

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE YOUTH
EMPOWERMENT SCHEMES IN ONDO STATE OF NIGERIA:
AN EMPIRICAL STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

In Africa, the subject matter of youth unemployment and their involvement in social vices have been a topical issue. It is a general knowledge in Nigeria today that white collar jobs are becoming almost unavailable and that has been one of the primary reasons why educated and uneducated youth engage in social vices because they believe they have to survive regardless of the means. It is on this premise that the government of Nigeria had to introduce youth empowerment schemes in Nigeria to empower and develop youth. The expectation of the Nigerian government and people is to see a drastic reduction of youth engagement in social vices. This empirical study therefore examined the implementation strategies of the schemes by focusing on one of its programmes- the Skills Acquisition in Ondo State. The strategies were assessed in order to ascertain if it has been adequate in achieving the programme's goals and objectives. 27 copies of questionnaire were administered on the trainers at the skill acquisition centers, while 557 copies were administered on the beneficiaries of the skills acquisition programme in Ondo State. Thirteen members of the coordinating departments were selected for an in-depth interview. Findings revealed that the implementation strategies employed by the State government to empower and develop youth in area of skills acquisition were adequate even though some challenges such as inadequate fund and skills centres still affect its proper implementation as revealed during the interview section. The study therefore concluded that the implementation strategies of the skills acquisition programme in Ondo State of Nigeria were adequate.

Key Words: Youth, Youth Empowerment, Unemployment, Policy Implementation.

1. Introduction

Youth are called future leaders, they represent an important and dynamic force in all societies of the world and yet, they face many challenges; such as high rate of poverty and unemployment, underemployment, indiscipline, illiteracy, lack of access to information, and essential welfare services, that are manifested in young people's diminished hope for the future. In Africa and other developing nations of the world, some high levels of violence, crime and high risk of sexual behaviours of any age group are seen in the youth. To Skogan (1986), these have made many people to label the youth as a source of societal problem rather than its potentials.

To correct these anomalies, it therefore becomes imperative to empower and develop youth not only for national development but also for the transitional period from childhood to adulthood which is unquestionably a challenge for many youth. There are serious social and economic consequences associated with not addressing the problems facing unemployed youths who are at the risk of negative circumstances – not only for the youth themselves and their families, but also for the society at large. If the potentials of these youth are not profitably harnessed and marshalled towards development, there may be trouble. This implies that all stakeholders in youth empowerment and development programmes, including governments, Non- Government Organizations (NGOs), religious organizations, parents, guardians, and elders have the responsibility to empower youth around them in order to jointly realize the national objective of socio-economic transformation of communities (Oladele, 2003).

In the light of the above, the government of Ondo State of Nigeria was one of the State governments interested in the business of developing and empowering youth in the State to ensure they are better positioned in the Nigerian society and the African continent at large. It was a general belief among the political actors and researchers that the greatest problem confronting youth today is unemployment and that is why they involve themselves in various levels of crime. The government launched the Youth Empowerment Scheme of the State and introduced the following programmes under it- Youth-in-Agriculture Programme (YIAP), Skills Acquisition Programme (SAP), Entrepreneurial Development Scheme (EDS) and Accelerated Poverty Alleviation Scheme (APAS). Also introduced were the establishment of Agricultural Modern Farm Cities, Renewable and Sustainable Green Energy Programme, Industrial Development

Centre (IDC) and the Profarmers and Agropreneurial Sustainable Scheme (PASS). The government termed this, “The Investment in Peace”.

In order to assess the performance of this Scheme, this present study will focus on the most popular and patronized programme of this scheme- The Skills Acquisition Programme, to determine how far its implementation strategies which include the establishment of skills acquisition centres, Ministry of Adult, Technical and Vocational Education and that of the Department of Youth Development have been able to achieve the objectives of this programme.

2. Literature Review

Although there is no universally accepted definition of whom a youth is, however, in a way of making conceptual clarification, Youth according to Jega (2012) can be defined as a special group of people with a strong stamina and passion for realizing certain set goals and objectives. Youth, according to him, share certain characteristics that distinguish them from other generation. Such characteristics include impatience for change, zealousness, radicalism, rebellions, curiosity, hard work, ego and ambition etc. According to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Youth is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood’s independence and awareness of their interdependence as members of a community. It is believed that age is the easiest way to define this group, particularly in relation to education and employment. Therefore, “Youth” is often indicated as a person between the age where he/she may leave compulsory education, and the age at which he/she finds his/her first employment.

Talking on the roles and importance of empowering youth, Jega (2012), asserts that it is vital for policy makers and parents to understand and appreciate that youth are the future of their country; therefore, their mindset and creativity should be a major concern to the nation. There is need for the government to create atmosphere favourable for the youth to achieve their desired objectives. The agonies of Boko Haram, militancy, armed robberies, scams, and other social deviance are the product of lack of guardianship and vision for national development. Investing in knowledge and skill is critical to youth development.

According to the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (PAYE) 2006 - 2015, developed through wide consultation with key stakeholders in all regions of the Commonwealth,

Youth empowerment is to empower, engage and create value so that young men and women can contribute to the economic, social and cultural advancement of their families and countries and to their own fulfillment.

Empowering youth, according to Koripamo-Agary (2010), means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others. According to Reiss (1988), Youth empowerment means involving young people in decision-making processes on issues that affect them as well as entrusting them with the knowledge and skills necessary for them to effectively and meaningfully participate in the activities of their own affairs.

Zakaria (2006) believes that “the rising tide of unemployment and the fear of a bleak future among the youth in African countries have made them vulnerable to the manipulations of agents' provocateurs”. These include aggrieved politicians and religious demagogues. Zakaria strongly believes that the absence of job opportunities in developing countries is responsible for youth restiveness with disastrous consequences.

3. Strategies Adopted in Implementing the Skills Acquisition Programme of Youth Empowerment Scheme in Ondo State of Nigeria.

The strategies are the various parameters put in place by the Ondo State government to ensure that the aim and objectives of the skills acquisition programme are achieved. Under this section, we shall be discussing the skills acquisition centres, the coordinating ministries, personnel and funding of the programme.

The Skills Acquisition Centres

The Ondo State government, in order to implement and achieve the aim and objectives of the skills acquisition programme, established 28 skills acquisition centres, spread across the 18 local government areas of the State. These skills acquisition centres were also equipped by the State government with necessary facilities needed for them to function effectively and there are also qualified trainers to train youth in their chosen vocation (Department of Vocational Education, Ondo State Ministry of Adult, Technical and Vocational Education).

Trades Available At the Skills Acquisition Centres

Under the present operations, there are 11 trades whose period of training range between six months and a year. They are- Food Processing, Soap, Tie and Dye, Chalk-Making, Fish Farming/Net Making and Fashion Designing. Also available at the skills centres are Catering Service, Cloth Weaving, Hat and Bead Making, Hair Dressing, Wood Work, Block Laying and Concreting.

The Coordinating Ministries

Two ministries are in charge of empowering youth through the skills acquisition programme of the Ondo State government. The two ministries are institutionalized and they have their own personnel with which they carry out their statutory functions. The ministries are The Ministry of Adult, Technical and Vocational Education and the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports. They both manage the affairs of the skills centres through their various departments.

Funding of the Skills Acquisition Programme (SAP)

According to the two coordinating ministries, there have been contributions from NGOs, traditional rulers, religious groups and members of community where the skills acquisition centres are located but it was clearly disclosed that, funds from government have been the major source of funding for the SAP. The 28 skills acquisition centres were built and equipped by the Ondo State government. While the bulk of the money used to procure vocational tools for selected youth beneficiaries are also from the State government.

3. Methodology

The population under study through which the implementation of the skills acquisition programme of youth empowerment scheme were assessed in Ondo State comprised the youth beneficiaries that benefitted from the skills acquisition programme, the trainers at the skills acquisition centres and coordinating members of staff from the department of youth development and the department of vocational education. A total number 5,566 youth had benefitted from the programme between 2008 and 2015, the skills acquisition centres has a total number of 84 trainers. The department of youth development has a staff strength of 11 while the department of vocational education has a total number of 15 staff.

Five hundred and eighty-five (585) copies of questionnaire were administered: 27 copies were administered on the trainers at the skill acquisition centers, while 557 were administered on the

beneficiaries of the skills acquisition programme in Ondo State. Also, thirteen members of the coordinating departments were selected for an in-depth interview. This figure represents 50 percent of the total number of staff in the two Departments who are in charge of the skills acquisition programme in Ondo State. Relevant textbooks, journals, internet sources were consulted. In addition, data were sourced from the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports as well as the Ministry of Adult Technical and Vocational Education. The data collected through primary data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics while secondary data were analyzed using content analysis.

4. Data Analysis, Interpretation and Results

This chapter deals with the analysis, presentation and interpretation of data gathered through the administration of questionnaire to the trainers and the beneficiaries of the Skills Acquisition Programme in Ondo State. A total of five hundred and eighty-four (584) copies of questionnaire were administered in order to elicit information on the implementation process of the Skills Acquisition Programme of the Youth Empowerment Schemes in Ondo state. However, four hundred and ninety-seven (497) copies of questionnaire were retrieved from the field, thus representing 85.1% of the total number of questionnaire that were administered. Also, variables on the research objectives, which were used to assess the implementation of the Skills Acquisition Programme in Ondo state, were discussed. The total number of respondents in this study is four hundred and ninety-seven (497). Remarkably, the respondents reacted to all assertions set out in all the sections of the questionnaire. Data were analysed by SPSS and presented in frequency, and percentage as well as inferential statistics with the use of tables.

The Examination of the Implementation Strategies of the Skills Acquisition Programme in Ondo State

This section examined the implementation strategies of the skill acquisition programme in Ondo state. To achieve this objective, respondents were asked to either agree or disagree to ten (10) assertions put forth in an attempt to examine the implementation strategies of the programme and its values/responses were organized using likert scale of measurement, such as: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. As presented in table 1.2a, 304 (61%) of the respondents disagreed to the first assertion that the skills acquisition centers are well funded and equipped for

the training of beneficiaries. This revealed that the necessary equipments and tools are not sufficiently provided for the training of the beneficiaries at the skills acquisition centers. The second assertion was similarly refuted, as 335 (67.4%) disagreed with the statement that officials of the two coordinating ministries are well equipped to perform their official duties.

As part of the implementation strategies of the programme, government supplies some proficient tools, machines and other materials needed by the beneficiaries to start up their own businesses. Reacting to this third assertion, 334 (67.2%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. This shows that government has not, to a commendable extent, actualized this particular strategy. The fourth assertion states that workshops/seminars are organized by the management free of charge for trainers in the skills centres. However, 389 (75.8%) of the respondents acknowledged this statement. It thus follows that the statement is true to the degree of its acknowledgement.

As shown in table 1.2a, 226 (45.5%) of the respondents agreed and 271 (54.5%) disagreed with the fifth assertion on the availability of adequate trainers to tutor beneficiaries at the 28 skills acquisition centres. The interpretation of this distribution implies that trainers are not, to an extent, sufficient at the skills acquisition centres. Hence, more efforts should be geared towards the recruitment of trainers at the skills acquisition centers.

TABLE 1a: Implementation Strategies of the Skills Acquisition Programme in Ondo State

Assertions	Responses	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
The skills acquisition centers are well funded and equipped for the training of beneficiaries	Strongly Agree	36	7.2	7.2
	Agree	157	31.6	38.8
	Disagree	38	7.6	46.5
	Strongly Disagree	266	53.6	100.0
	Total	497	100.0	
Officials of the two coordinating ministries are well equipped to perform their official duties	Strongly Agree	1	.2	.2
	Agree	161	32.4	32.6
	Disagree	31	6.2	38.8
	Strongly Disagree	304	61.2	100.0
	Total	497	100.0	
Government supply enough tools, machines and other materials needed by the beneficiaries to start off their own businesses	Strongly Agree	29	5.8	5.8
	Agree	134	27.0	32.8
	Disagree	72	14.5	47.3
	Strongly Disagree	262	52.7	100.0
	Total	497	100.0	
Workshops/seminars are organized by the management free of charge for trainers in the skill centres	Strongly Agree	42	8.5	8.5
	Agree	347	69.8	78.3
	Disagree	32	6.4	84.7
	Strongly Disagree	76	15.3	100.0
	Total	497	100.0	
There are adequate trainers at the 28 skills acquisition centers to train youth beneficiaries in their chosen trades	Strongly Agree	15	3.0	3.0
	Agree	211	42.5	45.5
	Disagree	19	3.8	49.3
	Strongly Disagree	252	50.7	100.0
	Total	497	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2016

With respect to the sixth assertion on table 1b, 337 (67.8%) of the respondents also fell in agreement with this assertion that skills acquisition centers staff as well as the personnel of the

coordinating Departments are provided with adequate remuneration and incentives for performing their duties. Although, the efficiency of the staff members could sometimes be hampered by absence of practical tools and materials. The explanation of this finding however implies that staff members of the skills acquisition programme and the coordinating ministries enjoyed, to a favourable degree, adequate remuneration and incentives. This therefore places the staff members on optimal performance of their duties at the skills acquisition centers and the coordinating ministries.

It was also asserted that Skills acquisition centers are evenly distributed across the 18 Local Government Area of Ondo State. In their response, 293 (59%) of the respondents disagreed to this seventh assertion. This indicates that skills acquisition centres have not been squarely distributed across the 18 Local Government Areas of Ondo state. In addition, respondents were asked to agree or disagree on whether vocations are evenly spread in the available 28 skills acquisition centers. Responding to this eighth assertion, 289 (56.9%) of the respondents discredited this statement. It could therefore be inferred that vocations vary at the 28 locations where the skills acquisition centers are established.

Periodic recruitment of trainers into the skills acquisition centres formed the ninth assertion set out to examine the objective stated above. 303 (61%) of the respondents confirmed that there is a periodic recruitment of trainers into the skills acquisition centers. The claim of these respondents is said to be correct due to their varying degrees of occurrence witnessed during the course of their training. 422 (85%) of the respondents acknowledged the last assertion that youth empowerment schemes gives room for the training and retraining of the beneficiaries. This implies that most beneficiaries had, at a time profited from the training and retraining exercise of the skills acquisition programme in Ondo state.

TABLE 1b: Examination of the Implementation Strategies of the Skills Acquisition Programme in Ondo State

Assertions	Responses	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Skills acquisition centers staff as well as the personnel of the coordinating Departments are provided with adequate remuneration and incentives for performing duties	Strongly Agree	56	11.3	11.3
	Agree	281	56.5	67.8
	Disagree	32	6.4	74.2
	Strongly Disagree	128	25.8	100.0
	Total	497	100.0	
Skills acquisition centers are evenly distributed across the 18 Local Government Area of Ondo state	Strongly Agree	30	6.0	6.0
	Agree	174	35.0	41.0
	Disagree	36	7.3	48.3
	Strongly Disagree	257	51.7	100.0
	Total	497	100.0	
The vocations are spread evenly in the 28 skills acquisition centers	Strongly Agree	32	6.4	6.4
	Agree	182	36.6	43.1
	Disagree	27	5.4	48.5
	Strongly Disagree	256	51.5	100.0
	Total	497	100.0	
There is a periodic recruitment of trainers into the skills acquisition centers	Strongly Agree	7	1.4	1.4
	Agree	296	59.6	61.0
	Disagree	57	11.5	72.4
	Strongly Disagree	137	27.6	100.0
	Total	497	100.0	
The youth empowerment scheme gives room for the training and retraining of the beneficiaries	Strongly Agree	44	8.9	8.9
	Agree	378	76.1	84.9
	Disagree	48	9.7	94.6
	Strongly Disagree	27	5.4	100.0
	Total	497	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2016

The responses to the ten (10) assertions are summarized in table 2. As shown in the table, an average of 5.9% of the respondents strongly agreed with the ten assertions, just as another 46.7% agreed ordinarily with the assertions, making a total of 52.6% of the respondents in the agreement category. On the other hand, an average of 7.9% ordinarily disagreed just as another 39.5% strongly disagreed with the assertions, making a total of 47.4% in the disagreement category. It can therefore be claimed from the foregoing that the implementation strategies of the skills acquisition programmes seem to be adequate, consequent upon 52.6% agreement level of the respondents with the assertions listed below.

However, the 5.2% differential level between respondents in the agreement and disagreement categories makes the proclamation inconclusive. Thus, the claim is further subjected to a hypothesis test on whether or not the implementation strategies of the skills acquisition programme are adequate in Ondo state, denoted as hypothesis 1. As shown in table 3, the hypothesis test confirms that the implementation strategies of the skills acquisition programme are adequate in Ondo state.

Listed below are ten assertions which are the implementation strategies identified: they are presented to respondents for their responses. The summary of the responses is tabulated in Table 3 as generated from Tables 1a and 1b. A possible inference which can therefore be drawn from the table is that the implementation strategies of the skills acquisition programmes are adequate in Ondo state.

**Table 2: Implementation Strategies of the Skills Acquisition Programme in Ondo State
(Summary)**

	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Total (%)
Assertion 1	7.4	31.6	7.6	53.4	100
Assertion 2	0.2	32.4	6.2	61.2	100
Assertion 3	5.8	27.0	14.5	52.7	100
Assertion 4	8.5	69.8	6.4	15.3	100
Assertion 5	3.0	42.5	3.8	50.7	100
Assertion 6	11.3	56.5	6.4	25.8	100
Assertion 7	6.0	35.0	7.3	51.7	100
Assertion 8	6.4	36.6	5.4	51.5	100
Assertion 9	1.4	59.6	11.5	27.6	100
Assertion 10	8.9	76.1	9.7	5.4	100
Average	5.9	46.7	7.9	39.5	100
Observed Frequency	52.6		47.4		100

Source: Statistically generated from Table 1a and 1b

Hypothesis Testing

H₀: The implementation strategies of the skills acquisition programmes were not adequate in Ondo state

Using chi-square to test Hypothesis 1

Chi-Square (X^2)_{calculated} is given as

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$$

Where O_i is the observed frequency and E_i is the expected frequency

Table 3 Chi-square Table

RESPONSES	OBSERVED FREQUENCY (O_i)	EXPECTED FREQUENCY (E_i)	$(O_i - E_i)^2$	$\frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$
Strongly Agree/Agree	52.6	30	510.8	17.2
Strongly Disagree/Disagree	47.4	70	510.8	7.3
Total	100.0	100		24.5

Source: Statistically generated from table 3

$$X^2_{calculated} = 24.5$$

$$\text{Degree of freedom} = 2 - 1 = 1$$

$$X^2_{tab} \text{ at } 5\% \text{ significance level} = 3.84$$

Since $X^2_{calculated} > X^2_{tab}$, we reject H₀ and accept its alternative

Therefore, this study concluded that the implementation strategies of the skills acquisition programmes are adequate in Ondo state.

To complement the data gathered through questionnaire administration, key personalities in the Ministries of Youth Development and that of the Adult, Technical and Vocational Education were interviewed. Most of the interviewees agreed that the modalities put in place by the state government to implement the skills acquisition programme are somewhat adequate but government should try to tackle the problem of inadequate funding and skills centres.

5. Conclusion

The Youth Empowerment Scheme in Ondo State, based on the findings of this study has, to a reasonable extent, alleviated the problems confronting youth in the State. Through the

assessment of the implementation of the skills acquisition programme of the scheme, it was discovered that the programme has helped to improve the lives of youth participants in the sense that many of them are now engaged in gainful activities and, consequently, they can cater for their needs and even that of their families. The government acts as a catalyst for economic emancipation and development therefore should speed up the tempo of economic activities by using various law incentives, subsidies and protection to encourage entrepreneurship development in Nigeria. Furthermore, it has increased their level of participation in governance. Thus, the youth empowerment scheme is a veritable programme in Ondo State of Nigeria irrespective of its challenges.

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