

Impact of Vocational Skills Acquisition Programme on Poverty Reduction in Katsina State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: Poverty is a menace that is seriously threatening the world's peace, the aftermath of which can be deadly if not quickly nipped in the bud. However, concerted efforts have been sorted by the government and other stakeholders in Nigeria to tackle the menace. Specifically, Katsina State government resorted to the establishment of Vocational Skills Acquisition Centres in order to reduce the incidence of thuggery, which is an offspring of poverty, in the State. The study, therefore, focused on the impact of Vocational Skills Acquisition programmes on Poverty Reduction in Katsina State. Snowballing (network sampling) was used in selecting respondents for this study. The reason for the use of snowballing sampling was due to the fact that respondents are scattered across the state and cannot be easily located. A total of 370 respondents were used as sample size and a structured questionnaire was administered to them. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics. It was found out that the programme has positively impacted on the lives of the beneficiaries. Finally, it is recommended among others that government should provide jobs for teaming unemployed youths by engaging them in skills acquisition programmes which are engineered towards poverty reduction.

KEYWORDS: vocational skills acquisition, programme, political thugs, unemployed youths, poverty reduction, self-reliant, beneficiaries.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A nation like Nigeria is blessed with abundant human and natural resources, which are enough to develop the country and make the people live a comfortable life. In spite of this, the majority of the people are underfed and living in abject poverty. They cannot cloth nor have good shelter. They are denied medical care, good education, good sanitation, employment, and social welfare services because they are poor. These vulnerable groups in the society, it is observed, are exposed to various forms of environmental pollution, fear and excessive pressure which have led to the disintegration of many communities. The problems created from these inadequacies spurred on societal problems like the high rate of crime, illiteracy, unemployment, rural-urban migration which invariably have led to the creation of urban-slums with its problems. The poor are found in a dejected area without any hope of survival (Ojelade, 2004).

The type of deplorable conditions mentioned above exists in almost all countries of the world. The most affected are the developing countries of Africa. To further buttress this fact, a Fox Business report (2012) attested that ten (10) countries of the world had been classified as the poorest and that nine (9) of the countries are in Africa. The situation is not different in Nigeria as a United Nations' (UN) report on Nigeria's Common Country Analysis, CCA, has described the country as one of the poorest countries in the world. According to the report, as cited in Seun (2016), Nigeria is one of the poorest and most unequal countries in the world, with over 80 million or 64% of her population living below poverty line. The report affirms that, in Africa, rather than seeing poverty on the decline; it continues to be on the increase. Efforts were made internationally to improve these conditions by enjoining member countries of the United Nations (UN) to pursue policies and programmes that will guarantee every person the right to have access to good shelter, good food, good education, employment opportunity and other things that would improve their condition of living.

In spite of this, the number of poor people in Nigeria continues to multiply as prices of foods and other commodities continue to rise and social amenities are also restricted from them. It is an axiom that major government expenditure is directed to security, debt servicing while government spending on social welfare and rural development programmes continues to decline. The rural economy that should be serviced to supply the needed manpower and raw materials was neglected and the sufferings of the poor masses continue to increase. Many industries are also producing far below capacity. Some have closed down due to lack of enabling environment for operation (Ojelade, 2004). These, among others, contribute to high rate of youth unemployment

in the country. Confirming this, Uddin & Uddin (2013) reported that unemployment level was 21.1% in 2010 and 23.9% in 2011. They, however, suggested heavy investment on entrepreneurship education to enable youths become self-reliant rather than job seekers.

Nigeria as a nation which has many of its citizens suffering from poverty has been rated poor in the midst of abundant human and natural resources (Ubong & Nyanabo, 2006). A former United State Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in President Bill Clinton's administration, Ms. Susan Rice re-echoed this in what has turned out to be a famous aphorism; Nigeria is too rich to be poor and too poor to be rich (Ubong & Nyanabo, 2006). Now that poverty has been recognized as a global problem that threatens peace and security in the world especially in Nigeria (Lawore, 2008), concerted efforts at both local and global levels have been sought on the phenomenon.

However, one of the prominent strategies put in place by the government to tackle the scourge of poverty in Nigeria is vocational skills acquisition. Vocational skills acquisition equips individuals with relevant skills to become self-reliant and independent through acquiring skills for occupations, inculcating values and attitudes required as craftsmen and technicians. It has been identified as one form of adult education programme which provides the recipient with requisite knowledge and skills for self-reliance. This is particularly true when Muhammad, et al (2008) said that one of the cardinal objectives of education is the development of an individual socially, intellectually, emotionally, morally, and most importantly, ability to acquire skills necessary for economic and technological development. It has been observed that lack of adequate vocational training coupled with the escalating rate of unemployment among the youths is a factor contributing to the prevailing menace of Kauraye (political thugs) which is typical of Katsina State. As a result of high level of unemployment and pervasive poverty among Nigerian youths, they become ready-made instrument or recruits for manipulation by selfish and callous politicians. Agba (2011) asserted that since 1999, there is hardly any state in Nigeria that has not witnessed political violence, killings and thuggery. To him, this results from unemployment, poverty and weak security apparatus.

Indeed, acquisition of functional skills through vocational training programmes would tremendously emancipate the poor and empower the jobless and as well make life more meaningful to the restive political thugs in the society. Omoruyi and Osunde (2004) stressed that, lack of acquisition of vocational skills on the part of individuals has been considered the bane of the economy of many African societies particularly Nigeria. The realisation that vocational skills acquisition has potential to address poverty in Katsina State has encouraged the State government to subscribe to vocational skills acquisition for alleviating poverty in the State. While lending credence to this, the government of Katsina State established Youth Craft Village located in the State capital. It is against this background that the study investigates the impact of vocational skills acquisition programmes on poverty reduction in Katsina State.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Poverty has tremendously been a major factor in the underlying cause of problems in Nigerian society. It has grossly affected human habitation and peaceful co-existence of the Nigerian heterogeneous society. The aftermath of these problems are inherent in the illicit practices which include prostitution and political thuggery which is typical of Katsina State. It has been observed that, high rate of unemployment among the youths in Katsina State is a factor contributing to the prevailing menace of political thuggery (Kauraye). Prior to the establishment of Youth Craft Village, area boys move around freely smoking Indian hemp and brandishing dangerous weapons. This reason, among others, might have prompted the Katsina State government to establish Youth Craft Village in the State. It is, however, expected that the outcome of this research project will provide data for future economic planning in and outside the State by the government and other stakeholders. It will also serve as a springboard for future research on Vocational Skills Acquisition in Nigeria.

III. VOCATIONAL SKILLS ACQUISITION AND POVERTY REDUCTION

Skills acquisition is simply the practice of teaching or educating people the basic skills needed in various vocations such as in the areas of business, technology, creative arts, computers etc. The programme is offered through outlets or media such as skills acquisition centres, adult literacy centres, adult schools, distance learning, continuing education schemes, lifelong learning schemes and e-learning.

Programmes are designed to meet the needs of a person that did not acquire enough formal education or none at all as well as those that need to sustain learning for self development. Skills acquisition programmes are, therefore, designed under structured programmes of adult education to meet the needs of adult learners.

Skills acquisition is very important and central to the development of any contemporary society. It is one means of tackling poverty level, unemployment, under employment and affording massive job creation. With an estimated graduates turnover of over 600,000 yearly in Nigeria (Abubakar, Abdulkadir, & Sirajo, 2010) seeking white collar jobs that are not available, couple with the large numbers of youths who do not attend formal school, there is the need to strengthen vocational skills acquisition to reduce poverty and foster jobs

creation. This will engage people meaningfully thereby reducing insecurity to its barest level. When everyone is busy with one form of job or the other, there would be little or no room for heinous activities that can jeopardize the peace of the State particularly and the country at large.

At this time when the world is recovering from global recession, according to Uko-Akpulu (2009), the acquisition of vocational skills is the only cure for poverty alleviation to increase the number of the employed youths in Nigeria. He further observed that the structure of the Nigerian education system which lays much emphasis on University education needs to be re-addressed if the country must achieve its goals in poverty alleviation and employment creation.

Poverty is the state of having insufficient resources. It is lack of basic needs such as food, clothing, housing, water and health services. Nigeria is having a large percentage of poor people that suffers from poverty. While every individual is expected to live a comfortable life, well nourished with sound economic base, an avenue through which this can be realized is through vocational skills acquisition. Vocational skills acquisition programmes have greater potentials to achieve the goal because it is geared towards skills acquisition and occupational preparedness. Coupled with the above, the present world is changing through the forces of globalization and technological advancement which require advances in vocational and technological education. To prepare for these challenges, creativity and innovation in vocational skills acquisition and entrepreneurship are highly relevant and sustainable, and living depends on the ability of citizenry to create wealth, generate employment for others and become self-reliant through innovative application of ideas and skills, to make them useful members of the society and to be free from deprivation and poverty of whatever forms and types (Tijjani & Aliyu, 2008). In this regard, vocational skills acquisition is the most viable and veritable means to equip the youths with the skills and techniques to develop their potential and create a conducive environment where individuals strive to match with current world development pattern.

It is expected in this democratic dispensation that, all efforts must be geared towards poverty reduction through vocational skills acquisition. This, according to Tijjani and Aliyu (2008), will help in self-reliance or self employment attitude in the individuals and the ability to develop our own technology based on economic and social environmental factors. They further observed that a lot of skills can be learnt through vocational skills acquisition with potentials for developing manpower to promote both social and economic growth and development. The skills provide meaningful occupations and entrepreneurial activities particularly manufacturing, building and construction industries, production, operation, commercial venture services etc. (Nwigwe, 1998).

IV. KATSINA STATE GOVERNMENT AS A CASE STUDY

Katsina State Government in its wisdom and the realization of the importance of science and technology had realized that there cannot be any meaningful development where science and technology base is weak. It, therefore, established the Department of Science and Technology vide Katsina State Legal notice No. 196 (1) 28th July, 2011, not only to promote the science and technology education but facilitation, coordination and formulation of policies and development of aforementioned, to enhance and facilitate the development of science and technology transfer. A wide range of functions of the new department includes the supervision of Katsina Youth Craft Village, among others.

The Youth Craft Village is one of the major youth skills acquisition programmes providing skills acquisition programmes in the State. The skills acquisition centre is designed to provide the youths in the State with a source of livelihood and put them on a sound path towards self-sustenance and self-actualization. The concept was in fulfillment of the promise to remove political thugs from roaming the street to a productive venture that will make them useful to themselves and the society at large. The Village is designed to provide self-employment opportunities to over 2000 youths annually throughout the State through various skills acquisition programmes being mounted in the centre (Katsina State Government, 2016).

V. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the research are:

- To identify vocational skills acquisition programmes of Katsina State government within Katsina State.
- To identify the level of awareness of vocational skills acquisition programmes in Katsina State.
- To determine the level of youth participation in vocational skills acquisition programmes in Katsina State.
- To determine the impact of vocational skills acquisition programmes on poverty reduction in Katsina State.
- To determine the problems confronting the provision of vocational skills acquisition programmes in Katsina State.
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VI. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- i. What are the types of skills acquired through the programme?
- ii. What are the various means through which the government creates awareness for the programme?

- iii. What is the level of youth participation in vocational skills acquisition programmes in Katsina State?
- iv. What are the impacts of vocational skills acquisition programmes on poverty reduction in Katsina State?
- v. What are the challenges facing the programmes in Katsina State?

VIII. METHOD

The study used descriptive survey design. The study area is Katsina State located in the North-Western geo-political zone of Nigeria. The population of the study consists of all the 11,800 youths who acquired skills in different vocations from the centre from the inception of the programme to date (2010-2017). The sample size was 370 respondents. This was obtained using Krejce and Morgan (1970) table for determining sample size which says a population that falls within the range of 10000-15000 will have a sample size of 370.

Snowballing sampling (or chain sampling) was used in selecting respondents for this study. In this procedure, each beneficiary that participated in the study was nominated by a preceding beneficiary as appropriate for the study. According to Castillo (2009) as cited in Muhammad (2013), snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that is used by researchers to identify potential subjects in studies where subjects are hard to locate. The process of snowball sampling is much like asking the initial subject to nominate another person with the same trait as your next subject. The researchers then observe the nominated subjects and continue in the same way until the sufficient number of subjects was obtained. The choice of snowball was informed because the beneficiaries of the vocational skills acquisition programmes are scattered across the State and it is difficult to locate them ordinarily. Simple random technique was used to select the facilitators of these programmes for the purpose of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

The questionnaire was of a structured undisguised format. All items in the instrument were stated in a 5-point Likert format ranging from Strongly Agreed=5, Agreed=4, Undecided=3, Disagreed=2 and Strongly Disagreed=1 respectively using SPSS package to analyze the data. The questionnaire, containing questions ranging from respondents' socio-economic characteristics, awareness, access to skills acquisition programmes as well as constraints were used for the study and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) was also used to elicit more information. Descriptive statistics was used for the analysis.

IX. RESULT

The data obtained were analyzed by SPSS using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. A mean value of 3.50 and above indicated respondents' agreement with an item while a mean value of 3.49 and below indicated respondents' disagreement with such items.

S/N	Item	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
1.	This vocation has improved my socio-economic well-being	4.1595	.67794	Agreed
2.	This vocation has increased my income	4.6811	.51631	Agreed
3.	I don't longer rely on family members and friends for upkeep because of the skills I acquired	4.5676	.71532	Agreed
4.	The skills I acquired have made me to be self-reliant	4.3811	.82519	Agreed
5.	I can now take care of my family comfortably and save some money from this vocation	4.3324	.81668	Agreed
6.	Inadequate funding	2.4838	.64687	Disagreed
7.	Inadequate government support	2.5703	.72260	Disagreed
8.	Inadequate relevant training facilities	2.6946	.63436	Disagreed
9.	Inadequate qualified facilitators	2.5135	.58070	Disagreed
10.	Inadequate monitoring and supervision	2.5865	.74669	Disagreed
11.	Inadequate sensitization/awareness campaign	3.6349	1.14733	Agreed
12.	Inadequate staff development programme	2.9595	.94910	Disagreed
13.	Inadequate transport fare to the training centres	2.8135	.79995	Disagreed

X. DISCUSSION

The research question one was answered by listing the trades according to the duration of the training as shown in table 1:

Table 1:

6-month duration training	3-month duration training	9-Month duration training	12-month duration training
-Handset repair -Tie and Dye -Pottery -Wrought Iron/furniture making -Catering Services -Tailoring and Fashion Design	-Leather works & Shoemaking -Film and Photography -Beauty Salon	Computer repair	-Auto-mechanic/ Generator repairs -Wheel Alignment and Balancing -Welding, Fabrication & Blacksmith -Carpentry and Joinery

Source: Documentary Evidence from the Centre, 2017

The findings on the impact of vocational skills acquisition programme on poverty reduction in Katsina as presented in the table above showed that 5 of 13 items revealed that vocational skills acquisition programme in the State has positive impact on the wellbeing and reduction of poverty among youths in the State. The findings in item 1 through 5 agreed with greater means ($X=4.14, 4.68, 4.56, 4.38$ and 4.33) respectively. The result revealed that a greater proportion of the beneficiaries of vocational skills acquisition programme perceived that the programme has given them the opportunity to improve their socio-economic well-being, increase their income, improve their productivity, increase their standard of living, and made them self-reliant.

The responses from the beneficiaries indicated that they appreciated how vocational skills acquisition programmes have contributed to their socio-economic development. These expressions certainly indicated their joy of being self-reliant. This study supports the submission of Akintayo (2005) and Igwe (2003) that vocational education is work-oriented and has enabled majority of the participants to be self-employed. The findings also revealed that vocational skills acquisition has implication for poverty reduction in the society, especially among the youths. Thus, Ojo-Ajibare (2002) argues that vocational skills acquisition tends to create room for socio-economic development of the participants as they could embark on income generating activities and Uwaifo (2009) also posits that skills acquisition develops not only the practical skills but also attitude and habits that make the recipients creative, innovative and resourceful persons.

The findings from items 6 through 13 revealed the challenges confronting the programme indicated by the means derived from the result ($X=2.48, 2.57, 2.69, 2.51, 2.58, 3.63, 2.95, 2.81$) vehemently disagreed with virtually all the items on the questionnaire regarding the challenges confronting the provision of vocational skills acquisition in Katsina State with the exception of awareness/source of information about the programme. Most of the respondents agreed that awareness/sensitization about the programme is defective and needs improvement in order to reach out to more of the target audience (i.e. political thugs).

However, during the FGDs, it was found out that there is interference of elites in the enrolment processes. The political class tends to dominate the process by enrolling their children in the programme thereby hindering the real target group (i.e. political thugs roaming the street) from enrolling in the programme. This may lead to the defeat of the objectives for establishing the centre.

There is also the problem of age restriction. The government set age bracket for the programme to be between 18 and 30 years of age. This has however restricted some people, who are older than 30years, to enroll in the programme. Another challenge is that, some of the trainees are just at the centre awaiting their West African Examination Certificate (WAEC) and JAMB results to be out so that they can proceed to the University or College. This always leads to drop-out before the end of the programme.

It was also discovered that there is a problem of disbursement of take-off materials to the trainees after the training as rightly pointed out by one of the speakers during the FGDs. Initially, all the trainees were given take-off grants/materials but later on pegged at 10 best graduating trainees per session. Although, the decision was taken after realising that some trained youths were engaged in selling the take-off materials given to them.

XI. CONCLUSION

Political thuggery is one of the problems of third-world countries that adopted democracy as a system of government. In Nigeria, political actors consider the youths, especially the illiterate and unemployed ones, as tools for election manipulation and after the elections, they become nuisance to the society because of their idleness. The study was able to establish the fact that Katsina State Vocational Skills Acquisition programme (Katsina Youth Craft Village) has tremendously impacted positively on the beneficiaries of the programme. It has provided meaningful engagement for the unemployed and restive political thugs in the State. A greater number of them are now self-employed and to some extent, employers of labour as well as providing one form of service or the other to the public, thereby contributing to nation-building.

XII. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this research, the researchers, therefore, recommended that:

1. the government should provide jobs for teaming unemployed youths by engaging them in skills acquisition programmes which are engineered towards poverty reduction.
2. in order to motivate the trainees and enhance the standard of the programme, the government should increase the number of trainees to be given take-off materials as against what is currently obtainable in the centre whereby only ten best trainees are given materials/grant after the training.
3. patronage of the products from the beneficiaries of the centre should be mandatory on all government's Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in line with the present administration's "Made-in-Nigeria" campaign.
4. other state governments within the country should emulate the laudable example of Katsina State government in order to make the youths more functional and productive to themselves and the society

which is in line with what the Nigerian government aimed at achieving through the defunct 6-3-3-4 system of education as contained in the National Policy on Education of 1982.

5. selection of trainees should not be left in the hands of politicians and elites, the process should rather be based on grassroots mobilization of the unemployed youths and the restive political thugs through community leaders.

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