

ENHANCING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES IN EDO STATE

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Abstract

The study examined the specific ways in which women participation in Vocational Training Programmes in Edo South Senatorial District could be enhanced. A total of two hundred and forty (240) women were randomly selected from five Vocational Training Centres in Edo South Senatorial District. The main instrument used for the study was the questionnaire. Data were analyzed using frequency counts and simple percentages. The study revealed that certain vocational skills enjoyed higher patronage than the others. It also identified lack of accessibility to training centres, high cost of acquiring skills, lack of spouse support, limited human and material resources among others as factors hindering women participation in vocational programmes. It was therefore recommended, that resources in terms of instructors, equipment and infrastructure should be adequately provided and improved upon, establishment of more centres especially in the rural setting should be encouraged, existing centres should be expanded, scope of vocational skills should be broadened and above all free interest loan should be given to women participants.

Introduction

Vocational education is not a new phenomenon in Africa and Nigeria in particular. Even before the advent of colonial masters, Africa was able to satisfy her technical and vocational needs, especially in the area of tool making and skill acquisition of various forms to meet the challenges of human environment (Omolewa, 1997). This implies that from time immemorial, in the different tradition sectors, children learnt from their parents whatever occupation their parents were doing. This ranges from farming, weaving, gold-smithing, fishing, cooking, painting, woodwork to carving to mention but a few.

Furthermore, Omolewa (2001) contended that one very vital area of training in the traditional setting is vocational education and further pointed out that "It was considered a crime to breed an unemployable citizenry." In addition, to the ones mentioned above (in traditional African society), the vocational training provided individuals with the roles they were expected to play. In Nigeria, for instance, women were given vocational training that was oriented towards domestic activities such as home management and child care and not for any gainful employment whereas males were taught the trade of their fathers. Even with the advent of western education, the situation did not change. This is of course traceable to the age long African traditional legacy which considered the education of female child as a waste of time and resources (Omoruyi and Ojogwu 2005).

However, with the emergence of feminist movement in the late 70s and the United Nation's declaration of 1975 as the International Year of Women, a greater awareness and consciousness was created on the indispensable role women play in economic production and communal development. Similarly, the United Nations Nairobi Looking Strategies for the advancement of women (1985) cited in Olomukoro and Aghedo (2012) recognized that education is the basic tool that should be given to women

in order to fulfill their roles as full members of the society. The acquisition of skills and knowledge is essential to the development of autonomous and productive individual woman.

The Nigerian Education philosophy is based on the integration of individuals into a sound and effective citizen vis-à-vis the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities, competences as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society (National Policy on Education; 2004). It is within this framework that vocational education, especially for women becomes relevant. In the era where gainful paid employment is difficult to find, the need to be self employed and self reliant becomes imperative. There is need to provide an alternative means through which individuals can acquire skills so as to enable them contribute their quota effectively to their homes, national progress and most importantly for self development. Stressing this point further Oimage (2012) pointed out that the provision of Vocational Education as the envisaged form of education has been identified as a vehicle through which individuals especially women can attain self-reliance.

According to Umar (1986) cited in Omoruyi and Ojogwu (2005), women vocational training courses were first introduced in Nigeria in 1977 by the Ford Foundation of America. The programme then was aimed at providing vocational skills in agriculture, then industries and commerce, promoting local craft and technology, providing and preparing women for trade tests for employment. Since, then, there has been tremendous growth in educational programmes in the country.

The establishment of women education units in the federal and state ministries and eighty-eight (88) women vocational centres in the country attest to the awareness and recognition of women's unquestionable role in nation building. As reported by World Bank (2000) women are keys to nutrition security of the household particularly if they have command over income.

The inclusion of vocational education in National Policy on Education (2004) has ushered in a new outlook to the concept of skill training with the introduction of pre-vocational subjects as Home-economics, local crafts and so on which are skill oriented in preparation for entry into vocational education programmes in future based on interest and aptitude. Also, all women can acquire vocational education at the technical college, adult and non-formal training and re-training programmes organized by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) at designated vocational training programmes.

In recent times the task of making women actively participate in skill acquisition programmes has rested more with NGOs than government agencies, this is due to the situation where government policies which aimed at involving women in governance are politicized in the process of implementation. In line with the view expressed above, one time Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Boutros Boutros Ghali, remarked that "given the importance of female leadership in community and grassroots level, organizations have been identified as a key factor in empowering women in ensuring that an accurate knowledge of the true situation of their actual and potential roles and obstacles to economic participation is reflected in the design of economic policies" (Cited in Newsletter Support 28 LAPO, 2003).

Marilee (1993) further stated that women's status in the household affects their ability to participate outside the home. Lack of income, lower income reduces women's decision making power in household and their ability to participate in social and political activities. The inequalities women face in economic participation have an adverse effect on women's self esteem and their status in the society. Consequently, women have learnt to use other avenues to turn their situation around especially in the area of economic activities. Thus, they increasingly formed women's cooperative groups, organizations and networking activities with NGOs to empower them and help them participate in diverse economic activities that will uplift them from economic disposition.

In Edo state for instance, Women Education Centres were established in 1991 under the women's education unit of the Ministry of Education. Two are located in Benin-City, the state capital at Iyaro and Akpakpava, while others are found in Igarra, Auchi, Ubiaja and Sabogida Ora. Similarly, Skill acquisition centres were established in the state where women can learn various types of skills ranging from hairdressing, fashion designing, catering, computer/secretarial studies. For example, Edo Skill Acquisition Centre Evbuomudu, Benin-Auchi Road, India Renaissance Skill Acquisition Centre to help rehabilitate victims of female traffickers and under-privilege children under the auspices of Mrs. Eki Igbinedion, wife of the then State Governor. Others include those established by private individuals and NGOs to empower women in the State such as Lift Above Poverty Organization (LAPO), Pattons Fashion Academy (Centres For

Vocational Studies), Dave Omokaro Foundation (DOF), Institute of Catering and Hotel Management and Sir Osunde Foundation.

For Nigerian women to enjoy the full benefits of contemporary living, they require basic education to contribute meaningfully to the development of the country. A woman's education status correlates with her level of development. When a woman is given the necessary skills through vocational training to improve her interaction and awareness levels she becomes a better and more effective participant in building her society, expanding the frontier of politics, economic productivity and cultural integration. The challenge women are facing today is to maintain and increase the momentum of their participation and empowerment. The task of this study, therefore, is to examine specific ways of enhancing women participation in vocational training in the area under investigation.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study was to examine how women's participation in vocational training programmes in Edo South senatorial district could be enhanced. The specific objectives include to:

1. ascertain the available vocational training programmes for women in Edo South Senatorial District.
2. find out the level of participation of women in available vocational training programmes in the area under investigation.
3. determine the adequacy of resources for effective vocational training programmes in Edo South Senatorial District.

The findings of the study will serve as a guide for government agencies, NGOs and other stake holders in their quest for designing a workable vocational programme for the women in the area under investigation. The study will be of immense benefit to the society at large as it will unfold the attitude of women towards vocational education. In addition, the study will help enlighten intending participants about the various vocational training programmes available and the various suggestions will help enhance women participation in future vocational programmes.

Research Questions

1. What vocational training programmes are available for women in Edo South Senatorial District?
2. What factors influence the level of participation of women in vocational training programmes in Edo South Senatorial District?
3. What are the resources for effective vocational training programmes in Edo South Senatorial District?

Methodology

This study adopted the survey research design. The population of the study was the entire women participants in skills acquisition centres in the seven local government areas of Edo South Senatorial District. The multi stage sampling technique was used to select the required sample size. First, simple random sampling technique was used to select four out of seven local government areas in Edo South Senatorial District. The second stage involved the selection of 10% of the participating women from each of the selected programmes. This gave a total sample size of two hundred and forty (240) women. The main instrument for this study was the questionnaire. The scoring pattern of the instrument was along the four point likert scale of strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, and disagree. The questionnaire was designed based on the research questions raised. The content validity of the instrument was established by using the expert's judgments approach whereby copies of constructed questionnaire were given to some experts in vocational education in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin-City, for scrutiny. The final design was based on the contributions and amendments by these experts. The reliability was established through a test-re-test procedure using an interval of two weeks. It was only after these steps that the actual collection of data was done. The data collected was analyzed using frequency counts and simple percentages.

Results

The results were presented according to research questions.

Research Question One

What vocational training programmes are available for women in Edo South Senatorial District?

Table 1: Women vocational training programmes available in Edo South Senatorial District and their level of participation

Vocational Training Programmes Available	Level of participation					
	High	(%)	Average	(%)	Low	(%)
Fashion design	60	25				
Computer studies					35	14.5
Catering	70	29.2				
Hair dressing	60	25				
Soap making					10	4.2
Petty trading					5	2.1
Total	190	79.2			50	20.8

Table 1 shows that several programmes were available in Edo South Senatorial District. These programmes included fashion design, computer studies, catering, hair dressing, soap making, petty trading. From table 1 women participation level in available programmes in Edo South Senatorial District was high, rating 79.2% although participation level skewed towards specific skills such as fashion design, hair dressing and catering.

Research Question Two

What factors influence the level of participation of women in vocational training programmes in Edo South Senatorial District?

Table 2: Factors influencing the level of women participation in vocational training programmes

Responses	Influencing factors											
	Accessibility of centres		High cost of acquiring skills		Lack of spouse support		Domestic chores		Other social roles		Low awareness	
	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)
SA	90	37.5	106	44.2	60	25	51	21.2	126	52.5	10	4.1
A	108	45.0	120	50.0	90	37.5	100	41.7	82	34.5	25	10.4
D	39	16.2	10	4.1	70	29.2	26	10.8	23	9.5	85	35.5
SD	03	1.3	04	1.7	20	8.3	63	26.3	09	3.8	120	50
Total	240	100	240	100	240	100	240	100	240	100	240	100

In table 2 different possible influencing factors were highlighted. For accessibility of centres, 37.5% strongly agreed, 45.0% agreed, 16.25% disagreed while 1.3% strongly disagreed. For high cost of acquiring skills, 44.2% strongly agreed, 50.0% agreed, 4.1% disagreed, and 1.7% strongly disagreed. For lack of spouse support, 25% strongly agreed, 37.5% agreed, 29.2% disagreed and 8.3% strongly disagreed. For domestic chores, 21.2% strongly agreed, 41.7% agreed, 10.8% disagreed while 26.3% strongly disagreed. For other social roles, 52.2% strongly agreed, 34.4% agreed, 9.5% disagreed while 3.8% strongly disagreed, for low awareness, 4.1% strongly agreed, 10.4% agreed, 35.5% disagreed while 50% strongly disagreed. The data showed that the above highlighted factors generally influenced women's effective participation in vocational training programmes. The highest influencing factors were the other social roles. These other social roles include women groups at various levels like the church, mosque, market, clubs and professional associations and other associations like The Girl's Guide, The Red Cross and so on.

Research Question Three

What are the resources for effective vocational training programmes in Edo South Senatorial District?

Table 3: Adequacy of Resources

Responses	Adequacy of instructors available		Adequacy of Materials Available	
	F	%	F	%
SA	11	4.6	03	1.3
A	23	9.6	31	12.9
D	126	52.5	98	40.8
SD	80	33.3	108	45.0
Total	240	100	240	100

The data in table 3 shows that 4.6% of participants strongly agreed that instructors available were adequate, 1.3% strongly agreed that materials available were adequate, 9.6% agreed that instructors available were adequate while 12.9% agreed that materials were adequate. Also, 52.5% disagreed that instructors available were adequate, 40.8% disagreed that materials available were adequate and 33.3% strongly disagreed that material available were adequate.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that there were diverse skills available for women participants in vocational training centres in Edo South Senatorial District. The programmes include fashion design, catering, hair dressing, computer, secretarial studies, soap making, tie and dye and so on as indicated earlier. It was discovered from the study that catering (29.2%) attracted the highest participation followed by fashion design (25%) and hair dressing (25%) respectively. Results from the study showed that 21% of the women participated in computer studies. This implies that women participants preferred some skills to the others. For example, skills such as fashion design, catering and hair dressing were more dominant than other skills in the training centres. This finding supports Ogbaga (1994) that certain vocations are identified by employers as “feminine field” and as such there is generally a strong resistance to women in jobs naturally reserved for men such as the technical sector. As a result, programme providers are unconsciously structuring vocational training programmes for women in defined areas.

Also, the finding showed that a combination of factors hindered women effective participation in vocational training programmes, such factors include accessibility to training centres, high cost of acquiring the skill, lack of spouse support, domestic chores as well as other social roles. This is in line with the study of Marilee (1993) that there were some sociological and psychological problems as identified above that are confronting women in their work place. Marilee (1995) additionally attested to the fact that women are financially handicapped to play the league with their male counterparts and observed that women’s status in household affects their ability to participate outside the home.

When availability of resources was assessed, it was observed that both human and material resources were grossly inadequate. Tobi (1991) alluded to the fact that resources/teaching aids required for the effective participation in vocational training were usually inadequate. He identified sewing equipments for clothing and textile, hair dressing equipment/cosmetology material as well as equipment for food and nutrition, laboratory for practical cookery as resource materials that are always in short supply.

The study also indicated that awareness level was high in certain skills. It shows that people were aware of centres where they can acquire skills and the benefits derivable from such participation. Corroborating this finding, Oyitso (1999) in her study noted that there was increase in the consciousness level of women participants in vocational training programmes as they have now seen the benefits of engaging in income generating projects. In the same vein, Omoruyi and Ojogwu (2005) in their work acknowledged the importance of stepping up the consciousness level of women participants in vocational training which will invariably lead to increase in their level of participation.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that vocational training programmes were available and provided by both government and private individuals. There was high level of awareness of the existence of these programmes and their centres, though the rural areas suffered some deprivations.

Consequently, government and other stake holders should intensify their efforts and ensure that women development in the area of vocational training is adequately catered for and given top priority. It is no longer in doubt that when a woman is given necessary skills through vocational training to improve her interaction and awareness levels, she becomes a better and more effective participant in building her society.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are put forward for the improvement of vocational training programmes for women in Edo South Senatorial district.

Availability of necessary resources in terms of instructors, equipment and infrastructures is a key to successful participation in vocational training programme and should be improved upon. This will go a long way to stimulate women effective participation thereby leading to more women enrolment in the training programmes.

More awareness should be created by way of publicity in the various training programmes especially the ones that recorded low patronage, for instance computer training. Women should be encouraged to delve into technical sector not confining themselves to feminine field only. This can be done through awareness and enlightenment programmes by government and private agency so that there can be increase in the number of programmes available for women participants thereby broadening the scope of vocational skill training in the area.

There is need to establish more vocational training centres in rural areas to enable women in such locations to participate. Accessibility is a major hindrance to most women. They are easily discouraged because of the long distance they have to walk. Rural women also need to be mobilized using available local and media resources to enhance their participation. More importantly, the existing vocational training centres should be expanded in Edo South Senatorial District to open up opportunities for more women to participate in the training programmes.

Government should encourage women participation in vocational training programmes by giving them interest free loan upon completion of the programme to enable them utilize the skills they have acquired. This will in the long run bring about economic development in the state and improvement in the standard of living of women.

Government should assist training centres with adequate funding so that both human and material resources can be adequately catered for. Private organizations could also source for fund through donations, launching, levies, religious bodies, international organizations and charitable bodies.

Finally, government agencies like the National Orientation Agency should organize forum where spouses of interested women can be enlightened about the benefits of their wives acquiring vocational skills so as to support and contribute financially in the home especially in a time when gainful employment is scarce.

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