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ASSESSMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE CORPS ICT SKILL ACQUISITION TRAINING PROGRAMMES IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed implementation of national youth service corps ICT skill acquisition training programmes in Anambra State. A research question and hypothesis guided the study. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 2,061 corps members for the 2022 Batch C service year in Anambra State. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 617 corps members. Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. Mean, standard deviation and t-test were used to answer the research question and test the hypothesis. The findings revealed that corps members agreed that National Youth Service Corps implement to a high level information and communication technology in Anambra State. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that, government should provide enough ICT facilities to be used in the camps for training; also enough professional ICT facilitators and adequate security for these facilities should be provided to assist corps members train effectively. It was also recommended that NYSC should not be wary in organizing regular orientation and enlightenment programmes for the corps members on the need for them to participate fully in the learning of the different skills organized for them.

Keywords: Skill Acquisition, entrepreneurship training, National Youth Service Corps, Information and Communication Technology.

Introduction

In African countries of the world, the increase in the demand for skills and entrepreneurship caused by the emergence of new technologies and a shift in economic conditions have brought about rising levels of educational attainment among young people in the quest to acquire appropriate skills. A skill is an ability and capacity which an individual acquires through deliberate, systematic and sustained effort to smoothly and deliberately carryout complex activities or job functions including ideas (Udu & Udu, 2015). Skill acquisition according to Idoko (2014) is the form of training an individual engages in that can lead to acquisition of knowledge for self-sustenance. Okolo (2014) affirmed that through practical training people will acquire creative, innovation and business skills which will transform

opportunities and material resources into goods and services. Skills acquisition has been a veritable tool for promoting entrepreneurship knowledge and ability in the present economic realities.

Over the years, skill acquisition as a means of youth empowerment has caught successive government's attention in Nigeria to introduce different policies, programmes as well as schemes to tackle a particular situation. These programmes according to Deebom, MtormaBari, Daerego and Ilomabo, (2020), could be to curb insecurity, enhance food production, and reduce unemployment among others; skill acquisition and entrepreneurship programmes were also targeted towards a particular set of people such as adolescent, youth, adults, literate, illiterate and even the physically challenged. Some of these programmes include; small and medium enterprise development Agencies (SMEDA), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), National Apprenticeship Scheme, National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), among others. (Ekong & Ekong, 2016). The focus of this paper is on National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programmes.

NYSC was introduced to target the youths. Maduawuchi (2019) opined that during the early years after Nigeria gained independence from the British government, the country was filled with so much strife and tribal segregation that the Nigerian government of that time sought to foster peace and unity among Nigerians, starting with the youth through a programme that removed cultural and geographical bias. The NYSC programme was established in 1973 under General Yakubu Gowon's administration to engage fresh Nigerian graduates of tertiary institutions below the age of 30 years in nation building.

According to Abbas (2012), the NYSC scheme which was born through decree no 24 of 22nd May, 1973 was created to rebuild Nigeria after the civil war of 1967-1970. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2012) explained that the NYSC scheme was fundamentally borne out of the exigencies and Post Nigerian civil war 3R's programme-Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation; to inspire the youths of Nigeria to selflessly serve their fatherland and express the spirit of unity regardless of culture, social as well as religious affiliation. Under the NYSC scheme, young graduates are mobilized and deployed nationwide for a compulsory one-year service with a view for proper development of communities through the youth of Nigeria and promotion of national unity. The posting was such that graduates must not be allowed to serve in their own biological state of origin (Ogundele, Sofoluwe & Kayode, 2012).

According to Onyishi (2011), the goal of the NYSC scheme include to develop youth especially graduates with sound mind and result oriented achievement that are driving towards the acquisition of national cohesion and unity and to incorporate national coexistence. However, due to the enormous and pervasive challenges of youth unemployment confronting Nigeria; the NYSC scheme was directed in 2012 to

establish the NYSC Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (NYSC-SAED) as a department. The NYSC-SAED project was conceived in response to the scheme quest to proffer solution to post services unemployment challenge of the youths and to achieve one of its objectives which is to promote self-reliance among Nigerian youths.

Before the establishment of the NYSC- SAED project, unemployment rate in Nigeria rose from 21.1% in 2010 to 23.9% in 2011(Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). According to this report, the economically active population (15-64yrs) constituted 56.3% of the total unemployment in Nigeria as at 2011. Also, the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (2012) observed that Nigeria had a population of 164.39 million people in 2011and out of this figure, the labour force stood at 67.25 million out of which 51.18 million were employed and 16.07 million were unemployed. It was also noted that unemployment rate was highest amongst youth aged 15-25years (NYSC-SAED, 2019). As a result of this development, the department was created and charged with the responsibility of promoting self-reliance and wealth creation through skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development amongst young Nigerian graduates. The project is a nationwide initiative targeted at young Nigerian graduates mobilized and deployed in one year mandatory service.

The NYSC-SAED vision is to develop a culture of self-reliance in the youth by equipping them with the necessary skills for sustainable job creation towards national development while the mission is to create a platform that will facilitate access of young graduates to requisite skills and resources necessary for successful entrepreneurship as a means of enhancing national development (NYSC-SAED, 2019). To achieve the mission and vision of the NYSC-SAED, the objectives were clearly stated. According to the NYSC-SAED (2019), the objectives of the project includes; to sensitive and mobilize 200,000 young graduates for skill acquisition annually; facilitate the training and mentoring of 100,00 young graduates in skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development for self-reliance annually; promote public-private partnership for entrepreneurship development and self-reliance amongst Nigerian youths, promote documentation and sharing of best practices on youth empowerment in Nigeria; support evidence-driven advocacy efforts for favourable policies on youth empowerment in Nigeria.

According to Faloye and Olatunji (2018), the major objective of NYSC-SAED programmes is to encourage Nigerians generally, and youths in particular to be highly involved in entrepreneurial activities for job creation. Others include sensitizing corps members and providing them with practical self-employment programmes with a view to boosting the economy and curbing unemployment. According Bodley-Bond and Croni (2013), the expected outcome of this is the creation of platforms for the youth to gain practical experience, reflexive learning and

entrepreneurship development opportunities through orientation programmes.

This essential initiative of the NYSC-SAED focus on twelve (12) major business areas and sub-areas covering agro-allied, construction, education, environment, film and photography, power and energy, culture and tourism, food processing and preservation, ICT, cosmetology, beautification as well as automobile (NYSC-SAED, 2019). The corps members are therefore intended to acquire the business skills based on their areas of interest and choice. The training acquired during the camping exercise is future developed during the service year through monitoring and mentorship. Out of the 12 business areas, this paper focused only on one training programme which is information and communication technology (ICT) training Programmes.

ICT stands for Information and Communication Technology. It refers to technologies that provide access to information through telecommunication. According to Onwubiko (2011) information and communication technology is any tool that is used in producing, organizing and distributing information. It includes electronic information processing technologies such as computers and the internet as well as fixed-line telecommunication, mobile phones and other wireless communication networks. It is similar to Information Technology (IT) but focuses primarily on communication technologies. This includes the internet, wireless networks, cell phones and other communication mediums (Asogwa, &Anah, 2017). Accordingly, United Nation Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (2018) described ICT as a scientific, technological and engineering discipline and management tool used in handling information, its application and association with social, economic and cultural matters". Daniel (2013) posited that ICT is simply about sharing and having access to data with ease. It is regarded as the super highway through which information is transmitted and shared by people all over the world. Jimoh (2016) defined ICT as the handling and processing of information (texts, images, graphs and instruction among others) for use, by means of electronic and communication devices such as computers, cameras, telephone. Ofodu (2016) also referred to ICT as electronic or computerized devices, assisted by human and interactive materials that can be used for a wide range of teaching and learning as well as for personal use. From these definitions, ICT could therefore be seen as the processing and sharing of information using all kinds of electronic device, an umbrella that includes all technologies for the manipulation and communication of information.

ICT has dominated all aspect of our lives and has introduced new forms of entrepreneurship abilities based on the use of information. Increased access to information, through the power of internet facilities as well as the creation of several innovative

tools and accessories, have created several opportunities which has been exploited by young entrepreneurs who have successfully ventured into on-line businesses.

According to Bandele (2017), ICT is a revolution that involves the use of computers, internet and other telecommunication technology in every aspect of human endeavour.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have become key tool and have had a revolution impact on how people see the world and how they live. Today, the place of ICTs in education and the world in general cannot be undermined. Modern day businesses are conducted and facilitated through the use of telephones, fax machines and computer communication networks through the internet. This phenomenon has given birth to the contemporary e-commerce, e-government, e-medicine, e-banking and e-education among others. It means, according to Ashraf (2015), having more opportunities to use ICT to improve quality of life and schools.

ICT applications are important because most businesses regularly rely on them and spend so much because they believe it constantly improve organizational performance and saves time and cost (Ashraf, 2015). According to Bandele (2017), information is regarded as a backbone of any business which helps to reshape and redesign products/services, organizational structure, as well as corporate directions of any business. In that line, Ofodu (2016) posited that service-oriented businesses are information intensive and they communicate corporate information via the use of ICT to their clients.

The implementation of ICT training programmes after the course of the training in Nigeria has received mixed reactions from different authors. Ofodu (2016) argued that ICT is regarded very significant with the little implementation because it helps those corps members that have managed to start up, to develop their indigenous economy. Also, some of the trainees adopt the use of ICT effectively and advance their communication with their customer, a large number still consider it to be exciting in the development of networks and knowledge sharing (Inyanga, 2015). On this note, one cannot say only the male or female corps members were able to use ICT to run their businesses.

Essien (2016) argued that ICT trainings programmes have not been adequately implemented. This is because, the use of ICT among NYSC members is low and which gives one of the reasons many NYSC members still carry files in search of job after graduation. Many of the trainees are not knowledgeable on technological and human competences. A large number of trainers are not open-minded and they find it difficult to share information and take advantage of emerging ICT facilities. This ability to make available information to the trainees has to do with individual characteristics and complying with organizational objectives, but not gender characteristics (Asogwa, &Anah, 2017). Although with the little implementations, some corps members have been able to utilize ICT in initiating and advancing in their businesses.

Mortimore and Ariyo (2015) opined that ICT training programmes are not adequately implemented because there is mismatch between technology and social/business systems. When a mismatch between the technology and the social or business systems exists, the trainees, irrespective of gender may feel that the technology adds little value. This is against the notion that corps members are trained to be very aware of and discover the business and social systems that are at work in the micro-enterprise.

Operational challenges have affected the implementation of ICT training programmes among the NYSC members because of poor operational procedures and support (Ashraf, 2015). A problem facing all of the trainees is that there is no ICT support service for them. Albert (2010) opined that the trainees that own businesses are too small to hire their own technology staff, and usually cannot afford to hire an Information Technology (IT) consultant. The trainees were instructed to make sure that the entrepreneurs had adequate backup and virus protection systems in place and that they were comfortable using them (Ndu, 2017). In most cases, no such systems existed and the trainees had little awareness that they were needed. However, the problem of long-term support is not adequately solved by the IT experts.

Capability-related challenge is another reason why ICT training programmes has not been adequately implemented because of inadequate ICT user skills (Emmanuel, 2013). Whether real or perceived, lack of skills, which is devoid of gender sensitivity, is a great hindrance to the use of ICT in micro-enterprises. As Asogwa and Dim (2016) put it, as a small business, there is competency issues when it comes to technology. It takes so much time to figure out administrative and technical programs that helps in business processes. However, because of the challenges of implementing ICT programmes, this hinders marketing products to clients to get more sales.

Lukpata and Asha (2014) also posited that ICT training programmes has not be adequately implemented after training the NYSC members because of unreliable powers supply. For the Nigerian ICT sector to witness progress not only in application but also in invention and development, power supply must be stable. It is heartbreaking that Nigeria still battles the problem of epileptic power supply up till now. Most ICT facilities are powered by fuel or diesel generators which require a huge sum of capital to run a business. These also add to the cost of the company's maintenance and the government of Nigeria is still struggling to fix steady power supply.

Many corps members both the male and female have been able to use their ICT skills acquired through ICT training programmes to create different job opportunities. This is one of the reasons some NYSC members are actively engaged in ICT businesses, but the unemployment rate is still high. This appears to mean that the programme is inadequately implemented because in almost all cases, Ajake and Amalu (2012) opined that micro-

enterprise owners have insufficient ICT knowledge to address the information-related challenges facing the business. This is true with the NYSC members that do not have adequate ICT knowledge and skills. This may be a function of other factors such as lack of time from the organizers, and lack of awareness of the programmes.

However, NYSC-SAED has been operating for close to 10 years in Nigeria, in which they play the role of training corps members in ICT skill related programmes. The NYSC-SAED seems to be overwhelmed with the increasing nature of unemployment because presently there are still drastic increases in the rate of unemployment in Nigeria especially among young graduates. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, little attention is paid to corps members in Nigeria, hence the dearth of available data on ICT skill training programmes. Since the knowledge of ICT is known globally as a weapon for transformation and rapid growth; the researchers deem it necessary that corps members should begin to actively participate in the programmes, hence the need to embark on this paper to assess the implementation of national youth service corps ICT skill acquisition training programmes in Anambra State.

Research Question: What is the level of implementation of NYSC-SAED Information and communication technology training programme for male and female corps members in Anambra State?

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female corps members on the level of implementation of NYSC-SAED information and communication technology (ICT) training programmes in Anambra State.

Research Method

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study was carried out in Anambra state. The population of the study consisted of 2,061 corps members which comprised 1,013 male and 1,048 female for the 2022 Batch C service year in Anambra State. A sample size of 617 (303 male and 314 female corps member) was used for the study. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample size using 30% from each population. According to Nworgu (2015) stratified random sampling technique is a technique that can be used when a study consists of layers or levels in a population and each layer has some unique characteristics which make it different from the other layers, the characteristics have to be recognized in the study. In this study stratification was based on gender (male and female corps members). A structured questionnaire was developed by the researchers. The instrument was validated by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained through a pilot test by administering the instrument to 20 corps members in Enugu State which is not part of the study area. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.78 which was considered

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appropriate for the study. Mean statistics and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions and to determine the homogeneity of the respondent's ratings respectively while t-test was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. A criterion of 2.50 was adopted. This implies that mean scores of 2.50 and above was considered high level and any below was regarded as low level. Ho was rejected when the p- value is less than or equal to 0.05 ($p \leq 0.05$), but if otherwise ($p > 0.05$) the null Ho was not rejected.

Presentation of results

Research Question 1: What is the level of implementation of NYSC-SAED Information and communication technology training programme for male and female corps members in Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean ratings of the information and communication technology training programmes for male and female corps members in Anambra State

		Male=265			Female=316			Total=581		
S/N	**Items**	**X**	**SD**	**R**	**X**	**SD**	**R**	**X**	**SD**	**R**
1	Organizes intensive training for corps members on digital programming	1.82	.619	Low Level	1.73	.667	Low Level	1.77	.647	Low Level
2	Facilitates workshops on how to become an entrepreneur via internet packages	3.18	.759	High Level	3.18	.786	High Level	3.18	.773	High Level
3	Orientates corps members on setting up and equipping of computer business centres	3.06	.846	High Level	3.03	.872	High Level	3.04	.860	High Level
4	Trains corps members on how to create websites.	2.02	.677	Low Level	1.86	.679	Low Level	1.93	.682	Low Level
5	Conduct computer literacy training programmes for corps members in the camps	3.06	.913	High Level	3.05	.940	High Level	3.06	.927	High Level
6	Assist in the acquisition and adaptation of e-learning platforms and facilities	2.95	.890	High Level	2.96	.897	High Level	2.95	.897	High Level
7	Facilitate training programmes on system networking for self-employment	3.07	.951	High Level	2.96	.918	High Level	3.01	.934	High Level

8	Organize training on on-line business management	2.30	.679	Low Level	2.17	.710	Low Level	2.23	.699	Low Level
9	Facilitate training programmes on system maintenance/hardware engineering	3.18	.865	High Level	3.05	.938	High Level	3.11	.907	High Level
10	Train corps members on computer software engineering as a profitable business venture	1.86	.743	Low Level	1.82	.726	Low Level	1.84	.734	Low Level
11	Organizes training on GSM repairs and accessories	3.12	.930	High Level	2.95	.912	High Level	3.03	.923	High Level
12	Orientates corps members on setting up and equipping of computer laboratories	2.68	.870	High Level	2.92	.866	High Level	2.81	.875	High Level
	Average	**2.69**	**.364**	**High Level**	**2.64**	**.355**	**High Level**	**2.66**	**.360**	**High Level**

Source: Field Study (2022)

Result in Table 1 shows the item by item mean ratings of the implementation level of NYSC-SAED ICT training programmes for male and female corps members in Anambra State. All male responses to items 18, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27 and 28 with mean scores 3.18, 3.06, 3.06, 2.95, 3.07, 3.18, 3.12 and 2.68 respectively are rated high level while items 17, 20, 24 and 26 with mean scores 1.82, 2.02, 2.30 and 1.86 are rated low level.

More so, all female responses to items 18, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, and 28 with mean scores 3.18, 3.03, 3.05, 2.96, 2.96, 3.05, 2.95 and 2.92 respectively are rated high level while items 17, 20, 24 and 26 with mean scores 1.73, 1.86, 2.17 and 1.82 respectively are rated low level. The grand mean of 2.66 for both male and female corps members means that ICT training programmes in Anambra State is rated to a high level. The standard deviation of .364 for males and .355 for females means that the difference in the scores are not too much, thus, the respondents' mean scores are closely related.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female corps members on the level of implementation of NYSC-SAED ICT training programmes in Anambra State.

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Table 2: t-test Summary of the Significant Difference between the Mean Ratings of Male and Female Corps Members on the Implementation level of NYSC-SAED ICT Training Programmes in Anambra State

Gender	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	Df	t-cal	p-value	Decision
Male	265	2.69	.364				
				579	1.699	0.090	**NS**
Female	316	2.64	.355				

Table 2 shows the significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female corps members on the implementation level of NYSC-SAED ICT training programmes in Anambra State. The result shows a p-value of 0.090 with 579 degree of freedom and α-value of 0.05. Since the p-value of 0.90 is greater than the α-value of 0.05, the null is accepted. This means that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female corps members on the level of implementation of NYSC-SAED ICT training programmes in Anambra State.

Discussion of Findings

The result from the analysis of research question revealed that corps members agreed that information and communication technology training programmes was implemented to a high level in Anambra State. This implies that the conduct of ICT training programmes was satisfying to them. The finding therefore revealed among others that NYSC-SAED to a high level facilitates workshops on how to become an entrepreneur via internet packages; orients corps members on setting up and equipping of computer business centres; conducts computer literacy training programmes for corps members in the camps; assist in the acquisition and adaptation of e-learning platforms and facilities; facilitates training programmes on system networking for self-employment; organizes training on GSM repairs and accessories; orients corps members on setting up and equipping of computer laboratories. This finding agreed with the findings of Affero, Wan-Nurashida, AliaRazali, Hashim, and Mohd (2019) which observed that ICT training programmes have helped some corps members in their modern day business, which are conducted and facilitated through the use of telephones, fax machines and computers communication networks through the internet. Thus, these findings have significant impacts on the implementation of entrepreneurship programmes, especially to the corps members. This study further revealed that NYSC-SAED facilitates training programmes on system

maintenance/hardware engineering. On the other hand, the respondents agreed that NYSC-SAED organizes in a low level intensive training for corps members on digital programming; training on how to create websites; training on on-line business management and training on computer software engineering as a profitable business venture. This finding is in line with the findings of Balogun (2010), which revealed that as a result of high cost of ICT facilities, the programmes have not been adequately implemented. Generally, the finding of the study is encouraging because it suggests a sense of satisfaction, confidence and hope for better training in the corps members.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that corps members agreed that NYSC-SAED to a high level implement ICT training programmes in Anambra state. On the other hand, there is a significant difference in the mean scores of male and female corps members on the level of implementation of NYSC ICT training programmes in Anambra State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers proffered the following recommendations:

1. The NYSC-SAED should procure more ICT learning facilities and instructions that are not part of the available activities in their training programmes in Anambra State. Such practical activities like hands-on assignments, group projects and problem solving should be featured in the method of programme delivery to encourage more active participation in ICT training among the corps members.
2. The NYSC-SAED should recruit more ICT qualified SAED instructors and organize adequate ICT training at intervals for them. They should also provide them with adequate ICT training equipment to facilitate corps members' mastery of the ICT skills being taught.
3. The government should provide enough ICT facilities and equipment to be used in the camps for training. Enough professional ICT operators, ICT facilitators and adequate security for these equipment should be employed and provided to assist corps members train effectively.
4. The NYSC-SAED should not be wary in organizing regular orientation and enlightenment programmes for the corps members on the need for them to participate fully in the learning of the different skills organized for them.

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