

EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUTH ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT SCHEME IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

R. S. Olaleye, M. A. Ojo, M. A. Ndanitsa, I. S. Umar, J. A. Ndatsu and A. O Kolade,

Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension Technology,

Federal University of Technology, Minna, Niger State.

E-mail address: olaleyerotimidavid@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The broad objective of this study was to determine the effectiveness of youth economic empowerment scheme in Niger State. The specific objectives were: to describe the socio-economic characteristics of the beneficiaries, identify the various economic empowerment strategies put in place, examine the different economic activities engaged in by the beneficiaries, ascertain the level of income accruing to beneficiaries and their perceived effectiveness of the programme. A total of 179 beneficiaries were purposively selected from the three geo-political zones of the State. Structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results showed that the mean age was 22 years. Majority of the beneficiaries considered the empowerment scheme as effective in the areas of training and skills acquisition (74.3%) as well as provision of financial assistance (78.2%), while provision of equipment/working tools was considered ineffective by 31.3% of the respondents. Chi Square analysis showed significant relationships between type of economic activities engaged in by the respondents and the effectiveness of training /skills acquisition ($X^2 = 65.10$, $df = 8$, $P < 0.01$), effectiveness of the provision of equipment/working tools ($X^2 = 55.57$, $df = 8$, $P < 0.01$) and the effectiveness of financial assistance to beneficiaries ($X^2 = 99.76$, $df = 8$, $P < 0.01$). The result also confirmed a significant relationship between sex of the respondents and the effectiveness of training /skills acquisition ($X^2 = 13.06$, $df = 2$, $P < 0.01$). Semi-logarithm was chosen as the lead model of the regression ($F = 52.14$, $P < 0.01$) and it showed that $R^2 = 0.5450$. This implies that the independent variables included in the model accounted for 54.50% variation in the effectiveness of the economic empowerment strategies of the youth empowerment scheme. Years of schooling and duration of the training / skills acquisition were significant at 1% of probability level. It could be concluded that Youth Empowerment Scheme has helped the youth in the State to be self-employed. It is therefore, recommended that apart from the training and skill acquisition, assistance to the beneficiaries should focus more on financial assistance. Inclusion of training in agricultural production is important as this will go a long way in enhancing food security and income generation among the youth in the State.

Key words: Youth, education, empowerment and effectiveness,

RODUCTION

New Webster's Dictionary, the verb "to empower" is defined as "to give power to", or "enable" someone. It is located within the discourse of community development and is related to concepts of self-help, participation, networking and equity. Empowering young people means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others. Young people are empowered when they acknowledge that they have or can create choices in life, are aware of the implications of those choices, make an informed decision, take action based on that decision and accept responsibility for the consequences of their actions.

Youth empowerment also includes encouraging, and developing the skills for self-sufficiency, with a focus on eliminating the future need for charity or welfare for the individuals or the community. In short, empowerment is the process that allows one to gain the knowledge, skills and attitude needed to cope with the changing world and the circumstances in which one lives. In view of this, many local, state, provincial, regional, national, and international government agencies as well as non-profit community-based organizations provide programmes that focused on youth empowerment.

Youth empowerment has been at the center of a new paradigm shift in development thinking and attempts to re-conceptualize development and development strategies aimed at poverty reduction, particularly in the rural areas. In line with this new thinking, the Human Development Report (UNDP, 1993) states that, "development must be woven around people, not people around development – and it should empower individuals and groups, rather than dis-empower them". This rethinking has been brought about by the fact that after quite a few decades of development assistance accompanied by growth in some instances, the number of people who are in absolute poverty continues to increase.

According to Rappaport (1987) "empowerment conveys both a psychological sense of personal control or influence and a concern with actual social influence, political power and legal rights". McArdle (1989) defines empowerment as "the process whereby decisions are made by people who have to bear the consequences of those decisions". This implies that it is not the achievement of goals, as much as the process of deciding that is important. However, people who have achieved collective goals through self-help are empowered, as they have through their own efforts and by pooling their knowledge, skills and other resources achieved their goals without recourse to an external dependency relationship.

Therefore, youth empowerment is an attitudinal, structural, and cultural process whereby young people gain the ability, authority, and agency to make decisions and implement

change in their own lives and the lives of other people, including youth and adults (Susan, 2002; Varus and Fletcher, 2006).

Education, training and empowerment as panacea to youth restiveness and unemployment

Some studies had shown that idleness, frustration, disempowerment and marginalization as a result of high levels of unemployment and poverty, lead youth to search for other venues for a sense of belonging (Sakiko, 2007). Moreover, young people in the developing world often cite going to school and finding a job as key priorities in their lives; a lack of education and unemployment (for both educated and uneducated appear at the top of the list of youth grievances are two problematic issues singled out by most scholars focusing on youth crisis (World Bank,2002).

The United Nations similarly underscores that young people with limited education and few employment opportunities often provide fertile recruiting ground for parties to a conflict. Their lack of hope for the future can fuel disaffection with society and make them susceptible to the blandishments of those who advocate armed conflict and civil unrest (UNDESA, 2007).

To overcome these problems, education and training are fundamental tools of empowerment. They provide the poor and the disadvantaged with the means to increase their incomes. Hence, education and training policies must be geared towards transformation and structural adjustments of the economy. Also, non-formal education, vocational training, on the job training and other educational derivatives should be advanced as the vehicles that enable people to develop skills and capacities, which increase their control over decisions, resources and structures affecting their lives, productivity and income earning power.

Roles of extension education in the economic empowerment of youth

Non-formal education, vocational training, on the job training and other educational derivatives

Are probably, the vehicles that can enable people to develop skills and capacities, increase their decisions-making power, control of resources and structures affecting their lives. In this way, education creates conditions for full and equal participation of people in discussions and decisions, and at the same time empowers all people to act for change.

Generally, extension can be defined as an on-going process of getting useful information to people (the communication dimension} and then assisting those people to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to utilize effectively this information and

nology [the educational dimension (Swanson and Claar,1984). Therefore, extension
ation plays a vital role in youth empowerment, which is an attitudinal, structural, and
ral process whereby young people gain the ability, authority, and agency to make
ions and implement change in their own lives and the lives of other people, including
h and adults.

current economic situations, especially poverty and the mass unemployment of our
1 have pushed some people to illegal businesses and activities with a view to
coming such economic hardships. The Youth Empowerment Scheme, Project YES, a
governmental organization and the vision of Hajiya Zainab Kure, took off in April
. It is designed to address social problems of unemployment and the attendant
quences in Niger State. In spite of the effort made to tackle the menace, government
non-governmental organizations have continued to grapple with various social
ems that have left many disillusioned and completely dependent on their families and
ociety. Niger State is endowed with tremendous agricultural and natural resources.
eed to take advantages of the State's abundant natural and human potentials has
sitated the empowerment of youth productive economic activities.

Objectives of the study

General objectives of the study was to analyse the effectiveness of youth economic
empowerment scheme (Project YES) in Niger state, Nigeria. The specific objectives were

- examine the socio-economic factors affecting youth economic empowerment
strategies for implementing the scheme in the State,
- identify strategies put in place to empower youths in the State economically,
- ascertain different economic activities engaged in by the beneficiaries,
- determine levels of income generated as a result of their economic empowerment
by the project, and
- determine the effectiveness of the different empowerment strategies adopted by
the project over the last three years

Hypotheses

There is no significant relationship between sex and effectiveness of the economic
empowerment strategies.

There is no significant relationship between types of economic activities engaged
in by the beneficiaries and the effectiveness of empowerment strategies

There is no significant relationship between ages, years of schooling, duration of
membership, average weekly income of the beneficiaries and the effectiveness of the
empowerment strategies.

METHODOLOGY

Niger State is one of the 12 States created on the 3rd February, 1976. It has a land area of 74,244 square km covering 8 percent of the total land area of the country and about 8 percent of the land is arable. The population of the state is 2,421,581 people (Census, 2006) in 24 Local Government Areas. The three major ethnic groups in the state are the Nupes, Gwari and Hausas. Other tribes which are considered as the minority groups include Kadara, Koro, Gana-gana, Dibo, Kambari and Dukkawa. The state is also divided into three geo-political zones or senatorial districts (Zones A, B and C). A total of 179 beneficiaries were purposively selected from the three geo-political zones of the State. Structured questionnaire was employed for data collection. This was validated and tested for reliability using test re-test method ($r = 0.84$). Data collected were analysed using descriptive (frequency, percentages and means) and inferential statistics (Regression Analysis and Chi-Square).

Measurement of variables

Age was measured in actual years of age. Educational level was measured based on years of schooling. Income was measured in Naira and this was based on their average incomes per week.

Duration was measured on actual number of months used by individual for the programme. Sex was measured as male = 1, female = 2. Effectiveness of empowerment schemes or strategies was measured at interval on 3-point scale (i.e. very effective = 2 points, effective = 1 point and not effective = 0). The scores were aggregated for each respondent ($n=179$).

Regression equations

Model specification: The ordinary least square (OLS) multiple regressions used is specified in the implicit form as follows:

$$Y = f(X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4, U_i) \quad (1)$$

Where

\ln = logarithm

b_0 = constant

U_i = error term

b_1 to b_4 = coefficients of independent variables

Y = Effectiveness of empowerment strategy (dependent variable)

X_1 = Age (years)

X_2 = Education (years of schooling)

X_3 = Duration of training / acquisition of skill (months)

income generated (Naira)

explicit form of this function takes the following forms:

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + U_i(\text{linear}) \quad (2)$$

$$Y = a + b_1 \ln X_1 + b_2 \ln X_2 + b_3 \ln X_3 + b_4 \ln X_4 + U_i(\text{semi log}) \quad (3)$$

$$Y = a + b_1 \ln X_1 + b_2 \ln X_2 + b_3 \ln X_3 + b_4 \ln X_4 + U_i(\text{double log}) \quad (4)$$

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + U_i(\text{exponential}) \quad (5)$$

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic characteristics of the beneficiaries

Socio-economic variables considered were sex, age, education and marital status of the respondents. Findings in Table 1 show that over half of the beneficiaries were females (58.7%), and secondary school certificate holders (57.0%). Majority of them were still single (81.6%) and with a mean age of 22 years of age. This implies that both males and females youth in the State were given reasonable equal opportunities to be economically empowered with a view to attaining self reliance.

1 Distribution of respondents by demographic and socio-economic characteristics

| Variables | Frequency N = 179 | Percentages |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Sex | 74 | 41.3 |
| Female | 105 | 58.7 |
| | 179 | 100.0 |
| Age (Years) | | |
| Age below 20 | 60 | 33.5 |
| 20-29 | 95 | 53.1 |
| 30-39 | 24 | 13.4 |
| | 179 | 100.0 |
| Educational attainment | | |
| Primary | 23 | 12.8 |
| Secondary | 102 | 57.0 |
| tertiary | 35 | 19.6 |
| No education | 19 | 10.6 |
| | 179 | 100.0 |
| Marital status | | |
| Married | 33 | 18.4 |
| Single | 146 | 81.6 |
| | 179 | 100.0 |

Source: Field survey 2007

Empowerment strategies by the youth empowerment scheme

Findings in the study revealed that three major empowerment strategies being implemented by the Scheme include training and skill acquisition in different economic activities such as tailoring, barbing, hair dressing, welding of iron and shoe making as well as provision of equipment/ working tools and financial assistance to successful participants. However, only few of the respondents had interest in shoe-making when compared with other identified economic activities, especially tailoring in which at least over one-third (34.6%) of the beneficiaries had engaged themselves to make a living (Table 2). Furthermore, the result showed that majority of the respondents (81.0%) benefitted financially, while very few (19.0%) of them only received equipment/working tools as a form of empowerment. This was observed to be done based on the wisdom and discretion of the management of the scheme. However, it clearly suggests that every successful participant was given one form of assistance or another with a view to empowering them economically.

Table 2: Empowerment strategies (N = 179)

| Strategies | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| 1. Training and skill acquisition | | |
| a. Types | | |
| Tailoring | 62 | 34.6 |
| Barbing | 36 | 20.1 |
| Hair dressing | 34 | 19.0 |
| Welding | 32 | 17.9 |
| Shoe- making | 15 | 8.4 |
| Total | 179 | 100.0 |
| b. Duration (Months) | | |
| 3 months and below | 30 | 16.8 |
| 4-6 | 89 | 49.7 |
| 7-9 | 37 | 20.7 |
| 10-12 | 23 | 12.8 |
| Total | 179 | 100.0 |
| 2. Provision of working equipment /tools | 34 | 19.0 |
| 3. Financial assistance | 145 | 81.0 |
| Total | 179 | 100.0 |

Source: Field survey, 2007

Income generation from economic activities

Generally, the amount generated varied between N1,000.00 and N3,000.00 on the average per week as indicated in Table 3. Female beneficiaries appeared to have generated more income from their various economic activities than their male counterparts. The difference

be due to the natural abilities of females to attract more patronage than men, all other things being equal.

3: Average weekly income generated by beneficiaries (N = 179)

| Amount (Naira) | Male | Female | Total |
|----------------|------------|------------|-------|
| | F (%) | F(%) | |
| <2000 | 35 (47.3) | 41(39.0) | 76 |
| 2000-3000 | 32 (43.2) | 53(50.5) | 85 |
| 3000-4000 | 7 (9.5) | 11(10.5) | 18 |
| | 74(100.0) | 105(100.0) | 179 |

Source: Field survey, 2007

Effectiveness of the economic empowerment strategy of youth empowerment scheme

Based on this study, three major strategies were identified namely; training and skills acquisition, provision of equipment / working tools and financial assistance. The perceived effectiveness of these strategies varied among the beneficiaries based on their personal needs and experiences. Therefore, findings in Table 4 showed that majority of the beneficiaries considered the empowerment strategy effective in the areas of training and skills acquisition (74.3%) as well as provision of financial assistance (78.2%). Meanwhile, provision of equipment/working tools as a form of empowerment was considered less effective by 31.3% of the respondents. This suggests that beneficiaries might prefer financial assistance to the provision of equipment/working tools because of the needs to start and sustain their own business activities and buy relevant equipment and tools.

4: Perceived effectiveness of the project's economic empowerment strategies

| Empowerment Strategy | Very effective Frequency (%) | Effective Frequency(%) | Not effective Frequency (%) | Total |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Training and skills acquisition | 15(8.4) | 133(74.3) | 31(17.3) | 179(100) |
| Provision of working equipment | 27(15.0) | 96 (54.0) | 56(31.0) | 179(100) |
| Financial assistance | 30(16.8) | 140 (78.2) | 9(5.0) | 179(100) |

Source: Field survey, 2007 (Multiple response)

Results of hypotheses tested

Sex, type of economic activities, other personal characteristics, programme duration, and effectiveness

Table 5 showed that there were significant relationships between type of economic activities engaged in by the respondents and the effectiveness of training /skills acquisition ($X^2 = 65.10$, $df = 8$, $P < 0.01$), effectiveness of the provision of equipment/working tools ($X^2 = 55.57$, $df = 8$, $P < 0.01$) and the effectiveness of financial assistance to beneficiaries ($X^2 = 99.76$, $df = 8$, $P < 0.01$). The result also confirmed a significant relationship between sex of the respondents and the effectiveness of training / skills acquisition ($X^2 = 13.06$, $df = 2$, $P < 0.01$). It implies that the presence of both male and female beneficiaries was similarly supportive of the effectiveness of training / skills acquisition. Also diversification of the economic activities also facilitated effectiveness of the economic empowerment strategies.

Table 5: Chi-Square results relationship between sex, type of economic activities and effectiveness

| Variable | Chi-Square value (X^2) | df | P-value | Remark |
|--|----------------------------|----|------------|----------|
| 1. Sex and effectiveness of training and skill acquisition | 13.06 | 2 | $P < 0.01$ | Sig. |
| 2. Sex and effectiveness of the provision of equipment/tools | 1.80 | 2 | $P > 0.05$ | Not sig. |
| 3. Sex and effectiveness of financial assistance | 1.05 | 2 | $P > 0.05$ | Not sig. |
| 4. Type of economic activity and effectiveness of training and skill acquisition | 65.10 | 8 | $P < 0.01$ | Sig. |
| 5. Type of economic activity and effectiveness of the provision of equipment/tools | 55.57 | 8 | $P < 0.01$ | Sig. |
| 6. Type of economic activity and effectiveness of financial assistance | 99.76 | 8 | $P < 0.01$ | Sig. |

Source: Field Survey, 2007.

Regression analysis

Hypothesis 3 was tested using regression analysis. In Table 6, four regression models were considered out of which Semi-logarithm was chosen as the lead model based on its highest

ed R^2 value, more number of significant independent variables and significant relationship between the dependent variable and the selected independent variables as led by the Analysis of Variance results ($F = 52.14$, $P < 0.01$). The multiple correlation coefficient between the dependent and independent variables was high ($R = 0.74$). Tests further showed that R^2 is 0.5450 which implies that the independent variables led in the model accounted for 54.50% variation in the effectiveness of the economic empowerment strategies of the youth empowerment scheme. Moreover, years of schooling and duration of the training / skills acquisition were significant at 1% of probability level.

6: Factors influencing the effectiveness of economic empowerment strategies among youth (Semi-log function as lead equation)

| Factors | Regression Coefficient | t-values |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|----------|
| Constant | -1.120 | -0.460 |
| Age (X_1) | 0.070 | 1.160 |
| Education (X_2) | 0.510 | 2.780*** |
| Duration of training (X_3) | 0.710 | 12.77*** |
| Income generated (X_4) | 0.010 | 0.120 |
| R | 0.7400 | |
| R^2 | 0.5450 | |
| Adjusted R^2 | 0.5350 | |
| F value | 52.16*** | |

significant at 1%

Source: Field Survey, 2007

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It can be concluded that Youth Empowerment Scheme has helped the youth in the State to become self-employed. It is therefore, recommended that apart from the training and skill acquisition, assistance to the beneficiaries should focus more on financial assistance. Duration of training in agricultural production is important as this will go a long way in ensuring food security and income generation among the youth in the State. This can be achieved through collaboration with the extension component of the State Agricultural Development Project.

REFERENCES

- McArdle, J. (1989). Community Development Tools of Trade, *Community Quarterly* 16, pp. 47- 54.
- Rappaport, J. (1987). Terms of empowerment/examples of prevention: Toward a theory of community psychology, *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 15 (2): 121-148.
- Sakiko, F. (2007). Rethinking the Policy Objectives of Development Aid: From Economic Growth to Conflict Prevention, Research Paper Number 2007/32 (Tokyo: United Nations University, June 2007.www.crise.ox.ac.uk/copy/oxfordpolicyconference/fukudaparr
- Susan, W.(2002). Economic Priorities for Successful Peace Implementation, In *Ending Civil Wars: The Implementation of Peace Agreements*,(eds.) Stephen John Stedman, Donald Rothchild, and Elizabeth M. Cousens (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Reinner, Inc., 2002), p.201.
- Swanson, B. E. & Claar, J. B. (1984). "The History and Development of Agricultural Extension": In B. E. Swanson (Ed.), *Agricultural Extension: a Reference Manual* (2nd Ed.). Rome: FAO. pp. 1-19. www.wikipedia, 2007.
- World Bank (2002). The Conflict Analysis Framework (CAF): Identifying Conflict-related Obstacles to Development (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, October 2002), 2 www.peacebuildinginitiative.org/application
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2007). Review of National Action Plans on Youth Employment: Putting commitment into action, (New York: DESA, 2007), 8.<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/poverty/documents/national.action.plans.2007>
- UNDP (1993), *Human development report*, Oxford University Press p.1
- Vavrus, J. and Fletcher, A. (2006). Guide to social change led by and with young people. The Freechild Project. Pp.65