

Assessing the Impact of Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA) Vocational Programmes on Youth Empowerment in Rivers State: A Review of 2007 – 2015

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Abstract: The study assesses the Impact of Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency Vocational (RSSDA) Programmes on Youth Empowerment in Rivers State: A Review of 2007 – 2015. A descriptive survey design was adopted to guide the study. The centre has about 50 instructors and 420 trainees which were used for the study; hence there was no sampling due to small population size. Three research questions and three hypotheses were answered and tested in the study at 0.05 significant levels. The instrument used for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled 'Impact of Vocational Programmes on Youth Empowerment Questionnaire' (IVPYEQ). The reliability of the instrument was established through test-retest method for measure of stability. A reliability coefficient of 0.84 was established using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) coefficient reliability method. Research questions were answered using Mean with Standard Deviation while hypotheses were tested with independent sample t-test. It was found that RSSDA vocational programmes implementation equip the youth with relevant skills, granting of loans to establish technical trades, training the youth to fill vocational and technical gaps in the state. It was also found that monitoring/supervision of RSSDA vocational programme for youth's empowerment are done through assigning task to administrative and technical staff, planning for number of TVET instructors/trainees needed, organizes material resources for the training among others. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that government should provide employment opportunities to trainees after graduation or provide equipment/machine and tools to start-up the skills they have learnt, management of vocational centres should ensure proper regulation on monitoring of vocational programmes especially in areas of trainees and instructors and government should discourage given financial inducement or settlement to the youth, rather create more technical and vocational centers where they could be taught practical skills that will assist them for a living and to take responsibilities of their life and family.

Keywords: Assessing, RSSDA, Vocational Programmes, Youth, Empowerment, Impact

Introduction

Education is rightly perceived as the vehicle for effective human and national development. Wards in Ovbiagele (2015) believe that education is an essential motive force for progress. According to Okoye (2014), an educated man is the gentleman who is socially, morally, intellectually and physically equipped to fit into, and is useful to himself and to the society. It follows therefore that to be able to fit into the society and be fully integrated into it, one needs to acquire some vocational skills and competencies for self-reliance. This fact makes Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) popular as a vital tool for addressing social and economic challenges of nations, Nigeria inclusive and also to enhance youth empowerment. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) helps learners to acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to enter the world of work (UNESCO 2010) and that acquisition of TVET skills by the youth through programmes will enhance their empowerment.

Empowerment according to Emejuru (2015) is an economic and labour concept which means the impartations of labour skills and sensitivity to an able-bodied mentally fit individual to enable them participate in the harnessing and distribution of economic and social resources for meaningful self-benefit and the improvement of the society. This means that to empower an individual is to train, educate, and cause him/her to acquire a means of livelihood or skill in order to enable them to live usefully and optimally in the society. In view of World Bank (2011), empowerment is the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups (youths) to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Empowerment processes are targeted towards the youth because they are considered as the main hub through which development revolves as a result of their ability, creativity and innovations. For any nation to sustain its development, it must capture the contributions of the youth since they are the active driving force of the economy.

Youths according to the National Youth Development Policy (NYDP, 2001) is defined as people between the ages of 18 -35 years. The National Population Commission (NPC, 2006) asserted that youths constitute about forty percent(40%) of the one hundred and forty (140) million people of Nigeria. They are the driving force and the prime mover of a nation's economy. Their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pace of development and security of a nation. Thus, the level of attainment of any industrialized and developed nation depends on the extent to which the youths have been trained in TVET and empowered in applying various skills and professions such as carpentry, metal works, construction and maintenance, electrical/electronics, textile production, trade etc. These skills could only be achieved when the people are deeply inculcated into a concretized designed TVET programmes which will empower the youths with skills to live, learn and work as an industrial productive citizen in the society (Okoro, 2013). Acquisition of TVET skills by the youth through RSSDA programmes will enhance their empowerment.

In realization of these goals and objectives and for the empowerment of youths in Rivers State, the Rivers State Government in 2007 established the Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (abbreviated as RSSDA) under the Sustainable Development Agency Law of No. 3 of 2007. It was an agency dedicated to promoting programmes and activities aimed at eradicating poverty, developing rural areas and empowering the youth. It succeeds the Rivers State Sustainable Development Program (RSSDP) originally introduced by the Federal Government of Nigeria to improve lives of ordinary people in the State. RSSDA was later formally established as an autonomous entity under the office of the Executive Governor of Rivers State. RSSDA formally started operations in January 2008 under the leadership of its pioneer Executive Director, Mr. Bolaji Ogunseye, who was RSSDP's Technical Team Leader and was on secondment to RSSDA from SHELL Nigeria. In 2009, the Executive Governor, Rt. Hon. Chibuike Amaechi, appointed a supervisory chairman, Precious Omuku to oversee activities in the agency and in February 2010, a new Executive Director, Noble Pepple a seasoned administrator on secondment from SHELL was appointed to run the RSSDA activities (RSSDA Bulletin, 2013).

The Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA) is a strategic initiative of the Rivers State Government set up by law in 2007 to refocus development efforts in the areas of poverty alleviation, grassroots development and youth empowerment in the state. According to RSSDA Bulletin (2013), the Agency's flagship programmes include the State Governor's Special Overseas Scholarship Scheme, The Overseas Technical Training Scheme, The Greater Horizon Opportunities Programme (GHOP), The Graduate Work Experience Placement Scheme (GWEPS), The Acclaimed Excellence in Local Governance Initiative (ELGI), The Rivers State North Growth Pole Projects (RSNGPP), The Workmanship and Technical Training Centre (WTTC) in Bori and the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) through which it aims to enhance the state's human capital base. Another critical area of mandate for RSSDA is the development of sustainable agro allied potentials of Rivers State. The Songhai Farm at Bunu Tai (under the Songhai Rivers Initiative) is being strategically developed to serve as the hub for all agricultural programmes in the state.

Among the different types of programmes undertaken by Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA), this study focuses on the Workmanship and Technical Training Centre Bori, which was the vocational programme carried out by RSSDA to equip the people (youth) with the needed skills and resources that would enable them come together to implement development programmes on their own. According to the Executive Director of RSSDA, the Workmanship and Technical Training Centre (WTTC), Bori is being implemented by RSSDA as part of the vision of the former Governor of Rivers State, Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi to develop the state's skills manpower base to meet the current and future development need. The centre provides vocational education and training based on international best practices. The purpose of the centre was to equip Rivers State youths with relevant skills leading to internationally recognized certification thereby enabling them to get employed and also fill vocational and technical gaps in the state and beyond.

Statement of the Problem

The Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA) is a strategic initiative of the Rivers State Government set up by law in 2007 to refocus development efforts in the areas of poverty alleviation, grassroots development and youth empowerment in the state. Its primary objective is the development of manpower and building of capacity in the areas of education, skills development, and health so as to address some of the gaps in the current and future manpower needs of the state (RSSDA, 2007). It has been observed by Deebom and Okwelle (2016) that poverty and its symptoms are dominant features in Rivers State since the vast majority of the inhabitants, especially the youths are considered to be perpetually poor, unemployed and lacked marketable skills. This may have resulted from lack of appropriate skills by graduates in particular and Rivers State youth in general. These developmental issues might have informed the Rivers State Government to set up the Workmanship and Technical Training Centre, Bori under the RSSDA vocational programmes for the youth to be trained in various skills. This programme was targeted towards the development of technical skills among the

youth with the aims of curbing poverty level and unemployment. In spite of this technical training, high number of youth are still unemployed and unskilled, resulting to high level of kidnapping, armed robbery, cultism, raping, illegal bunkery, oil theft among others in the state. Hence, this study set to assess the impact of Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency Vocational Programmes on Youth Empowerment in Rivers State with a review from 2007 – 2015.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of Rivers State sustainable development Agency vocational programmes on youth empowerment in Rivers State: A Review of 2007 – 2015. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine how the objectives of RSSDA Vocational programmes are being implemented in Rivers State.
2. Identify how monitoring/supervision of RSSDA vocational programmes enhance youth empowerment in Rivers State.
3. Ascertain how RSSDA vocational programmes impact on the lives of youth in Rivers State.

Research Questions

Three research questions were posed to guide the study:

1. How does the objective of RSSDA vocational programmes being implemented in Rivers State?
2. How does monitoring/supervision of RSSDA vocational programmes on youth empowerment in Rivers State being implemented?
3. How does the implementation of RSSDA vocational programmes impact on the lives of Rivers State youths?

Hypotheses

Three null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and were tested at 0.05 levels of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean response of instructors and trainees on the extent of implementation of the objectives of RSSDA vocational programmes on youth empowerment in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of instructors and trainees on the monitoring/supervision of RSSDA vocational programmes on youth empowerment in Rivers State.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of instructors and trainees on the impact of RSSDA vocational programmes on youth empowerment in Rivers State.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The study was carried out in Rivers State. The population of the study comprised all the trainees and instructors in Workmanship and Technical Training Centre (WTTC) Bori. As at the time of this study, the center has about 50 instructors and 420 trainees (Source: RSSDA Bulletin, 2014). There was no sampling due to the relative small population size; hence the entire population of the instructors and trainees were used for the study. The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled "Impact of Vocational Programmes on Youth Empowerment Questionnaire" (IVPYEQ). The instrument contains 49 self-structured item statements. The instrument was divided into section A and B. Section A was designed to elicit the demographic status of both trainees and instructors while Section B was used to obtain information relating to the purpose of the study. The instrument was patterned after Likert-5-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with numerical values of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

Copies of the instrument were given to three experts in the Department of Vocational and Technology Education in Rivers State University of Port Harcourt and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni Port Harcourt for face and content validity. They vetted the instrument in terms of relevance, appropriateness and language use. Their recommendations and corrections were incorporated into the final version of the instrument before administration. The reliability of the instrument was established through a test-retest method for measure of stability of the instrument. Simple random sampling was used to draw 20 trainees and 10 instructors from Songhai Rivers Initiative (SRI) Bonu Tai that has similar vocational characteristic with WTTC. Copies of the instrument were administered to the 20 trainees and 10 instructors. After an interval of two weeks, the same instrument was re-administered to the same group. The initial (test) and the re-test scores of the sample group were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) method. A reliability

coefficient of 0.84 was established for the instrument which was considered reliable. Completed copies of the instrument (IVPYEQ) was administered to both the instructors and trainees at the vocational programme centre and collected for analysis. The total instrument distributed was 470 copies out of which 437 copies were retrieved and used for the study. This shows 93% return rate. Research questions were analyzed using Mean with Standard Deviation. The decision was to agree an item if mean calculated is greater than 3.00. On the other hand, an item was disagree if mean calculated is less than 3.00. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using the t-test. The t-test was adopted in this study to test large samples because as the sample size becomes sufficiently large, the t-distribution coincides with the z-distribution (Nworgu, 2015; Nwankwo, 2013). If the calculated value of t (tcal) is less than critical value of t (tcrit), the hypothesis was accepted but if the calculated value of t (tcal) is greater than or equal to the critical value of t (tcrit), the hypothesis is rejected. The data were analyzed with Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 20.10.

Results

The results of the study are presented as follows.

Research Question 1: How does the objectives of RSSDA Vocational Programmes being implemented in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean Response of Respondents on the Objectives/Goals of RSSDA Vocational Programme in Rivers State

S/No	RSSDA Vocational Programmes are Implemented through;	Instructors		Decision	Trainees		Decision
		X ₁	SD ₁		X ₂	SD ₂	
1	Equipping the youth with relevant skills.	4.06	1.08	Agreed	4.10	0.92	Agreed
2	Granting of loans to establish technical trades.	3.31	0.81	Agreed	3.23	1.00	Agreed
3	Training the youths to fill vocational and technical gaps in the state.	3.57	0.72	Agreed	3.68	0.88	Agreed
4	Workmanship drive and skill acquisition.	4.04	1.02	Agreed	4.22	0.97	Agreed
5	RSSDA programme develop the individual through their graduate scheme training.	3.67	0.61	Agreed	3.84	0.61	Agreed
6	Evaluation and assessing existing vocational and technical programmes.	3.49	0.78	Agreed	3.40	1.02	Agreed
7	Creating a conducive environment for the youth to empower themselves economically.	3.84	0.91	Agreed	3.88	0.66	Agreed
8	Creating a pool of better skilled youths in Rivers State.	3.35	1.04	Agreed	3.47	0.71	Agreed
9	Increases youth population that can make informed choices.	3.57	0.88	Agreed	3.72	1.03	Agreed
10	Training youth on skills to be job creators and employers of labour.	3.86	1.14	Agreed	3.95	0.62	Agreed
	Grand Mean/SD	3.68	0.89	Agreed	3.75	0.84	Agreed

Source: Researchers' Field Result, 2017

Result in Table 1 shows the respondents group (Instructors and Trainees) and their level of decision on a particular item. Item 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 were unanimously agreed by both respondents (instructors and trainees) with a mean value of 3.00 and above. However, the small size of the Standard Deviation of less than 1.00 indicates that the respondents were homogeneous or the same in their opinion. On the other hand, a standard deviation of 1.00 and above implies that the respondents were heterogeneous or divided in their opinion.

Research Question 2: How does monitoring/supervision of RSSDA vocational programmes on youth empowerment in Rivers State being implemented?

Table 2: Mean Response of Respondents on the Extent of Monitoring/Supervision of RSSDA Vocational Programme on Youth Empowerment in Rivers State

S/No	RSSDA Monitors and Supervise TVET Programmes Through:	Instructors			Trainees		
		X ₁	SD ₂	Decision	X ₂	SD ₂	Decision
30	Planning for number of TVET instructors/trainees needed.	3.59	0.94	Agreed	3.96	0.80	Agreed
31	Assigns task to administrative and technical staff.	3.47	0.73	Agreed	3.49	0.93	Agreed
32	Organizes material resources for the programme.	3.53	0.81	Agreed	3.61	0.62	Agreed
33	Planning for instructional materials required for effective teaching/learning.	3.71	0.62	Agreed	3.78	0.58	Agreed
34	Assesses the staff and trainees periodically.	3.53	1.06	Agreed	3.77	1.04	Agreed
35	By ensuring full curriculum implementation.	3.39	0.70	Agreed	3.58	1.00	Agreed
36	Checking the performance of the trainees.	3.76	1.04	Agreed	3.87	0.67	Agreed
37	Assessment of physical facilities like; equipment, workshop, laboratories, etc.	3.54	0.56	Agreed	3.63	0.91	Agreed
38	Appraising instructors and trainees periodically.	3.22	0.81	Agreed	3.35	0.73	Agreed
39	Organizes human resources for the programme	3.41	0.66	Agreed	3.50	0.61	Agreed
	Grand Mean/SD	3.52	0.79	Agreed	3.65	0.75	Agreed

Source: Researchers' Field Result, 2017

Table 2 shows that the respondents group (Instructors and Trainees) and their level of decision on a particular item. Item 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38 and 39 were unanimously agreed by both respondents (instructors and trainees) with a mean value of 3.00 and above. However, the small size of the Standard Deviation of less than 1.00 indicates that the respondents were homogeneous or the same in their opinion. On the other hand, a standard deviation of 1.00 and above implies that the respondents were heterogeneous or divided in their opinion.

Research Question 3: How does the implementation of RSSDA vocational programmes impact on the lives of Rivers State youths?

Table 3: Mean Response of Respondents on the Extent of Implementing RSSDA Vocational Programme in Rivers State

S/No	The following are the impact of RSSDA:	Instructors			Trainees		
		X ₁	SD ₂	Decision	X ₂	SD ₂	Decision
40	Scholarship to Rivers State youth (local and international).	4.28	0.60	Agreed	4.60	0.81	Agreed
41	Provision of employment opportunities.	4.12	1.00	Agreed	4.19	0.63	Agreed
42	Provision of access road to the host community.	3.22	0.84	Agreed	3.33	0.72	Agreed
43	Granting of loans to small scale business.	4.50	0.62	Agreed	4.53	0.84	Agreed
44	Empowerment of the youth in agro-industries.	3.60	1.03	Agreed	3.70	0.51	Agreed
45	Development of youth in technical skills.	4.54	0.80	Agreed	4.62	1.06	Agreed
46	Provision of transformers and electricity to host communities.	2.44	0.79	Disagreed	2.30	0.81	Disagreed

47	Construction/rehabilitation of health centre across the state.	2.39	0.90	Disagreed	2.35	0.62	Disagreed
48	Construction of water supply and plant.	2.47	1.23	Disagreed	2.23	1.16	Disagreed
49	Rehabilitation of public schools.	2.29	1.02	Disagreed	2.38	1.06	Disagreed
Grand Mean/SD		3.50	0.88	Agreed	3.52	0.82	Agreed

Source: *Researchers' Field Work; 2017*

Table 3 shows that the respondents group (Instructors and Trainees) and their level of decision on a particular item. Item 40, 41, 42, 43, 44 and 45 were unanimously agreed by both respondents (instructors and trainees) with a mean value of 3.22 and above. Although, the respondents both disagreed item 46, 47, 48 and 49. However, the small size of the Standard Deviation of less than 1.00 indicates that the respondents were homogeneous or the same in their opinion. On the other hand, a standard deviation of 1.00 and above implies that the respondents were heterogeneous or divided in their opinion.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the mean response of instructors and trainees on the extent of implementation of the objectives/goals of RSSDA vocational programmes on youth empowerment in River State.

Table 4: t-Test Analysis on Implementation of Objectives of RSSDA Vocational Programmes on Youth Empowerment in Rivers State

Groups	Mean	SD	N	Df	t _{cal}	t _{crit}	Decision
Instructors	3.68	0.89	50	468	-1.50	1.96	Accepted
Trainees	3.75	0.84	420				

Source: *Researchers' Field survey, 2016.* If $t_{cal} < t_{crit}$, H_0 is accepted else reject

Result in Table 4 revealed that t-cal (-1.50) is less than t-crit (1.96) which indicates that the hypothesis stated is accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in the mean response of the respondents on the implementation of the objectives/goals of RSSDA vocational programmes on youth empowerment in Rivers State.

2. There is no significant difference in the mean response of instructors and trainees on the monitoring/supervision of RSSDA vocational programmes on youth empowerment in River State

Table 5: t-Test Analysis on Monitoring/Supervision of RSSDA Vocational Programmes in Rivers State

Groups	Mean	SD	N	Df	t _{cal}	t _{crit}	Decision
Instructors	3.52	0.79	50	468	-1.05	1.96	Accepted
Trainees	3.65	0.75	420				

Source: *Researchers' Field survey, 2017.* If $t_{cal} < t_{crit}$, H_0 is accepted else reject

Result in Table 5 Revealed that t-cal (-1.05) is less than t-crit (1.96) which indicates that the hypothesis stated is accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in the mean response of the respondents on the monitoring/supervision of RSSDA vocational programmes in Rivers State.

3. There is no significant difference in the mean response of instructors and trainees on the impact of RSSDA vocational programmes on youth empowerment in River State.

Table 6: t-Test Analysis on Impact of RSSDA Vocational Programmes on Youth Empowerment in Rivers State

Groups	Mean	SD	N	df	t _{cal}	t _{crit}	Decision
Instructors	3.50	0.88	50	468	-0.15	1.96	Accepted
Trainees	3.52	0.82	420				

Source: *Researchers' Field survey, 2016.* If $t_{cal} < t_{crit}$, H_0 is accepted else reject

Result in table 6. Revealed that t-cal (-0.15) is less than t-crit (1.96) which indicates that the hypothesis stated is accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in the mean response of the respondents on the impact of RSSDA vocational programmes on youth empowerment in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The results in Table 1 found that RSSDA Vocational Programmes implementation equip the youth with relevance skills, granting of loans to establish technical trades, training the youth to fill vocational and technical gaps in the state, workmanship drive and skills acquisition, creating enabling environment for the youth to empower themselves economically, creating a pool of better skilled youth in Rivers State, increases youth population that can make informed choices and trained youth on skills to be job creators and employers of labour in Rivers State were implemented. These findings are in line with Nwafor (2007) who stated that vocational educational program should aim at empowering people to contribute to environmentally sound sustainable development through occupational areas of their life for human capacity building. Also, Banjo, in Ojo (2008), opined that the most important characteristics of a system of technical and vocational programme are that it must be relevant in functional terms and the objectives and content must be selected and designed to cover the spectrum of technical and vocational needs of the society (in terms of skill and manpower development). Banjo also contended that technical education is vocational education in its provision of skills and manpower for industrial and other vocational and technical skills that a society requires for its socio-economic advancement.

Table 2 found that monitoring/supervision of RSSDA vocational programme for youth's empowerment are done through assigning task to administrative and technical staff, planning for number of TVET instructors/trainees needed, organizes material resources for the training, planning for instructional materials required for effective teaching/learning and assesses the staff and trainees periodically. These findings are in corroboration with Osarenren and Irabor (2012) who stated that in order for the objectives of a programme to be successfully actualized, there are some fundamental needs that must be adequately provided. These basic needs include monitoring/supervision of the resources of both human and materials. The RSSDA vocational programmes functions of teaching, learning, research and public service are often pursued with a view of satisfying these goals of manpower development for the society, skill development for its individuals and product of cultivated individual with survival value orientation as well as an objective view of society.

Table 3 found that RSSDA vocational programmes have impacted on the lives of Rivers State youths through provision of employment opportunities, granting of loans to small scale business, empowerment of the youth in agro-industries, development of youth in technical skills, scholarship to Rivers State youth (local and international) and rehabilitation of public schools. This result uphold that of Garuba as cited in Ugomma (2010) stressed that vocational programme generally plays a critical role in the life of humans, because it presents a solid vehicle for human transformation and empowerment of individuals and the society through empowerment. Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in particular, is an instrument of empowerment that seeks to provide the youth with the skills required for sound social living.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that RSSDA have implemented its vocational programmes by equipping youths with relevant skills, training of the youths to fill vocational gaps in the state. Also, monitoring and supervision of RSSDA vocational programmes have enhance youth empowerment through its plans for number of instructors and trainee. RSSDA have impacted on the lives of Rivers State youth through their vocational programme. These skills include; electrical wiring and installation, electronics repair, vehicle maintenance and repair, block work and concrete, plumbing and pipe works, painting and decoration, welding and fabrication, cosmetology, computer training programme among others.

Recommendations

The following recommendation was made based on the findings of the study.

1. The government should provide employment opportunities to trainees after graduation or equipment/machine and tools to start-up the skills they have learnt. This will help to curb poverty level and reduce kidnapping, illegal bunker, arm robbery, cultism, etc. in the State.
2. Management of vocational centres should ensure proper regulation on monitoring of vocational programmes especially in areas of trainees and instructors. This will make management of the programmes efficient and effective which will instructional and training effective.
3. Government should discourage given financial inducement or settlement to the youth, rather create more technical and vocational centers where they could be taught practical skills that will assist them for a living and to take responsibilities of their life and family.

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