



An Appraisal of the Implementation of Non-School Vocational and Apprenticeship Programmes in Rivers State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The provision of relevant skills needed by the youths for their wellbeing and productivity is important especially in the industrial world of technology. The focus of this paper is therefore to appraise the implementation of non-school based vocational and apprenticeship programmes in Rivers State. The paper looked at the School-To-Land Programmes, the National Directorate of Employment, Government Craft Development Centres, Industrial Units, The Adolescent Project (TAP), skill acquisition programmes, on and off-the-job scheme and the private apprenticeship scheme. On these bases the paper concludes that non-school based vocational and apprenticeship programmes have been provide and implemented in diverse forms in Rivers State. The paper inter-alia recommended that Rivers State government should ensure the continuity of the programmes and youths have been urged to make good use of the programme.

Introduction

Indeed, laudable forms of non-formal vocational education programmes or apprenticeship programmes have been provided in Rivers State. These programmes are aimed at ethically rehabilitating the students, morally re-orientate and socially and economically empower the youths and citizens of the State. Also, the programmes aims at training youth school leavers to acquire skills needed for self-reliant and providing better life options to adolescent girls and boys in order to improve their access to education, training, credit and health and reproductive services.

Vocational education programmes are provided in diverse form in Rivers State. These take the forms of school-based programmes (formal) and the non-formal vocational programmes. The school based programmes include the pre-vocational and vocational programmes offered in the three technical colleges in Rivers State and the Government Crafts Development centres and Local Government industrial unit in the twenty three local government areas in Rivers State; the Polytechnics Bori and the College of Technical Teacher Education at Omoku and Rivers State College of Education, Port Harcourt.

According to Ebete (2015), the non-formal/non-school based vocational programmes in Rivers State include such programmes as the Government Open apprenticeship scheme, the skill acquisition programmes, the private apprenticeship scheme and the on and off-the job technical training offered by industrial establishments.

The Implications of Non-school Based Vocational and Apprenticeship Programmes in Rivers State

These are vocational programmes designed by government to encourage and aid unemployed Rivers indigene acquire practical skills and entrepreneurship. Examples are:

- (a) **The school-to-land programmes:** The school-to-land programmes were established in 1985 with the objectives of training young learners in agriculture, livestock and poultry farming and place them on land acquired in all local government council areas of Rivers State so that the young school learners can forge careers in agriculture, livestock or poultry farming, etc. Furthermore, to train young school learners in fishing techniques and provide them with equipment and other inputs to enable the young school learners to forge careers in fishing (School-To-Land Authority Edict, 1985).
- (b) **The National Directorate of Employment (NDE):** this is a national programme established in 1986 with the objective of creating employment with emphasis on vocational skill and entrepreneurship (National Directorate of Employment, 1987). Just like in most states of the federation, the Directorate is established in Rivers State with four practical programmes, which include:

National Youth Employment and Vocational Skills Development Programme

Small-scale industrial and graduate employment programme

Agricultural sector employment programme

Special public works programme

- (c) **Government craft development centres:** Government craft development centres were established in Rivers State in 1980 with the main objective of training young school leavers to acquire skills that will enable them be self-reliant. Vocational training was available in the areas of diesel mechanic, craft engineering (general fitting and living), auto mechanic, etc (Nandi, 2003 as cited in Adiele, 2008:39). Training at the craft development centres run for three years and graduates are issued with craftsmanship and trade test certificate from the Federal Ministry of Labour. Students who studied business related programme such as bookkeeping, shorthand, typing, etc. write the National Board for Technical Education (NABTE) examination.
- (d) **Industrial Units:** Industrial units are also established by the Local Government Councils at the local government areas. Youths are trained on various trades and skill programme with the aim of; creating employment opportunities, provision of practical training opportunities, stimulation of rural resources, income generation and redistribution, better standard of living; and fostering large-scale production, reduction of rural-urban migration (Nandi, 2003 as cited in Adiele, 2008:40).
- (e) **The Adolescent Project (TAP) implications for techno-vocational programme:** The adolescent project in Rivers State was initiated by the wife of the Executive Governor, Justice Mrs. Mary Odili to ethnically rehabilitate, morally re-orientate and socially and economically empower adolescents with the view of inculcating leadership and respective citizenship qualities so that they do not become vulnerable to social vices (TAP Mission Statement, 2000:2). TAP aims at providing better life options to adolescent girls and boys in order to improve their access to education, training, credit and health and reproductive services. In this way, health is enhanced while poverty will be reduced; population growth slows down while national resources are used wisely for sustained economic development (Ezekiel-Hart, 2005 as cited in Adiele, 2008:40). TAP offers training skills in the following areas: Hairdressing, catering, auto mechanic, computer training and repairs, welding, sewing and fashion design, textile making and dying.

In addition to the formal vocational education programme offered in Rivers State, there are numerous vocational programmes under the private apprenticeship scheme which find expression in some entrepreneurial activities in areas such as carpentry, auto-mechanics, tailoring, typing, computer training, shoe making, hair dressing and restaurant operation, etc. Apart from the contributions these make to the socio-economic development of the state, it also offers the following benefits:

1. Opportunity to gain control over one's destiny
2. Opportunity to attain one's full potential
3. Opportunity to profit maximally, and
4. Opportunity to contribute to society and gain recognition (Nnadi, 2003).

Dike (1995) as cited in Adiele (2007=8) succinctly provides a clear definition of relevant school-based curriculum as one which: "endows learners with appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes which will enable them to harness resources (natural and human) in order to improve the quality of life and the environment. By harnessing natural resources, we mean being trained to identify the potentials of existing raw materials as a basis for economic and aesthetic growth and empowerment through the application of appropriate technology specifically. It means being able to realize that even the soil we stand on can be put to other uses apart from being a strong base for agriculture".

In a more recent study, Dike (2007:3) further reiterated that "a relevant school-based curriculum (education) is one that empowers its clients with appropriate technology to harness resources to not only survive out there in the external world, but to also improve the quality of life and the environment".

There are other non-formal vocational educations/vocational programmes red outside the school system. They include such programmes like the open apprenticeship scheme initiated by government and NGOs, the off-and-on the job training offered by industrial establishment and the private apprenticeship scheme.

Apprenticeship and vocational programmes designed by the government to encourage and aid unemployed Nigerians acquire practical skills and entrepreneurial ship. This is mostly achieved through public sector establishments such as the National Directorate for Employment (NDE). Vocational programme run by the directorate include:

- (a) National youth employment and vocational skills development programme.
- (b) Small scale industries and graduate employment programme and
- (c) Special public works programme

The National Youth Employment and vocational skill development programme has three main vocational programmes designed for skills acquisition. These include:

- (a) The National open apprenticeship scheme
- (b) Waste-to-wealth-scheme and

(c) The school on wheel scheme

The small-scale industries and graduate employment scheme is designed to encourage and aid unemployed Nigerians set up and run their own business, while the agricultural sector employment scheme is designed to provide self-employment in agriculture for school leavers and graduates with degree in agricultural science or related disciplines. There are numerous other vocational programmes initiated by various state governments to provide skill for their youths. In Rivers State for example, there is the school-to-land agricultural programme initiated in 1985 and the government craft development programmes established at the various local government headquarters.

Skill acquisition programmes by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

Non-Governmental Organisations are also involved in providing skills acquisition programmes aimed at training both school dropout and the unemployed adolescents in skills that will enable them become self-reliant. A good example of such programme is the Adolescent Project (TAP) initiated by Justice Mary Odili, the wife of the former governor of Rivers State, Dr. Peter Odili. Essentially, TAP aims at giving options for a better life for adolescents girls and boys in order to improve their access to education, training, credit and health and reproductive services. In this way, it is believed that family well-being will be enhanced while poverty is reduced; population growth slows down while natural resources are used wisely for sustained national development (TAP Mission Statement, 2000 as cited in Adiele, 2008).

On and off-the-job scheme

These are training programmes offered by employers of labour by directly being involved in the training of their employees in skills desired by the establishment. Apart from paying for the training of such skills, the employers of labour have the clear idea of what they need and therefore channel their training programmes towards those needs. The public works departments of the public sector, the banks and most other private sector establishment have been involved in the training of its workforce on on-the-job training programmes (Ebong and Adiele, 2006).

The private apprenticeship scheme

These are vocational programmes provided by craftsmen and private investors in diverse areas such as auto-mechanic, furniture making, electrical repairs and installations, fabrications, glazing and painting, sculpture and ceramics, hair dressing, dress making, etc. Majority of these vocations are classified as 'roadside'. Their existence have contributed immensely to national development as they have proved most rewarding in meeting the needs of society in diverse ways and their products are reasonably self-reliant.

Recommendations

1. Rivers State citizens and youths have been urged to ensure that they make good use of the diverse provision of non-school based vocational or apprenticeship programmes provided by the State Government.
2. Rivers State government should ensure that the non-school based vocational or apprenticeship continued.
3. Rivers state government should ensure that the programmes are spread across all the local government in Rivers State.
4. Youths in Rivers State are advised to shun violence and cultism and embrace the laudable apprenticeship programmes provided in Rivers State.

Conclusion

Non-school based vocational or apprenticeship programmes are provided in diverse forms in Rivers State to provide the citizens and youths with relevant skills needed for their wellbeing, productive and self-reliance. Youths are therefore required or advised to embrace these programmes for their entire wellbeing.

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