

Education for Self-Employment: An Appraisal of Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme

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Abstract

The study appraised Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development undergraduate programme in respect to the self-employment abilities it confers on her students. The research design employed was the descriptive survey technique. The population consisted all the undergraduate students of Adult Education and Community Development, and graduates of the programme precisely 2012/2013 graduates, totalling 468 people. Simple random sampling technique was used to compose a sample of 200 people (169 students; 31 graduates,) for the study. Three research questions were answered in the study. The instrument used was two structured questionnaire titled Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme and Graduate's Perception of Self-employment Abilities Questionnaire (RSUAECDPGPSEAQ); and Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme and Student's Perception of Self-employment Abilities Questionnaire (RSUAECDPGPSEAQ). They were subjected to face and content validation by experts in Adult Education and, Measurement and Evaluation. Mean was used to answer the research questions, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) was used to test the hypotheses. The findings showed a significant relationship in the two hypotheses. The result implies that Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme equips students with skills needed for post-graduation self-employment. Students and graduates however lack presentation skills needed to market these skills to potential clients. The study recommended collaborative efforts of National University Commission with all faculties on our campuses to emphasize skills needed for post-graduation self-employment through her academic programmes.

Keywords: Conflicts, Communal Conflicts, Community Development, Ogoni People

Introduction

More often than not, people pursue tertiary education as a means to an end. They have dreams of getting gainfully employed on completion of their chosen course. Many continue schooling to the tertiary level with the aim of getting better pay and better preference than others in the labour market. Even parents believe that Schoolwork should always come first. As they see it, disagreeing with the accepted wisdom about education is tantamount to child abuse so they give their all towards their children's schooling till tertiary levels.

But formal education sealed with a university degree is not always the bargain that many people pretend it is. In the case of tertiary education, the sticker price is about ₦200,000 and rising Falola (2019). That does not include the opportunity cost of spending four years insulated from the pressures and demands of adult life. Plus, there is no guarantee that a job will await today's college students once they get a diploma. In fact, present realities in Nigeria have shattered the hope of countless youths as they comb the streets every day in search of jobs that are not readily available. Youths commit suicide at the slightest provocation due to hopelessness (Bolarin 2012).

Nigeria, being the biggest black nation in the world ought to have a very strong economy capable of employing almost all the citizens but unfortunately, the unemployment rate in Nigeria hit an all-time high of 23.10 percent in the third quarter of 2018 and had stayed so till date (National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria 2018). An instance of this is the recent COVID pandemic disaster globally challenging the entire world. (Amirize, Kobani, Taylor 2020) most countries are now in recession as many businesses have been ground to an abrupt halt. It is not only a global pandemic and public health crisis, it has also severely affected the global economy and financial markets leading to significant reductions in transportation, service and manufacturing industries.

In the time past, even though the government could not absorb all job-seekers; the unemployment rate was at the barest minimum because other companies and businesses were booming and could absorb the rest. Nowadays, companies retrench instead of employing, governments place ban on employment for years and small businesses fold up (Onyenemezu 2012). Foreign investors who would have helped reduce the number of job seekers, are scared to come invest in Nigeria for many reasons which are beyond the scope of this work.

What then becomes the way forward when the agencies for employment are losing their prowess? Who will absorb the teeming number of graduates being turned out from our tertiary education system daily? Is there even a level playing ground for fresh graduate businesses to thrive in Nigeria? To answer these questions, one needs to go back to the dressing room where these graduates are prepared for work life- our tertiary institutions. Tertiary education, also referred to as third stage, education, is the educational level following the completion of a school providing a secondary education. It is an optional final stage of formal learning often delivered at universities, polytechnics, academies, colleges, seminaries, conservatories, and institutes of technology. Tertiary education typically seeks to ensure students have a broad understanding of many subjects, with an extensive and deep understanding of a particular field

of study. It is an educational level where one is exposed to diverse knowledge while focusing extensively on one field. A popular campus pun says ‘a university is a universe in a city and a city in a universe’. The diverse experiences on campus positions tertiary education graduates for the inter-relatedness of knowledge in the future. Completers of tertiary education institutions are awarded with certificates, diplomas, and other degrees. Justifying the need for tertiary (higher) education, Wilhelm von Humboldt in a letter to the Prussian king, wrote:

There are undeniably certain kinds of knowledge that must be of a general nature and, more importantly, a certain cultivation of the mind and character that nobody can afford to be without. People obviously cannot be good craftworkers, merchants, soldiers or businessmen unless, regardless of their occupation, they are good, upstanding and – according to their condition – well-informed human beings and citizens. If this basis is laid through schooling, vocational skills are easily acquired later on, and a person is always free to move from one occupation to another, as so often happens in life. (Günther, K. H. 1988: page 127–136.)

Adult education and community development as a programme of study on the other hand, refers to any educational programme(s) developed by a tertiary institution and organized as an academic plan to move its beneficiaries towards a career path in helping adults to learn and improve their communal life. (Kobani, D. and Kpurunee, F. B (2019) It means being awarded a university degree as a qualified adult educator who can positively motivate other adults to learn and better their lots. We must not forget that adults are the ones presently at the hem of all human affairs. Deductive reasoning would reveal that if adult education clientele (the adults), can be found in all spheres; then adult education as a profession covers all human endeavours. Nwafor (2006) calls this all-encompassing tendency, jack of all trade; master of all. This makes it imperative to offer these adults varied learning opportunities to enable them impact the society no matter their walks of life. Thus, the need to train individuals who should be able to guide these adults as desired. This is the simple reason for having Adult education as a programme of study in Nigerian Universities. Universities and their equivalents are the final breeding ground for the Nigerian intellectual labour force as it were, hence the introduction of Adult Education as a course of study. In Rivers State University, Adult education and community development was housed in the department of Educational Foundations, faculty of education, until about 3 months ago when it became an autonomous Department in the faculty.

The National Policy on Education (2004, p.9) already provided Adult and non-formal education (community education) as an instrument par excellence for lifelong education. Section 6 of the Policy outlined the goals of adult and non-formal education to include providing functional literacy and continuing education for adults and the youths, provide education for different categories of completers of the formal education system to improve their basic knowledge and skills, provide in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and give adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetics, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

Why Adult Education for Self-Employment?

A trip to Nigerian campuses will reveal that our students are trained to be their best so that they can get jobs and survive. Schools seem to forget that even if everyone strives for and achieves excellence from schools; the agencies to absorb them all are lacking. This is why our educational system must go back to the drawing board and re-strategize. Our students must not come out of school without entrepreneurship education; a craft and a communication skill to liaise with clients. This is to ensure that graduates who will not readily find jobs won't despair like many of our youths do today. Survival is tough out of school especially when one does not have a job and it is really not the best time for someone to go learn a trade. That can be likened to preparing for war on the battle field; of course, that will be suicidal.

Our tertiary education system should prepare youths for self-employment first before job-seeking. This can only happen when marketable in-demand skills are infused into the university curriculum. Sadly, our educational system waits till students are out of tertiary institutions before tackling this challenge through SAED (Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development). SAED is a nationwide initiative of the NYSC (National Youth Service Corps) targeted at young Nigerian graduates mobilized and deployed in the one-year mandatory service with the primary mandate of promoting self-reliance in the Nigerian youth. It is designed to be implemented within the framework of the Corps members camping exercises (in –camp) and also throughout the service year of Corps members (post camp) during which corps members will be encouraged to learn in-demand industry skills, position themselves to become value creators and leverage a bouquet of career and business start-up opportunities (Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development 2000).

Note must be taken of the fact that during the one-year mandatory service corps, Nigerian graduates are deployed to alien states of the federation as a means of fostering national unity. Considering the time frame, inconveniences and the engagements of NYSC in the country, one

begins to wonder if anyone can really learn and master a new skill. Tension wielding from thoughts of how to cope with camp rigours; settle down in a foreign land, serve your place of primary assignment, stay far away from family and friends make the NYSC period a tough time to really learn a trade. How and when should we then train our youths to be creators of jobs and not job seekers?

This study will highlight the following abilities:

Professionalism;

- Reliability;
- The ability to cope with uncertainty;
- The ability to work under pressure;
- The ability to plan and think strategically;
- The capability to communicate and interact with others, either in teams or through networking;
- Information and Communication Technology skills;
- Creativity and self-confidence;
- Good self-management and time-management skills;
- A willingness to learn and accept responsibility

Statement of the Problem

The statement of the study's problem centres on the noticeable large-scale unemployment that has been staring graduates of Nigerian universities. Unemployment is one of the most disturbing problems facing federal, state governments and unemployed graduates. Most Nigeria graduates come out of university programmes looking for jobs which are not readily available. Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme as a course of study in this era of mass unemployment must not add to the number of unemployed graduates roaming the streets when the course is blessed with so many self-employment potentials. The problem of this study therefore is: Has Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme decorated its beneficiaries with post-graduation self-employment abilities?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to determine how exposure to Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme could influence Students' self-employment abilities both on campus and after graduation. The specific objectives include among other things to:

1. Find out the relationship that exists between Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme and post-graduation self-employment abilities?
2. Highlight ways that Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme has exerted a significant effect on the acquisition of creative skills needed for post-graduation self-employment abilities?
3. Demonstrate that Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme has significant influence on students' self-employment abilities?

Research Questions

The following research questions were stated to guide the study:

1. What relationships exist between Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme and self-employment abilities?
2. In what ways has Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme exerted significant effect on the acquisition of creative skills needed for self-employment abilities?
3. How can it be demonstrated that Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme has significant influence on students' self-employment abilities?

Conceptual Review

Adult education and Community Development in Rivers State University

Rivers State University (RSU), formerly Rivers State University of Science and Technology, is a university located in the Diobu area of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The university was established in October, 1980 from the Rivers State College of Science and Technology which was itself established in 1972. (Rivers State University, 2017). The University has seven faculties; Agriculture, Engineering, Environmental Sciences, Law, Management Sciences, Science, Education; and a budding college of medicine. The University runs 37 programmes at the undergraduate level and 86 at the postgraduate level. Rivers State University is the first technological university in Nigeria and also the first university to be situated within the Niger Delta (Orobor 2008). In 2014, it was rated as Nigeria's best E-learning institution and was ranked as the 15th best university in the country (Rivers State University, 2017). Rumour has it that adult education and community development as a programme of study was introduced in the school because oil companies located within the region needed trained personnel who could amicably liaise with host communities for community development projects. Adult education and community development programme was an Option in the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education. However, very recently (about 3 Months ago),

Adult education and community development programme gained autonomy as a Department within the Faculty. Nigeria operates a 6-3-3-4 educational system therefore many tertiary education courses run for 4 years except for some courses that run for more. Adult education and community development as a programme of study runs for 4 years with students being exposed to a preferred teaching subject, swimming, computer, and several other life skills.

Adult Education and Community Development Programme and Self-Employment Abilities

Mayombe (2017) studied Non-formal adult education for self-employment: the importance of post training support for micro-enterprise development in South Africa. The population consisted of adults who face long-term unemployment due to a lack of marketable skills; and even those who remained unemployed after completing adult non-formal education (NFE) programmes in South Africa province. The study sample was drawn from the 326 adult training centres in KwaZulu- Natal KZN. From the selected 21 centres, the sample size consisted of 420 trainees. The purpose of the article was to investigate major challenges trainees of NFE programmes for self-employment encounter in starting and growing small businesses, and the types of post-training support they receive from public and private institutions in (KZN) province. The findings reveal that weak institutional linkages result in trainees not having access to essential post-training support, community resources, public goods and services. The researcher concluded that centre managers did not take into consideration the importance of institutional linkages and the socioeconomic background of the trainees who have faced long-term unemployment leading to social isolation, which then further reduced their likelihood of self-employment.

Bolarin (2012) studied Entrepreneurial Education at university level: the way forward. The study suggested that the best step in bridging the education to employment pipeline comes by building students' skills through targeted instruction and hands-on learning opportunities. In his survey, 58 percent of youth said practical, hands-on learning is an effective approach to training, yet only 24 percent of academic-program graduates and 37 percent of vocational education graduates said they spent most of their time learning in this manner. As such, the researcher suggested that it is important that, more than just on-the-paper opportunities for internships and apprenticeships are made available and followed up. When such is not available, the author lauds programs that "bring the workplace to the classroom" through physical and computer/digital simulations as successful alternatives to internships and other workplace-based opportunities.

Ofuasia and Nwalado (2010) studied Entrepreneurship education for youth employment in Nigeria: Implication for social studies education. The researchers attempted to gain understanding of skill acquisition in higher education and employment settings with the aim of improving the provision of these skills. Their findings and analyses provide a conceptualization of core and generic skills. The study asserts that while a university degree is important, it is more important for graduates to be exposed to in-demand skills with which they can employ themselves if the need should arise. Michael (2008) did a work on 'The degree is not enough': Students' perceptions of the role of higher education credentials for graduate work and employability. Findings from the study assert that just like the employers, the majority of graduates identified hard core business skills as being an important and integral part of their portfolio. However, according to him, whilst many graduates felt more than qualified in respect of discipline focused abilities; they perceived themselves as lacking the necessary level of presentation skills. Furthermore, in each of the four countries the study covered, graduates felt they had not had been able to gain sufficient expertise or experience in making verbal presentations whilst in higher education.

Nwite (2010) studied Rationale for youth preparation and entrepreneurship Education in the face of global economic crisis in Nigeria. The researcher identified presentation skills as an important facet of employability and suggested that the teaching of such skills should form part of the undergraduate curriculum. It would seem therefore, that in order to promote business graduate employability within an increasingly competitive and global business environment, tertiary institutions need to develop programmes in which undergraduates are actively encouraged to acquire and hone communication skills to market themselves. High levels of business knowledge by itself is insufficient, excellent verbal communication skills are also necessary in order that graduates feel confident in their abilities to communicate such knowledge to customers. It's really common to see first class graduates who know what they know but can't deliver it to another logically.

Methodology

To address the research problem, the survey research design was adopted for the study. This type of design was most preferred because it is concerned with the statistics that result when data are abstracted from a number of individual/groups cases (John & Kahn, 2008). The population consisted all the undergraduate students of Adult Education and Community Development, and graduates of the programme precisely 2012/2013 graduates, totalling 468 people. Simple and stratified random sampling technique was used to compose a sample of

200 people (169 students; 31 graduates,) for the study. More of the final year students were used because they were on the verge of graduating and must have gone through all the programme requirements. On the other hand, the 2012/2013 graduates used were easily accessed by the researcher because she graduated with them and they still contact themselves on Facebook.

Table 1: Study population and sample compilation

Category	Number	Number selected
Year 400	82	46
Year 300	87	41
Year 200	92	42
Year 100	143	40
2012/2013 Graduates	64	31
Total population	468	200

The instrument used for the study was a 12-item Questionnaire titled: Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme and Student's Perception of Self-employment Ability Questionnaire (EESPJCAQ). The instrument was scored using 4 points scale of Very Great Extent (VGE - 4 points), Great Extent (GE = 3 points), Low Extent (LE= 2 points), and Very Low Extent (VLE = 1 point), with a criterion mean of 2.5. Copies of the questionnaires were given to experts in Educational Foundations and Measurement and Evaluation unit all in the Faculty of Education, Rivers State University for face and content validity. Data collected from pilot testing were used to estimate the reliability of the instrument. The reliability of the coefficient of the questionnaire was determined using split half reliability. The estimated internal consistency computed is 0.79.

Results

Research Question 1. What relationships exist between Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme and self-employment abilities?

Table 1. Mean score for the relationships that exist between Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme and self-employment abilities

s/n	Items	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	N	M	S.D	Decision
1	When I graduate from Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme, I do not need to look for a job, I'll create one.	50	40	60	50	200	2.45	1.12	Disagree

2	Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme gave me the opportunity to liaise with clients like I would do after graduation.	0	0	30	70	200	0.65	1.20	Disagree
3	Upon graduation, I am going to start business with a skill learnt as a student of Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme	30	70	52	38	200	2.36	0.97	Disagree
4	Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme is self-employment oriented	43	23	77	57		2.26	1.09	Disagree
	Grand Mean						2.39		

Research Question 2. In what ways has Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme exerted significant effect on the acquisition of creative skills needed for self-employment abilities?

Table 2. Mean score for ways Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme has exerted significant effect on the acquisition of creative skills needed for self-employment abilities

s/n	Items	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	N	M	S.D	Decision
1	Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme armed me with a teaching subject.	180	0	20	0	200	3.8	0.60	Agree
2	Did you undergo computer training as a student of Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme?	87	72	30	11	200	3.2	0.88	Agree
3	Did you go on teaching practice as a student of Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme?	200	70	52	38	200	4	0.99	Agree
4	Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development	43	23	77	57	200	1.78	1.09	Agree

Programme gave me formal training in how to do Presentations to potential clients	
Grand Mean	2.87

Research Question 3. How can it be demonstrated that Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme has significant influence on students' self-employment abilities?

Table 3. Mean score for demonstrations that Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme has significant influence on students' self-employment abilities

s/n	Items	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	N	M	S.D	Decision
1	I think there should have been more practice at proposing my services in front of other people as part of my degree course.	193	3	3	1	200	3.94	0.34	Agree
2	Have you tried marketing your chosen skill to anyone as a student of Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme?	87	72	30	11	200	3.2	0.88	Agree
3	Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme taught me to postulate business from the things around me like home lessons for unlettered adults	36	74	52	38	200	2.54	1.00	Agree
4	Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme taught me to easily adapt one thing for other uses.	43	23	77	57	200	2.26	1.09	Disagree
	Grand Mean						2.89		

Discussion

The findings of this study show that hypotheses 1 and 2 are all statistically significant. This implies that Rivers State University's Adult Education and Community Development Programme has a significant relationship with student' self-employment ability. The programme trains her students to be skilled and self-reliant change agents. However, students

of the Programme expressed reservations on their communication skills needed to market the acquired skills. The findings from this study corroborate Falola (2009) who reported that the National University Commission (NUC) and National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) have been lauded over the introduction of entrepreneurial studies in the curriculum of Nigerian universities and polytechnics for self-employment. The finding of the study is also in consonance with Nwite (2010) who confirmed that the prospect of Adult Education and Community Development Programme is training job creators with the ability to seek and find business opportunities in his environment. Arguably, graduates/youths endowed with entrepreneurial skills through Adult Education and Community Development Programme, acquires strategy skills, planning, market skills, communication skills and more so the negotiation skills for self-employment and economic progress.

In line with the findings of the study, Ofuasia & Nwalado (2010) substantiated the efficacy Adult Education and Community Development Programme fused with entrepreneurship, in their assertion that entrepreneurship alleviates poverty and promote self-employment. The findings of this study on the relevance of adult education and community development programme fused with entrepreneurship education to students' self-employment is also in accord with Papayannakis, KastelliDamigos & Movrotas (2008) and United Nations Human Settlements programme (UN-HABITAT, 2007). They posit that entrepreneurship has emerged as an important mechanism for the generation of social returns and self-employment for graduates. UNHABITAT (2007) affirmed that effective youth entrepreneurship education prepares graduates and young people to be responsible entrepreneurs contributing to economic development and sustainable communities. The finding is also in line with United Nation's Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2005) which opined that entrepreneurship education is a societal agent, enabling mechanism, a catalyst needed to develop new innovations necessary to achieve Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concluded that there should be a paradigm shift from general adult education to integrated entrepreneurship education in the present realities of the need to develop and empower self-employment. This would boost positive engagement opportunities in the society and at same time ameliorate some socio-economic problems, prevalent among unemployed youths. Therefore, formalized entrepreneurial training infused in adult education should be encouraged for acquisition of relevant skills for graduate self-employment. Campus

shopping complex kiosks ought to be allocated to third-year students to sample their products and services. This will be an avenue for them to meet clients and work on their business skills. If tertiary institutions emphasize business in their curriculum, then the dignity of labour would return. A student who can mend shoes wouldn't be ashamed opening a cobbler shop within the complex. Same goes for electrician, mechanic, make-up artist, tailor, Master of Ceremony, hair stylist, adult educator, teacher, house-cleaner. They should be lured through the curriculum to start their businesses on campuses rather than use their leisure for partying. If these students are exposed to first hand experiences of generating income with their services and products on campus, when they eventually graduate, selling their onions won't be much of a problem. This is especially so because a dignified tertiary institution already recognised their products and services enough to allow them operate within their campus freely.

Recommendations

1. Nigerian tertiary institutions need to simulate real life experiences on her campuses. It's not only products from school farms that can be marketed. If truly, our tertiary education system is geared towards self-reliance and not job-seeking; then each department must generate income through sales of their products and services. Marketing a skill to a client is a very tricky venture requiring all the boldness and skill one can muster. They must begin this herculean task on campus. No need shielding them from adult life realities for four good years.
2. The Department of Educational Foundations in collaboration with National University Commission (NUC) should make more deliberate efforts to infuse entrepreneurship into adult education and community development curriculum as strategic attempt to address graduate unemployment. This could be done by offering opportunities for business to undergraduates as a remedy to escalating unemployment challenges among graduates of Educational Foundations.
2. There should be a linkage between seasoned lecturers and Guest lecturers on the application of different pedagogical approach in Adult Education and Community Development Programme in the universities. The approach should emphasize simulation and role playing.
3. An Adult Education and Community Development Business Programme (AECDBP) should be formalized and integrated fully into the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme in the same spirit of weekly Community Development (CDS) of the NYSC. This if applied will in turn assist graduates with ideal job generation, creation and development ability.

4. Parents too need to encourage their wards to pursue an income generating venture as early as possible. Money making can go hand in hand with schooling; no need to suppress one to actualize the other first. It becomes tougher when one needs to come into business as a buffer for joblessness.

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