



ASSESSMENT OF VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND SMALL SCALE ENTERPRISES PROGRAMMES OF NATIONAL DIRECTORATE OF EMPLOYMENT FOR SELF-RELIANCE AMONG YOUTHS IN NORTH-EAST, NIGERIA

Yahaya, A., Inuwa, U. & Hamza, S.

Department of Vocational and Technology Education, Faculty of Technology Education,
Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi, Nigeria.

Corresponding author: billyyahaya@gmail.com, +2348090905953, +2348069563101

Abstract

The study assessed vocational skills development and small scale enterprises programmes of national directorate of employment for self-reliance among youths in north-east, Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research design which is purely quantitative, using a structured questionnaire which was administered to 418 NDE trainees that were proportionately selected from the NDE training centers in North-east, Nigeria. Data collected was analyzed using mean, standard deviations and independent samples t-test. The findings of the study revealed among others that vocational skills development and small scale enterprise programmes trained youths (graduate and non-graduate NDE trainees) for self-reliance. The findings of the study suggest that the parents should always encourage their children specifically youths to enroll into various NDE programme such as vocational skills development and small scale enterprise this will enable them to receive necessary skills and training for self-reliance. Moreover, the teachers of higher institutions should also encourage students to enroll after graduation into various NDE programme such as vocational skills development and small scale enterprise in order to obtain additional skills and training for self-reliance.

Keywords: Vocational skills development, small scale enterprise, youths' self-reliance.

Introduction

Skills acquisition training programme is referred to as policies, plans and programmes designed by governments, private or non-governmental organizations to train people with skills and knowledge necessary for work and self-reliance in the society (Nsofor, Umeh, Ahmed & Idris, 2014). The abundance of natural resources in any nation does not in itself make it to be ranked among the developed nations, rather it is the specialized skills, competences and ability possessed by its populace which can be harnessed to utilize these resources, such skills and competencies are acquired through a well-established skills acquisition training programmes.

Looking at the challenges of today's rapidly changing world, the quest for self-reliance through skills acquisition training has always been the desire and priority of many nations including Nigeria in the present face of global economic challenge. This has triggered Nigerian Government to re-evaluate her position and question her roles as regards facilitating skills acquisition training

programmes especially to the youths (Molenda 2008). Hence skills acquisition training has become a strategic necessity in building a system of adequate capacity towards ensuring equitable access to youths through diversifying skills development programmes to meet the changing requirements of the emerging economy by ensuring quality and relevance of skills training for self-reliance (Federal Government of Nigeria [FGN], 2012). This could be achieved through skills acquisition training programme as one of the most effective human resource development and capacity building strategy that Nigeria needed to embrace so as to train and modernize her workforce for self-reliance, industrialization and national development (FGN, 2012).

In line with the above, Enemali (2010) argued that, to accomplish the task of training and modernizing the technical workforce for self-reliance and national development, there is need to formulate developmental policies, plans, programmes and build adequate human and institutional capacities to implement such policies and programmes. His argument is in



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line with the philosophy of Nigerian government that entails training and modernizing the technical manpower for self-reliance, economy growth and national development. The said philosophy brings about the establishment of various form of skills acquisition and youth empowerment programmes for self-reliance like National Directorate of Employment [NDE] (Agbamu, 2006).

NDE was established in Nigeria by the Federal Government based on the report of Chukwuma Committee on the 26th of March, 1986. The committee was constituted to consider appropriate strategies for dealing with the mass unemployment problem in the country under the guidance of the Ministry of Employment Labour and Productivity. The NDE was officially launched on 30th January, 1987 to seek a way out of the mass unemployment in the country especially among the youths (Ekpenyong, 2011; Popoola & Ajayi, 2016). The Federal Government. According to NDE brief (2014), provided that the philosophy of NDE is self-enterprise, which emphasizes self-employment and self-reliance in preference to wage employment. This philosophy is pursued through policy planning and well-articulated core programmes which include among others Vocational Skills Development (VSD) and Small Scale Enterprise (SSE) Programmes (Adebisi & Oni, 2012).

The Vocational skills development programme is one of the Directorate's job creation programmes primarily concerned with bequeathing productive, functional and marketable skills to the unemployed youths in the country (Morakinyo, 2017). Small scale enterprise programme which is designed to encourage and aid unemployed Nigerians to set up and run their own businesses; (NDE, 2010). Therefore, NDE occupies an important aspect and position in the sustainable empowerment of any region in the country because persons who have passed through NDE programmes are expected to be more dutiful and conscientious in their duties which will enable them to become more productive and self-reliant in the society in which they live (Akande, 2011; Maigida, 2012). Despite all the government

efforts through the programmes of NDE in equipping young people with technical and vocational skills that will facilitate their engagement in productive activities and become self-reliant citizens, there is a consistent increase of unemployment among the Nigerians particularly among youths who are the most and direct beneficiaries of the core NDE programmes, and significant percentage of the beneficiaries are not productive and self-reliant citizens which is contrary to the primary aims of the programme (Maigida, Saba & Namkere, 2017). In addition, Mohammed (2016) argued that unemployment especially among school leavers that is, non-graduates and graduates of tertiary institutions mostly who are youths, has remained one of the fundamental challenges threatening the economic development of Nigeria.

Maigida, et al. (2017) observed that, the massive and consistent unemployment among these youths could be due to the fact that, youths are turning out from the NDE training programmes without the requisite skills and competencies needed for self - reliance. Likewise, Azihs and Samuel (2018), observed that, youths in North Eastern, Nigeria are attending NDE programmes, but most of them are not employed; either self-employment or by the employers of labour. In view of these argument, Azihs and Samuel (2018); Maigida (2017); Farida (2018) called for investigation into NDE core programmes for youths' self-reliance. Nevertheless, at present time, none of the published studies especially in North East, Nigeria carried out an assessment of NDE core programmes for youths' self-reliance. This paper is therefore, aims at assessing vocational skills development and small scale enterprises programmes of national directorate of employment for self-reliance among youths in north-east, Nigeria.

Research Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to assess vocational skills development and small scale enterprises programmes of national directorate of employment for self-reliance among youths in north-east, Nigeria. The specific objectives are:



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1. To find out the extent to which Vocational Skills Development Programme of NDE trained youths' self-reliance in North-east, Nigeria.
2. To find out the extent to which Small Scale Enterprises Programme of NDE trained youths' self-reliance in North-east, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research question were formulated to guide the study:

1. To what extent does Vocational Skills Development Programme of NDE trained youths for self-reliance in North-east, Nigeria?
2. To what extent does Small Scale Enterprises Programme of NDE trained youths for self-reliance in North-east, Nigeria?

Literature review

Overview and Historical Development of NDE in Nigeria

The world-wide economic depression of the early 80's caused a rapid deterioration in Nigeria's economy. Industrial output shrank to an all-time low and commercial activities were consequently reduced, leading to the loss of employment opportunity for millions of Nigerians. By the end of 1985, the unemployment situation in Nigeria had reached desperate and alarming proportions (Charles, 2011). On 26th March 1986, the President appointed a committee to deliberate on strategies for dealing with mass unemployment under the auspices of the Federal Ministry of Employment, Labour and Productivity. The report of the Chukwuma Committee, as it became popularly known, was approved by the Federal Government in October, 1986. Based on its recommendations, the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was established on November 22, 1986 and its initial core programmes were formally launched on 30th January, 1987, by the Chief of General Staff, Vice Admiral Augustus Aikhomu, on behalf of the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces,

General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (NDE, 2006).

The directorate was established by Act 25 CAP 250 of the laws of the Federal Government of Nigeria. The Act was published in the Federal Government (Extra-ordinary) Gazette No. 61 of 20th October, 1989. The President in his 1987 budget speech had directed the new body to "concentrate its efforts on the re-activation of public works, promotion of direct labour, promotion of self-employment, organization of artisans into co-operatives, and encouragement of a culture of maintenance and repairs." To ensure effective implantation of the President's directive, a Board of Directors representing a cross section of all interest groups from industry, commerce, agriculture, finance, employers of labour and government was set-up to define policy and supervise operations (NDE, 2015).

The NDE was formally launched in January 1987 but actual training under the Small-Scale Industries and Graduate Employment Programme started in May 1987 when the Honourable Minister of Employment, Labour and Productivity invited all the Vice Chancellors and Rectors of the nation's universities and polytechnics to Lagos to discuss the institutionalization of Entrepreneur Development Programme (EDP) training in tertiary institutions (Comfort & Ngwama, 2015). They affirmed that from that time on, there have not been significant changes in terms of targeting, scope and coverage since the programme started in 1987. But one development has been a minor expansion of the target groups in 1988 to include mature people and young school leavers. To further enhance and streamline the strategies of the NDE in mass job generation, a committee, "the Ahmed Joda Committee of 1999" streamlined the activities of the various Poverty Alleviation Agencies in the country. Thus NDE's activities were streamlined and made to focus mainly on training for job generation with resettlement limited to only symbolic proportion to test the efficacy of her training activities (NDE, 2015). The NDE is the nation's apex agency for employment creation through programmes of direct intervention among school leavers and



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graduates (Emeh, 2012). The mission statement of NDE is to design and implement job creation programmes that will promote attitudinal change, employment generation, poverty reduction and enhance wealth creation (Charles, 2011).

Objectives and Mandate of the NDE

The NDE annual report (2010) stated that the law establishing the National Directorate of Employment presents its mandate as follows:-

1. To design and implement programmes to combat mass unemployment.
2. To articulate policies aimed at developing work programmes with labor-intensive potential.
3. To obtain and maintain a data bank on employment and vacancies in the country with a view to act as a clearing house to link job seekers with vacancies in collaboration with other government agencies; and
4. To implement any other policies as may be laid down from time to time by the Board established under section 3 of its enabling act.

The NDE therefore derives its routine functions from this mandate. The main function is to combat mass unemployment through skills acquisition, self-employment and labor-intensive work scheme (NDE, 2015).

Vocational Skills Development (VSD) Programme

The Vocational Skills Development programme is one of the Directorate's job creation programmes primarily concerned with bequeathing productive, functional and marketable skills to the unemployed youths in the country (Morakinyo, 2017). The VSD programme of NDE involves the use of informal sector operators such as master craftsmen and women as training outlets for unskilled school leavers. Such school leavers are attached to them for period long enough for the apprentice to acquire necessary skills. The programme also deploys well-equipped mobile workshops to train unemployed youths in rural areas where informal training outlets are non-existent (Azihs & Samuel, 2018). This programme emanated from the realization that

the majority of the unemployed are youths who possess productive and marketable skills. Hence, the main schemes of this programme are concerned with skills acquisition (NDE, 2015).

The VSD programme has the following schemes:

1. National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS).
2. Resettlement Loan Scheme (RLS).
3. School-On-Wheels (SOW).
4. Partnership in Skills Training (PST).
5. Youth Employment and Social Support Operation (YESSO).
6. Community Based Training Scheme (CBTS).
7. Special Vocational Training for the persons with special needs (Vulnerable Groups).

The target population of the programme includes; persons with formal education, school leavers and dropouts, persons with special needs, women and fresh graduates from tertiary institutions (NDE, 2015).

Small Scale Enterprises (SSE) programme

This enterprise support services programme is designed to encourage and aid unemployed Nigerians to set up and run their own businesses. To help the participants translate their business ideas into viable commercial ventures (Usiwoma & Mgbor, 2005). The enterprise support services described in this study are provided by the Small-Scale Industries and Graduate Employment Programme (SSI&GE). Some aspects of the programme were based on pre-existing schemes in the country even though such schemes had not been systematically implemented and followed through. For example, both Federal and State Governments had established a Small-Scale Industries Credit Scheme in the early 1970s for financing small-scale industries, and some States were still operating the scheme by the time the NDE was created. In addition, the Federal Government had since the early 1970s opened Industrial Development Centres in the States to provide extension services to small-scale industries that were not able to pay for the services of private consultants. The State Ministries of Commerce



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and Industries had also been providing advisory services to small-scale industries through their Small-Scale Industries Divisions. All these services are still being provided across the country today (Azihs & Samuel, 2018).

The report of NDE (2015) provided that, training in the form of an Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) was first suggested to the NDE upon its inauguration by the Centre for Management Development (CMD), which had designed and organized a similar programme under the auspices of the Bendel State Government between November 1985 and December 1986. The CMD had adapted its own EDP model from the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India. The idea of incorporating training packages in the form of Entrepreneurship Development Programmes into the programme, as suggested by the CMD, was warmly welcomed by many vocational and tertiary institutions (Charles, 2011). Small Scale Enterprise Programme was designed to encourage and aid unemployed Nigerians most especially the unemployed graduates of the higher institutions to set up and run their own businesses (NDE, 2006). To help the participants translate their business ideas into viable commercial ventures, the NDE conducts courses in entrepreneurship prior to making loans available to them through its Job Creation Loan Guarantee Scheme (Charles, 2011).

Usiwoma and Mgbor (2005) noted that the primary motivation for establishing the SSE programme under the auspices of the NDE was the existence, as noted, of desperate and alarming levels of unemployment among young people, which posed a serious threat to national security and peace. The aim of the Small-Scale Industries and Graduate Employment Programme under the Directorate is to train and assist young graduates to set up small-scale enterprises for self-reliance and to generate employment for others (Azihs & Samuel, 2018). Morakinyo (2017) highlighted that almost all the young graduates who were unemployed needed training programme to re-orientate and inspire them into self-employment and self-reliance. But they also needed financial assistance (under "soft" and

concessionary conditions) to set up enterprises, and having done so, they would need management support services to sustain the effects of the training and financial assistance. According to NDE annual report (2006) the SSE programme provides the following services to unemployed graduates and other interested persons;

1. NDE Enterprise and Finance Counseling Clinic (NDE-EFCC)
2. Graduate Enterprise Attachment Scheme (GEAS)
3. Preparation, Processing and Packaging Training Scheme (PPPTS)
4. Special Micro Enterprises Empowerment Scheme (SMEES)

Methodology

The study employed a cross-sectional research plan which involves the collection of data at a specific point. (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). Also, the study used a quantitative and descriptive survey method aimed at assessing vocational skills development and small scale enterprises programmes of national directorate of employment for self-reliance among youths in north-east, Nigeria. This method is used when a researcher is interested in studying the opinions of the respondents about a particular situation (Fisher, 2010). Hence, the method was considered appropriate for achieving the objectives of this study. The unit of analysis for this study is individual.

The population of this study consisted of 1,302 NDE trainees (youths) who enrolled in the six NDE training centres of North- Eastern Nigeria (NDE, 2019). The NDE youth trainees were considered in this study due to the fact that they are the direct beneficiaries of the NDE core programmes (Maigida, *et al.*, 2017). The sample size of this study is 302 NDE trainees which was drawn from Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for sample size. According to Krejcie and Morgan, 302 NDE trainees are enough to represent even the population of 1400 trainees. The sample size for this study was increased to 418 to avoid non-response problem and sample size error as supported by Salkind (1997). The author further suggested that, a researcher can increase sample size up to



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40%. Proportional random sampling technique was used to select the required number of respondents in each training center in proportion to the population of NDE trainees in the area of study. The technique involves the division of a population into smaller sub-groups and selecting samples directly proportional to the sub-groups (Adams, 2020). The sampled trainees were randomly selected in each training center under investigation. This is because random selection produces a sample which are free from bias and give equal chance of selection to every element of the population (Sambo, 2005). Following this argument, the present study selected the respondents at random in each training centre of the NDE after proportionally determined the sample of trainees.

The research instruments were adapted from the previous research literature. Firstly, the vocational skills development is a variable with 12 items, while small scale enterprise has 11 items. All the items were adopted from Morakinyo (2017). All items adopted were measured on a 5-point rating scale ranging from 1 (very low extent) to 5 (very high extent). Expert's opinion was sought to ensure the face and content validity of the instruments.

Results

The output of descriptive statistics indicates that vocational skills development and small scale enterprise programmes trains youths for self-reliance to a high extent as the grand mean of vocational skills development is (M= 3.67, SD = .737), while that of small scale enterprise is (M= 4.09, SD = .536). All the means are above 3.50. That is, both vocational skills development and small scale enterprise programmes prepared youths for self-reliance to a high extent. This is in line with a

recommendation of Kabir, (2019). The study further analyzed to find out where the respondents differed significantly in their opinion on whether vocational skills development and small scale enterprise programmes trains youths for self-reliance to a high extent.

An Independent Sample t-test was performed in to find out whether there is a significant difference in the mean responses of graduate and non-graduate trainees of NDE on the extent to which vocational skills and small scale enterprise programmes trains youths for self-reliance. the evidence from the statistical outcome documented in Table indicates that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of graduate and non-graduate trainees of NDE on extent to which vocational skills development programme train youths for self-reliance in North-east, Nigeria $t(128) = 1.215, p = .092$. Hence, the mean response of vocational skills development graduate trainees (M= 3.82, SD = .637) is not significantly better than that of non-graduate trainees (M= 3.75, SD = .591). Similarly, Table 1 indicates that, there is no significant difference in the mean responses of graduate and non-graduate trainees of NDE on the extent to which small scale enterprises programme train youths for self-reliance in North-east, Nigeria $t(113) = 1.347, p = .181$. Therefore, the mean response of small scale enterprises graduates trainees (M= 4.17, SD = .391) is not greater than that of non-graduate trainees significantly (M= 4.04, SD = .589). The result implies that both graduate and non-graduate trainees of NDE have no different opinion on vocational skills development and small scale enterprise programmes trains youths for self-reliance to a high extent in North-east, Nigeria.



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Table 1: Independent samples t-test for mean responses of graduate and non-graduate trainees of NDE on extent to which vocational skills development and small scale enterprise programmes train youths for self-reliance in North-east, Nigeria.

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances								
Programme	Groups	N	F	Sig.	T	Mean	SD	Sig. (2-tailed)
VSD	Graduates	46	.832	.363	1.215	3.82	.637	.092
	Non-graduates	84				3.75	.591	
SSE	Graduates	45	1.512	.221	1.347	4.17	.391	.181
	Non-graduates	70				4.04	.589	

Note: (VSD= Vocational Skills Development, SSE= Small Scale Enterprise).

Discussions

The findings of this study revealed that vocational skills development and small scale enterprise programmes trains youths for self-reliance to a high extent in North-east, Nigeria. The finding is in consistent with Adebisi and Oni (2012) who found statistically that vocational skills development programme of NDE had operational schemes and job categories that trains trainees for self-reliance in South-western, Nigeria. Similar result was reported in the study of Comfort and Ngwama (2015) that vocational skills development programme of NDE had contributed significantly towards training and creating jobs for the unemployed youths within their capacity. The finding also concurred with Ekong and Ekong (2016) that, there is a positive connection between skills acquisition of vocational skills development programme of NDE and unemployment reduction. The result is again in agreement with Morakinyo (2017) that, the activities of vocational skills development programme of NDE is in the right direction of tackling unemployment due to skills training given to the participants. In addition, Ekong and Ekong (2016) reported a positive connection between skills acquisition of small scale enterprises programme of NDE and unemployment reduction. The finding is also in conformity with Azihs and Samuel (2018). Their findings indicated that, NDE small scale enterprises programme is contributing to entrepreneurship development for self-employment in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The present study provided empirical evidence on the extent to which vocational skills

development and small scale enterprise programmes trains youths for self-reliance to a high extent in North-east, Nigeria. The study proved that vocational skills development and small scale enterprise programmes of NDE trains youths for self-reliance to a high extent. Therefore, the persistent increase in unemployment particularly among the youths in North-east, Nigeria who are the most and direct beneficiaries of the core NDE programmes can be resolved by engaging more youths to core NDE programmes (i.e., vocational skills development and small scale enterprise).

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