

Constraints to Government's Capacity Building Programmes in Rural Communities of Rivers State, Southern Nigeria

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Abstract: This study examined the constraints to capacity building programmes established by the Rivers State Government, Southern Nigeria, in order to improve self-employment skills of her rural citizenry. The state government established craft centres and rural industries to achieve this objective. A structured interview schedules were utilized to elicit information from 120 participants of the programmes, using random sampling technique. Mean scores and t-test were applied for data analysis. The study found that the programmes of the craft centres and rural industries were largely hindered by poor financial resources, perverse incentives created by cooperating partners, poor conditions of service, factors encouraging brain drain, and much dependence on technical assistance. However, insignificant differences existed in the level of constraints affecting the activities of the craft centres and the rural industries ($P > 0.05$). Suggestions were advanced therefore that both rural institutions should be merged; improved incentives and grants should be re-considered; and partnership where governments provide funds, infrastructure and enabling environment, and where private sectors provide technical knowledge are necessary for improvement in skills and capacity building efforts in the rural communities.

Key words: Constraints, capacity building and rural rivers state

INTRODUCTION

In most third world countries, especially in the sub-saharan Africa, the issue of rural development is very challenging considering that more than 70 percent of the population live in the rural areas where they cultivate the soil to make out a living. Looking at the poverty level, it therefore becomes a social problem that demands an urgent solution. According to Ihimodu (2003), rural development is the process of economic and social progress aimed at eradicating poverty through the provision of employment, improvement in the quality of life and satisfying the basic needs of the people. To be engaged in a rewarding employment vis-à-vis eradicate poverty among the rural populace, demands appropriate skills. Rural people are endowed with quantum of knowledge and traditional skills but at their primitive levels that needs development to fit in properly with the modern trend of things. This could be achieved through capacity building programmes. Capacity building is the process of developing skills, abilities and faculties; individually and collectively that is vital in comprehending rural development and its roles in ameliorating rural poverty, ignorance and illiteracy (Castelloe *et al.*, 2002).

Capacity building is continuous and reflects the society's need to respond to innovations and changes in social, economic and political realities. It emphasis hard

work as a prerequisite to earning income enough to meet social and economic needs of the people. Prilleltensky (1997), likens capacity building to empowerment necessary to deeply embed community change initiatives. According to Gutierrez (1990), empowering presumes that the practitioner does not hold the answers to the client's problems, but hoping that with collaboration, the client will develop the insight, skills and capacity to resolve the situation. Skills are necessary to sustain change. Engagement without skills is hollow and atimes dangerous because, it only provides the people with a sense of what could be, without the support and skills involved. McKnight (1995), therefore recommended skill developments through capacity building in community change process to enable rural people meet their immediate needs.

In Nigeria and other developing nations of the world, the benefit of capacity building in poverty reduction is one of the major policy thrusts of government and non-governmental organizations alike. The effort of government in community capacity building is recognized in its bid to eliminate poverty and provide avenues whereby rural community members could sustain a living, as well as develop their communities. The government does this through the establishment of rural craft centres and encouraging the building of rural industries. In the craft centres, skills such as sewing, masonry, carpentry, auto-mechanics, auto-electrical and electronics, etc are

organized while the rural industries provide training and job opportunities for rural people. The non-governmental organizations play complementary roles by organizing programmes and undertaking projects that cover various aspects of community life. They engage in programmes like adult literacy, training of traditional birth attendants, small and medium scale entrepreneurs and natural resources management. It also includes workshops on good governance, political awareness and leadership training. By so doing, community members develop a more positive self-image and confidence (Staall and Stoecker, 1998).

Through capacity building, participants learn team, strategic planning and organizational development, and also, develop leadership abilities (Rabinovitch and Lewis, 1994). Capacity building is a vital focus on the human resource development. However, this approach to human development is constrained by many factors making the realization of its objective, in terms of poverty eradication among the rural populace, impossible.

Purpose of the Study: This study focuses on identifying the constraints to government's capacity building programmes in Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study intended to:

Determine the factors militating against effective capacity building in rural communities of Rivers State.

Compare the experience by rural craft centres and industrial institution participants on the identified constraining factors.

Research Methodology: The sample size includes 120 respondents sampled from government capacity building institutions of craft centres and rural industries currently operational. The samples include trainees, instructors for the craft centres and workers from the rural industries. Fifty respondents were drawn from the craft centres, while seventy were selected from the rural industries. Two sampling techniques were adopted in selecting the respondents. Firstly, cluster sampling method was used to select ten local government areas based on their rural nature and the presence of capacity building institutions. Secondly, stratified random sampling was used to select the respondents using sex, and occupation. A structured questionnaire tagged constraints to capacity building programmes designed in the pattern of 5-point likert rating scale of agreement was used to gather data. Mean statistic was used to analyse the data with a predetermined 3.00 as the minimum acceptable value, and the student t-test statistic was used to test the null hypothesis of no significance difference in constraints to capacity building programmes between the rural craft centres and industrial institutions in the study area.

RESULTS

Shown in table 1 are constraints to capacity building in rural craft centres, which are divided into five major

elements with four variables each. The respondents were requested to react to the variables under each major element. Items with ≥ 3.00 weighted means were accepted as constraints in the rural craft centres. The major factors of lack of finance, perverse incentives created by cooperative partners and poor conditions of service were identified.

The factors encouraging brain drain, such as superstitious belief, lack of learning materials and qualified instructors had means of > 3.00 except inadequate enlightenment with a mean of < 3.00 . Dependence of technical assistance with its variables was also accepted as a major problem in capacity building.

In table 2, the Responses on the major constraints affecting rural community industries were positive as the weighted mean for each of the variables was > 3.00 . In table 2, the respondents were of the opinion that rural industries, which are meant to employ and empower the rural people, are faced with a mirage of problems.

Table 3 shows that the $t\text{-cal} = 0.50 < t\text{-tab} = 1.98$ at $P > 0.05$. This implies that the constraints to capacity building programmes in the craft centres and rural industries were very similar. This could be true because both rural institutions operate in the same environment; hence the null hypothesis was accepted.

DISCUSSION

Craft centres are where capacities are built while the industries employ the rural members to enables them earn a living. Despite the unsimilar functions, the challenges are alike, though there are variations in the determinant factors. Five major areas of constraints were identified with various variables. On lack of financial resources as a constraint to the programmes, participants in craft centres hinged their problem on their inability to pay transportation fare and acquire certain basic needs for regular class attendance. The participants in industries are constrained by available fund not allocated to areas of need. This result confirms the two separate studies of Ogbuagu (2007) and Ochomma (2008), that lack of fund is a major hindrance to human and rural development in Nigeria.

In the area of perverse incentives created by cooperating partner, participants in craft centres complained of lack of boarding facilities to ameliorate their plight of coming from distance places to work, but the industrial workers agreed strongly that lack of sufficient logistic support commensurate to their services is an aspect of neglect by the government. Poor condition of service is another aspect of complaint as indicated by the respondents. Participants in craft centres revealed that poor condition of service made them attend their private business in preference to attending classes. They believed it is more rewarding to attend to their farms, which is their major means of livelihood, just as the industrial workers blamed the management for poor production output and distribution, which slow down the process in the industries.

Table 1: Constraining factors to capacity building programmes in rural craft centres.

Factors	Mean
1. Lack of finance for:	
i. Transportation fare	4.84
ii. Participants basic needs (uniform food, book etc)	4.56
iii. Equipment maintenance	4.26
iv. Salaries /wages of workers and instructors	3.68
2. Perverse incentive created by cooperative partners	
i. Lack of boarding facilities	64
ii. Inferior /obsolete equipment	4.22
iii. Lack/inadequate instructional materials	3.80
iv. Learners' preference of leisure to learning	3.58
3. Poor conditions of service for staff:	
i. Attend private businesses instead of official duties	4.72
ii. No rules and regulations	4.40
iii. Government delayed responses to identified problems	3.80
iv. Insufficient equipment	3.50
4. Factors encouraging brain drain	
i. Participants superstitious belief	4.62
ii. Lack of teaching/learning materials	3.96
iii. Inadequate qualified instructors	3.86
iv. Inadequate enlightenment	2.96
5. Dependence on Technical assistance	
i. Usurpation by other external organizations	4.38
ii. Material supplies by external organizations	4.10
iii. Poor monitoring	3.78
iv. Training driven by external evaluators' needs	3.58

Maximum mean score was 5.00

Table 2: Constraints to rural community industries

Factor	Mean
1. Lack of financial resources	
i. Insufficient funds from cooperative society	4.39
ii. Uncontrolled inflow of rural allocation and compensation	4.17
iii. Lack of rural industry funding	3.61
iv. fund not distributed based on priority needs	4.81
2. Perverse incentive created by cooperating partners	
i. Embezzlement of fund	4.66
ii. Insufficient logistic support	4.83
iii. Withdrawal of sponsorship	3.83
iv. Inadequacy of necessary industrial equipment	4.30
3. Poor conditions of service	
i. Lack of /erratic power supply	4.37
ii. Shortage of water supply system	4.01
iii. Poor transportation facilities	3.46
iv. Managerial malfunctioning, production and distribution	4.91
4 Factors encouraging brain drain	
i. Insufficient turn-over for job activities	4.20
ii. Inconsistent training/retraining of staff on innovation	4.83
iii. Poor maintenance culture for facilities	3.61
iv. Use of obsolete techniques	4.47
5. Dependence on technical assistance	
i. low level of technical know-how	4.51
ii. Reliance on external organizations for infrastructural repairs	3.77
iii. Total dependence on external organization for suppliers	4.86
iv. Lack of continuity with external help	3.74

Maximum mean score was 5.00

Table 3: T-test result showing the difference in constraints to capacity building programmes between craft centres and industrial institutions in Rivers State

Institution	No	Mean	SD	Df	t-value
Craft centres	50	20.46	1.53	118	t-cal = 0.50t-tab = 1.98
Industries	70	21.35	1.23		P > 0.05

Brain drain in the craft centres and rural industrial institutions is another factor militating against effectiveness of these capacity building institutions. According to participants in the craft centres, superstitious belief, lack of instructional materials and inadequate

qualified instructors constitute a problem and discourage the learners from attending classes. In rural industries, participants attributed the exodus of workers on poor turnover for job activities, inconsistent training and retraining of staff on innovation, poor maintenance culture and use of obsolete technologies in production. These, they argued, lower the moral of workers resulting to resignation of staff of industrial institutions who leave for greener pastures, probably in the urban centres. Poor work incentives had been identified as major impediment to programme implementation in Nigeria Agricultural Development Projects, ADPS (Isife and Igbokwe, 1998).

Lastly, dependence on technical assistance was also identified as a constraining factor in capacity building organizations. Total dependence on technical assistance results to low level of technical know-how, absolute reliance on external help for infrastructure renovations and supplies. The respondents in the industries opined that such dependence is dangerous to the survival of the institutions as it could lead to lack of continuity when the help is withdrawn. Instructors and trainees in craft centres believed that such dependence leads to usurpation by the external body providing the assistance and supplying the materials, poor monitoring and training objective being driven by the needs of the external evaluators. This scenario is inimical to capacity building, especially of the rural people whose resources and energy need to be harnessed for rapid growth in their socio-economic well being.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has found that the Rivers State government established craft centres and rural industries with a single focus of training her citizenry to improve their self-employment skills. It is pertinent, therefore, that the two capacity building centres (craft centres and rural industries) should be merged, instead of separate training programmes as graduates of craft centres face problem of placement and still lack means of livelihood after training. Poor job incentives have been identified as responsible for low morale of participants of the training programmes. Incentives or grants given to participants during and after training should be used to equip the institutions, and the programme made on-the-job training. This will encourage and motivate participants to show case their potentials since such incentives like sewing machines and generators are sold afterwards as the only basis of enrolment.

For the on-the-job training, the condition for selection of trainees should be one that will make the trainees work for a number of years before leaving the institution for another to ensure continuity of the programme.

Government should go into partnership with private institutions interested in capacity building programmes. In this partnership, government will provide the resources

(fund and infrastructure), while the partners will provide the technical knowledge.

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