourt. The test-retest method was adopted to determine a reliability coefficient of the instrument using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Method. A reliability index of 0.76 was obtained. Three research questions were posted. They were analyzed with weight mean and standard deviation. The study revealed that, government failure to provide equipment, machines, employing graduates of technical skills and expensive nature of technical workshops are factors discouraging Eleme Youths participation in empowerment programmes. It also revealed that engaging qualified technical instructors, provision of credit facilities, employment opportunities, review of school curriculum and regular power supply were strategies encouraging Eleme Youths participation in empowerment programmes. The findings revealed that poor implementation, certificates not honoured, technical instructors are not competent and irregular in class are views of trainees towards empowerment programmes in Eleme. Based on the findings, it was recommended that government should provide credit facilities, employment opportunities for graduates of this programmes, constitute monitoring team to checkmate instructors and trainees, review school curriculum and ensure full implementation of the programmes.

Keywords: *Youth Empowerment Programme, Technical and Vocational Training.*

INTRODUCTION

Youth is the time of life between childhood and adulthood (maturity). When carrying out its youth strategy, UNESCO uses different definitions of youth depending on the content. For activities at international or at regional level, such as the African Youth Forum, UNESCO uses the United Nation Universal definition. The UN, for statistical consistency across regions, defines “Youth” as those person between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definition by member states UNESCO (2013) youth is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood’s independence and awareness of our interdependence as members of a community, youth is a more fluid category than a fixed age-group. For activities at the national level, for example, when implementing a local community youth programme, ‘youth’ may be understood in a more flexible manner. UNESCO will then adopt the definition of “youth” as used by a particular member state. It can be based for instance on the definition given in the African Youth chapter where “youth” mean every person between the ages of 15 and 35 years (UNESCO, 2013).

The Nigerian youth policy of 1983, revised 1989 and 2007 defined youth as comprising all Nigerians between the ages of 12 and 30 years. They are potentially and actually the greatest investment for a country’s development. Kakiri (2005) stated that the Obasanjo–led government came up with the NDDC empowerment programme for youth, not only as an attempt to meet their socio-economic needs, but basically to contain the violent reactions of the youth which has found expression in restiveness, bloody clashes, and ugly of bloodletting. Thus, the Federal Government of Nigeria responded by an interventionist youth development programme called Niger Delta Empowerment Programme for Youth with headquarters in Port Harcourt, the capital of Rivers State. Adebayor (2014) defines empowerment as a multidimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power in people for use in their own lives, their communities and in their society, by acting on issues they define as important. Akpan (2014) identify the objectives of empowerment as support activities aimed at improving employment opportunities for trained graduates, equip target group with marketable skills and put in place mechanism that will improve future sustainability of Vocational Technical Centers (VTC). Czuba (2013) asserted that empowerment helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power in people to use resources in their own lives, their communities and in their society to act on issues they define as important. The objectives of empowering youths according to Botswana core welfare indicators survey (2009, 2010) are to: enable them to; (1) develop good work ethics, (2) gain entrepreneurship experience, (3) attain employment readiness, (4) develop skills and competencies that will enable them to make positive contribution to the development of the communities, (5) foster the development of behavioral changes, and (6) instill some level of responsibility and accountability in them; drawing on their creativity and energy.

McLean and David (2009) asserted that technical and Vocational Training is concerned with the acquisition of knowledge and skills for the world of work to increase opportunities for

productive empowerment and socio-economic development in knowledge economics and rapidly changing work environment.

Vocational/technical education is a skills training programme recognized all over the world for its potential for equipping youths and unemployed adults for self-employment, employment creation and poverty reduction as well as satisfying the needs of the society (Ezenwafor, 2015). Umar (2010) while appraising the skills content of the technical and vocational training programme listed the skills acquisition as including vulcanizing, painting, weaving, leather work, electronic repair, solar panel installation, masonry, tailoring/knitting, plumbing, auto-mechanic, carpentry, metalwork, welding, air conditioning, telecommunication repairs and building technology.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Empowerment programmes had in recent times contributed to the supply of skills manpower development in the society. Waiter (2014) observed that, successive government had deemed it fit in encouraging empowerment programmes based on technical and vocational training with the sole aim of boosting skills trade among youths in Rivers State. Despite the State Government's efforts towards empowering youths into various skills trade, programmes had consistently suffered setback and failed in providing positive responses which had resulted in lacking adequate skills manpower in the street of Eleme. Ngofa (2015) asserted that most of the empowerment programmes carried out in Eleme failed to complete its target duration of training based on poor turn up of participates. Osaronwi (2012) observed that the number of youths initially registered for the programme drastically reduced at the end of the 6 months designed for the training. He emphasized that youths registered for the empowerment programme gradually withdrew on weekly basis making it unsuccessful.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine problems and prospects of empowerment programmes for youths on technical and vocational training in Eleme Local Government Area. In specific term, the study will achieve the following objectives.

- i) Ascertain the factors discouraging Eleme Youths participation in empowerment programmes.
- ii) Determine strategies encouraging Eleme Youths participation in empowerment programmes.
- iii) Find out the view of trainees towards empowerment programmes in Eleme.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions for the study are as follows:

- i) What factors discourage Eleme Youths' participation in empowerment programme based in technical and vocational training?
- ii) What strategies encourage Eleme Youths' participation in empowerment programme.
- iii) What is the view of trainees towards empowerment programmes in Eleme?

METHOD

This study is a descriptive survey. The choice of this design is based on the fact that it would enable the researcher to collect and analyze data as they are without any manipulation. According to Ali (2006), this type of research design involve describing events as they are without any manipulation of what caused the events or what is being observed. The population of the study comprises 3000 registered members of youths organizations in the five randomly sampled communities (Alode, Alesa, Ebubu, Akpajo, Ogale) out of the ten communities that made up of Eleme Local Government Area. A 25% proportionate sampling of the registered members of the community administrations was applied to realize a sample size of 750. An instrument tagged; Empowerment Programme Based on Technical and Vocational Training Questionnaire (EPTVTQ) was used to gather data. The instrument was constructed by the researcher and was face-validated by two experts in educational measurement and evaluation in University of Port Harcourt. The reliability of the instrument was established using test-retest method with Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis which yield an index of 0.76. This value is at an acceptable level according to Linn and Gronlund (2005). Data were analyzed using item mean rating and standard deviation, the respondents were asked to rate the empowerment programmes based on technical and vocational training on a 5 – point likert scale:

Strongly Agree (SA)	5 Points
Agree (A)	4 Points
Strongly Disagree (SD)	3 Points
Disagree (D)	2 Points
Undecided (U)	1 Point

DECISION RULE

The decision rule is that where the calculated mean is less than the criterion mean (3.50), the responses were rejected, but where the calculated mean is equal or greater than the criterion mean, it was accepted.

RESULTS

The researcher used the finding from the study presented based on the research questions.

RESEARCH QUESTION1: What factors discouraging Eleme youths participation in youth empowerment programme based on technical and vocational training.

Table 1: Factors discouraging Eleme youth's participation in empowerment programmes.

S/No	Factors discouraging Eleme youths participation in empowerment programmes	Mean Response	SD	Remark
1	Youths' poor financial status.	4.34	0.96	Accepted
2	Government failure to provide equipment and machines.	4.18	1.08	Accepted
3	Graduates of technical skills are not employed in industries.	3.78	1.34	Accepted
4	Residents patronized quack rather than trained technician.	3.90	1.27	Accepted
5	Technical workshop is expensive to establish.	3.97	0.18	Accepted

Table 1 above shows the factors discouraging Eleme Youths participation in empowerment programmes based on technical and vocational training. The options that youths' poor financial status, government failure to provide equipment and machines, graduates of technical skills not employed in industries, residents patronized quacks rather than trained technicians and that technical workshops are expensive to establish were accepted by the respondents. Each of their means – 4.34, 4.18, 3.78, 3.90 and 3.97 respectively are greater than 3.5 the criterion mean.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

What strategies encourage Eleme youths' participation in empowerment programmes?

Table 4.2: Strategies encouraging Eleme youths' participation in empowerment programmes.

S/No	Strategies encouraging Eleme youths participation in empowerment programmes	Mean Response	SD	Remark
6	Engaging qualified technical instructors.	4.05	0.18	Accepted
7	Government provides credit facilities.	3.63	1.52	Accepted
8	Creating employment opportunities for technicians in government parastatals	3.60	1.41	Accepted
9	Reviewing school curriculum to emphasize technical and vocational training to school graduates.	3.67	1.42	Accepted
10	Regular power supply.	3.51	1.43	Accepted

From the data presentation on the strategies encouraging Eleme Youths' participation in empowerment programmes in table 2 above, it shows that engaging qualified technical instructors, provision of credit facilities, employment opportunities for technicians in government parastatals, review school curriculum emphasizing technical and vocational training for school graduates and regular power supply were accepted by the respondents. Each of their means includes 4.05, 3.63, 3.60, 3.67 and 3.5 respectively are greater than 3.5 – the criterion mean.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3: What is the view of trainees towards empowerment programme in Eleme Local Government Area?

Table 4.2: View of trainees towards empowerment programme in Eleme Local Government Area.

S/No	Views of trainees towards empowerment programmes in Eleme	Mean Response	SD	Remark
11	For non graduates and less vulnerable in the society.	3.73	1.34	Accepted
12	Empowerment programmes receives poor implementation.	3.51	1.41	Accepted
13	Substandard materials are used during training.	3.51	1.38	Accepted
14	Certificates of empowerment programmes are not honoured in government ministries and industries.	3.75	1.17	Accepted
15	Technical instructors are not competent and irregular in class.	3.66	1.27	Accepted

Table 3 shows that the options which suggest that empowerment programmes are meant for non-graduates and vulnerable in the society, that the programme receives poor implementation, that substandard materials are used during the training, that certificates awarded to the graduates of empowerment programmes are not relevant in government parastatals, and that technical instructors used are not competent and regular in class were accepted by the respondents. Each of their means include 3.73, 3.51, 3.51, 3.75 and 3.66 respectively are greater than 3.5 – the criterion mean.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The discussion of the findings strictly followed the three research questions raised in the study. The findings revealed that youths' poor financial status, government failure to provide equipment and machines, graduates of technical skills not employ in industries, resident patronized quack rather than trained technicians and expensive nature of technicians workshops are the stringent factors discouraging Eleme youths participation in empowerment programmes based in technical and vocational training. The study further showed that the outcome is the same to the view of Ogbonna (2002) and Ogunu (2000) who stated that the huge finance required in establishing technical workshop discourages youths' participation in empowerment programmes. As Nwachukwu (2014) observed that government failure to provide equipment and machines on completion of the programmes discourages most youths' participation in empowerment programmes.

The findings further revealed that engaging qualified technical instructors during the training, provision of credit facilities, employing technicians in the industries, review school curriculum emphasizing technical and vocational training for school graduates, enacting laws

mandating parastatals and industries to employ technician and regular power supply are strategies encouraging Eleme youths participation in empowerment programmes based in technical and vocational training. Okafor (2013) agrees with this finding as he stated that adequate credit facilities and other capital incentives were the most encouraging factors of youths' participation in empowerment programmes.

The respondents unanimously accepted that empowerment programmes are meant for non graduates and vulnerable in the society, received poor implementation, used substandard materials, derecognize certificates, incompetent instructors engaged for the training are the view of trainees towards empowerment programme. The finding is in collaboration with Ekanem (2002) who affirmed that government lack the required requisite staff both in administration, facilities and instructional personnel for the implementation of the laudable objectives of the programme. Kakiri and Torubeli (2015) stated that trainees in the programme have not received empowerment proportionate to the objective of the programme, the implementation of the programme was quite poor especially in relation to use of facilities.

CONCLUSION

The economy improvement of certain geographical zone or state depends mainly on the sizeable workforce empowered and employed in the industries and parastatals in the society. A good and effective empowerment programmes is a sure means of eradicating poverty, youth restiveness, cultism and stealing from the society. Until constraints militating against youths' empowerment programmes are completely removed, there cannot be a sustainable development in technical and vocational training in Eleme Local Government Area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made;

- 1) The government should provide standard equipment and machines, enabling environment for graduates' employment opportunities in the ministries and parastatals and provide a take-off grant for graduates.
- 2) The government should constitute monitoring team that will monitor the instructors and trainees during the exercise.
- 3) The government should review school curriculum emphasizing technical and vocational training to school graduates, provides credits facilities for graduates and ensure regular power supply in the society.

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