

Case Study

The Place of Skills Acquisition in Resolving the Social Problems of Unemployment in Rivers State. A Case Study of Rivers State Ministry of Women Affairs Skills Acquisition Graduates

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Abstract: The study investigated the role of skills acquisition in resolving the social problems of unemployment in Rivers State. The population of the study consists of all skills acquisition graduates of Rivers State ministry of women affairs, a sample of 50 skills acquisition graduates in the ministry was sampled using stratified random sampling technique. The questionnaire was structured in the likert scale of four (4) points, ranging from strongly agreed to strongly disagreed. The simple percentage statistical tool was employed for data analysis. The result of the findings showed that majority of the people had a positive opinion towards skills acquisition and it was recommended that government should carry out proper sensitization programmes in order to re-orientate the minds of the youths towards skills acquisition programmes.

Key Words: skills acquisition, collar jobs, women affairs, unemployment and empowerment.

Introduction

In third world countries like Nigeria, the importance of acquiring skills in order to resolve the social problems of unemployment cannot be emphasized. When one considers the rate at which unemployment is eating deep into the lives of young graduates like locust, canker worms and caterpillar. Again the traditional practices and religious practices that were adhered to strictly by the third world countries like Nigeria which Rivers State is a part of, have overtime led to feminized poverty amongst the women folk.

The question one may be forced to ask is “what is skills and what is skills acquisition?” skills are the proficiency, expertise and ability to acquire a type of craft requiring specialist training. To this end, it will not be an over statement to say skills acquisition is a programme made up of various kinds of skills to provide basic and special training/skills and capacity building/empowerment for the upliftment and well-being of an individual or a people (Adofu, 2013). Again skills acquisition can be defined as an act of developing proficiency and ability to gain special talent and trade (Oxford Advance Learner’s Dictionary of Contemporary English 4th Edition).

The next question is that should not go rhetorical is the meaning of unemployment. Unemployment is a state of joblessness, being out of job or not being gainfully employed. Suffice it to say that unemployment is an abuse of one’s fundamental rights as stated in the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria as amended (ss34) “right to dignity of human person”. Also as stated and prescribed by the provisions of the public service rules of 2008 and the Gazette of 2009, all of the Federal Government of Nigeria, section 2 item 020205 [(i) b & f] states that “one who is eligible for employment into the federal public service.

(a) Must be between the ages of 18 years -50 years.

- (b) Possess minimum qualification as may be specified from time to including computer literacy.
- (c) That no officer shall be appointed into the federal public services without authorization for appointment from the office of the head of service.

By the above provision of 2008 public service rules, and the Gazette of 2009, one who has proficiency in computer literacy (minimum qualification) which also is an acquired skill through skills acquisition programme (informal education), is qualified to be employed into the public service; to enjoy the full right as stated above in ss34. But many a time it is not always feasible. Seeing that many graduates of various tertiary institutions end up as unemployed after spending years in school, out of frustration indulge in antisocial behaviour such as: arm robbery, cultism, prostitution, smoking, gambling, etc. it is against this back drop that the researcher decided to investigate the issues of unemployment and how it has tackled to large extent through the various skills acquisition programmes of the rivers state ministry of women affairs.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of sensitizing the unemployment who are really interested in bettering their lives outside white collar jobs and combating feminized poverty in Rivers State is much of concern to the government and the society.

In spite of all the necessary provisions made by the Government via various Governmental outfits like: Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (ASSDA) in collaboration with sure p, and of course Rivers State Ministry of women affairs to alleviate the unemployment and the economically deprived from solving the accompanied social problems that goes with unemployment the attitude of those in these states to skills acquisition is very disheartening. This is because our society

sees skills acquisition as a programme meant for school drop outs for the less opportune who were unable to access formal education. The problem of this study therefore is to examine if the Government have done a proper sensitization in Rivers State via the ministry of Women Affairs that skills acquisition is Government approved and one can be self-reliant through skills acquisition and be salvaged from the menace of unemployment in Rivers State.

Objectives Of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the attitude of the unemployment in rivers state towards skills acquisition. But specifically it tends to:

1. To access if acquiring skills will accommodate graduates in rivers state which our schools roll out yearly into self-reliant market instead of unemployment market.
2. To ascertain, if girls who are victims of teenage pregnancy and marriage in rivers state can have a new lease of life through skill acquisition.
3. To ascertain if the less privileged in rivers state like the orphans and disabled can look forward to a brighter future where their dreams and aspirations can be fulfilled through acquiring skills.

Research Questions.

The following research questions were used to guide this study.

1. To what extent has acquiring skills accommodated graduates in rivers state which our schools roll out yearly into self-reliant market instead of employment market?
2. To what extent has skills acquisition been able to alleviate victims of teenage pregnancy and marriage from socio-economic problems in Rivers State?
3. To what extent has skills acquisition been able to prefer solution to giving brighter future; where the hopes and aspirations of the less privileged like: the orphans, widows and disabled in Rivers State been fulfilled?

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is divided into three (3)

- (a) The context scope: the study focuses on the place of skills acquisition among graduates of Rivers States ministry of women affairs.

Types of Empowerment

1. **SKILLS DEVELOPMENT EMPOWERMENT:** skills acquired as ability for individual or group of individuals to acquire more skills for the resolution of a particular situation. Youth empowerment as an act of skill development therefore signifies different creative measures of developing basic ideas through training in skills that are relevant to the social and economic survival of the nation (Ochiagha 1995). The above empowerment strategies are expected to imbibe in the youths the spirit of craftsmanship and entrepreneurship which makes them job creators instead of job seekers.
2. **MARKETING EMPOWERMENT:** marketing of goods and services produced in any economy according to

Magbagbeola (2004) is one of the crucial attributes of a business man. This is because it creates in businessmen or women the ability to convince a customer that what have been produced is the best. Acquisition of adequate marketing skill through training enables entrepreneurs to market their product easily. Effective communication, self-confidence and self-esteem are needed for effective and efficient marketing of goods and services.

3. **YOUTH EMPOWERMENT:** Youth empowerment according to Jimba (2006) involves different ways the youth can be facilitated to cause change in their life style. He maintained that youth empowerment means a way of inculcating into the youths the spirit of transformation of ideas into creativeness. Youth empowerment can also been seen as a means of exposing the youths into skills of training that makes them productive. It encompasses different ways youths can be exposed into different trades that may help them to engage in sustainable paid and self-employment.

In line with the above view, Ogbe (1996) stated that wealth creation acquired through youth empowerment is expected to reverse the structural weakness and imbalances in the economy providing strategic focus and direction and inculcating in the youths the right ethics, discipline, value, hard work, honesty, respect and humility among others.

Historical Background of the Rivers State Ministry of Women Affairs.

The Federal Military Government of Nigeria Decree No.30 of 7th. December 1989 established national commission for women under the then military administration of General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, which was replicated in all the states of the Federations as state Commission for Women. After the general Babangidas administration, on 8th. March 1997, during the international Women's day celebration, succeeding first lady Dr. Mrs. Maryam Abacha announced the upgrading of the commission for women to the status of ministry of women affairs. The actual take-off of the ministry in rivers state was by a letter from the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs No.FMWASD/FSP/17/S.8 of 11th march, 1997.this followed the directives from the Head of State late General Sani Abacha that all States Commission for Women be upgraded.

The ministry function under 6 specialized department: Administration, Women Affairs, planning research &statistics, finance &accounts, economics services under which the Rivlux paint factory operates and Procurement Department.

Objectives of the Rivers State Ministry of Women Affairs

1. To formulate policy that promotes gender equality and empowering women and girls in rivers state.
2. To formulate programmes that will develop the potentials of women and girls to contribute maximally towards the development of the states.
3. To identify problems militating against women and girls, to design and execute programmes and projects to address them.

4. To implement rivers state women empowerment loan scheme such as: the widow's micro loan scheme, the co-operative loan scheme and the macro business loan scheme.
5. To collaborate with government agencies to address societal issues that militates against the advancement of women. E.g. trafficking in women and girls, violence against women, harmful widowhood practices and female genital mutilation, maternal mortality, etc.
6. To provide career guidance and counselling as a means of empowering the female gender.
7. To provide mass literacy involving informal and functional literacy to foster (Female Educational Empowerment and Social Integration of Women).
8. To collaborate with the federal ministry of women affairs and other agencies to organize programme to advance the course of Women in Rivers State. (Rivers State Ministry of Women Affairs In collaboration with ESI).

Young women economic empowerment programme. (YWEEP)

The young women economic empowerment programme is initiatives of the Ministry of Women Affairs aimed at making women to become industrious and self-reliant. This initiative was derived from the quest to raise young women entrepreneurs in Rivers State. This is a challenge the ministry is faced with and it seeks to achieve. (YWEEP publication 2011).

How YWEEP was structured.

YWEEP covered a wide scope of training to include education and skills acquisition.

The programmes which lasted for a period of six months was intensively done and laid out very effective strategies to achieve its set goals. This project plan was broken down into six phases and carried out in the following sequence; Recruiting, Re-orientation, Training, Internship, Empowerment and Management

Each of these phases was carried out by efficient team of consultants and partners which comprises of government, individual consultants and community based organizations (CBOs).

Objectives of Yweep

The main aim of this programme is to develop the capacity of young women by ensuring that they acquire skills that will enable them to fend for themselves and contribute to the economy of Rivers State.

Ginger Farming Training: the trainees for ginger farming were taught how to plant ginger and harvest it. They were also taught how to produce ginger for commercial purposes.

Research Methodology

This chapter is based on the methodology adopted. The methodology is made up of the research design, population of the study, sampling techniques sample size, method of data collection, validity and reliability of instruments,

administration of instrument and method of data analysis.

Stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample size for this study. This technique ensured equal representation of all the variables of the study.

A stratified random sample of 65 skills acquisition graduates was drawn from Rivers State Ministry of Women Affairs and used for the study.

Method of Data Collection

Two sources of data were employed which are; primary and secondary data sources. According to Ezirim (2004), primary data are obtained from original sources to meet a specified problem situation that has been observed and recorded by the researched for the first time to his knowledge. While the secondary data is generated to help in determining development in areas of study or research as well as support findings. The secondary data were mainly collected from academic textbooks, journals, and previous works of others writers on the topic closely related to the present one Ezirim (2004). Structured questionnaire was used to get the required information for this study. The respondents were asked similar questions in the same order.

Administration of instrument.

The researcher used questionnaire (s) in collecting data for the study, a questionnaire is an instrument or a written document given to people asking them questions on what they think about a particular phenomenon (Chinedu, 2013).

The questionnaire was divided into two sections, A and B. Section A consist of personal data such as Name, State of origin, L.G.A., marital status. Educational qualification and skill acquired. Section B was structured in the likert scale ranging from agreed to strongly disagree. The researcher administrated 65 copies of the instruments "skill acquisition benefits scale (SABS)", out of which 55 were returned. 50 were useful and 5 were not useful after proper examination.

The researcher developed good rapport with the respondents and explained the need for honest response to the items of instruments. Copies of the instruments "skills acquisition benefits scale " (SABS) was directly administered to the respondents respectively through the respondents assistant (skill acquisition graduate) who was individually instructed on the questionnaire, the retrieval of the 55 copies of the instruments was done by the researcher after completion of the instrument by the respondents.

Method of data analysis

Simple percentage and descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the information gathered from the research questions.

Data Analysis and Interpretation of Results.

Research question one:

To what extent has acquiring skills accommodated graduates in rivers state which our schools roll out yearly into self-reliant market instead of unemployment market?

Table 1.

Percentage classification of skills acquisition as accommodating graduates in rivers state which our schools roll

out yearly into self-reliant market instead of unemployment.

Skill acquisition	No. of respondents	percentage
Positive	40	80%
Negative	10	20%
total	50	100%

Source: fieldwork 2019

Table 1 above shows that 40 representing 80% of the respondents had positive opinion towards skills acquisition. While 10 representing 20% of the respondent had negative opinion towards skill acquisition as accommodating graduates in Rivers State which our schools roll out yearly into self-reliant market instead of unemployment markets.

Research questions two.

To what extent has skill acquisition been able to alleviate victims of teenage pregnancy and marriage from socio-economic problems in Rivers State?

Table 2

Percentage classification of skills acquisition as been able to alleviate victims of teenage pregnancy and marriage from socio-economic problems in rivers state based on the opinion of rivers state ministry of women affairs skill acquisition graduates.

Skill acquisition	No. of respondents	percentage
Positive	48	96
Negative	2	4
total	50	100

Source: field work 2019

Table 2 above shows that 48 representing 96% of the respondent had positive opinion towards skill acquisition as the solution to alleviating victims of teenage pregnancy and marriage from socio-economic problem in rivers state. 2 respondents representing 4% of the respondents had negative opinion towards skills acquisition as the solution to alleviating victims of teenage pregnancy and marriage from socio-economic problems in rivers state. This means that majority of the skills acquisition graduates of the Rivers State Ministry of Women Affairs had positive opinion towards skills acquisition as the solution to alleviating victims of teenage pregnancy and marriage from socio-economic problems in Rivers State.

Research questions three.

To what extent has skills acquisition been able to prefer solution to giving a brighter future? Where the hopes and aspirations of the less privileged like: the orphans, widows and disabled in Rivers State been fulfilled?

Table3.

Percentage classification of skills acquisition been able to prefer solution to giving a brighter future; where the hopes and aspirations of the less privileged like: the orphans, widows and disabled in Rivers state been fulfilled based on the opinion of Rivers State Ministry of Women Affairs Skills Acquisition Graduates.

Skill acquisition	No. of respondents	percentage
Positive	35	70
Negative	15	30
total	50	100

Source: fieldwork 2019

Table 3 above shows that 35 representing 70% of the respondents had positive opinion that skills acquisition is able to prefer solution to giving a brighter future; where the hopes and aspirations of the less privileged like: the orphans, widows and disabled in Rivers State will be fulfilled, while 15 representing 30% of the respondents had negative opinion towards skills acquisition as the solution to been able to prefer solution to giving a brighter future; where the hopes and aspirations of the less privileged like: the orphans, widows and disabled in Rivers State will be fulfilled.

Discussion of Findings

Research questions one (1)

To what extent has an acquiring skills accommodation graduate in rivers state which our schools roll out by yearly into self-reliant market instead of unemployment market?

From the result of the analysis, 80% of the respondents had positive opinion towards skills acquisition while 20% of the respondents had negative opinion towards skills acquisition.

The outcome of the analysis revealed the extent to which skills acquisition can accommodate graduates which our schools roll out yearly into self-reliant market instead of unemployment market. This is in line with the assertion of Ezeji and Okorie (1999), "while stressing the important of skill acquisition in national growth, emphatically contended, "Nigeria social and economic problems will be drastically reduced if people are given adequate vocational training in skills, raw materials, machineries and equipment".

Research question two (2)

To what extent has skill acquisition been also to alleviate victims of teenage pregnancy and marriage from socio-economic problems in rivers state? From the analysis, the result revealed that 96% of the respondents had positive opinion towards skills acquisition as the solution alleviating victims of teenage pregnancy and marriage form socio-economic problems, while 4% of the respondents had negative opinion towards skills acquisition. The outcome of the analysis revealed that skills acquisition is the solution to alleviating victims of teenage pregnancy and marriage from socio-economic problems. This is in line with the publication of the young women economic empowerment programme (2011). The ministry was empowering the socially disadvantage young women whose abilities are not fully taped. The essence of the programme is to educate women and engage them with productive and viable skills. The ministry also placed them on six months internship in reputable companies.

Recommendations

The following were recommended:

1. That the government should carry out proper sensitization programme in order to re-orientate the minds of the youth/women toward skills acquisition programme.
2. That the government should release more fund for youth empowerment and skill acquisition as this will create more job opportunities and boost the economy of the state and the nation at large.
3. The youth/women should embrace the idea of skills acquisition as this will be an added advantage to their formal education.
4. That the government should provide various skills acquisition centers across the state to enable quick accessibility.
5. That the government should create a specific skills acquisition programme for those who are disabled in order to give them a brighter future and a sense of belonging.
6. That skills acquisition should not be seen as programme meant for school drop-out; it should be encouraged for everybody.

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Roles of Social Work Practice

The social workers should ensure that the interest of the participants to learn skills in order to address their fate is assured. Social workers are to ensure the beneficiaries are given starter pack to fix them into the business circles. The participants should also avail themselves of the counselling services rendered by the social workers. The social workers should ensure that the trainees do not play trancy but rather pay attention to the programme to become self-reliants in their profession.

Conclusion.

Based on the finding and recommendations, skills acquisition and empowerment programme is a vital tool for reducing unemployment, curbing crime rate and boosting of the economy of any nation. It is on this premise that skills acquisition programme should be encouraged and properly founded in rivers state and the society at large as this will create a means of livelihood for everybody.

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