

## Comparative Analysis of Influence of Some Socio-economic Variables on Vocational Skills Acquisition Programmes for Adult Learners in South-South, Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT** Non-formal vocational skills acquisition training has recently been identified as an effective strategy for poverty reduction in developing economies (Akanji 2008). Relating these training programmes to the situational contexts of beneficiaries has been problematic. Using the survey design, the study, therefore, investigated the influence of some socio-economic factors on vocational skill acquisition training of adult learners in selected agencies in South-South, Nigeria. The result showed significant joint contribution of social factors  $F(3, 984) = 56.778$ ;  $p < 0.05$  and economic factors  $F(3, 984) = 56.778$ ;  $p < 0.05$  on the indices of vocational skills acquisition and well-being of participants. Independent variables jointly accounted for  $F(8, 246) = 486.516$ ;  $p < 0.05$ . Literacy ( $\hat{\alpha} = .435$ ;  $t = 21.341$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ); Gender ( $\hat{\alpha} = .230$ ;  $t = 11.869$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ); employment status ( $\hat{\alpha} = .434$ ;  $t = 14.927$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ); occupational types ( $\hat{\alpha} = .175$ ;  $t = 8.796$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ); poverty level ( $\hat{\alpha} = .305$ ;  $t = 14.867$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ); language ( $\hat{\alpha} = .298$ ;  $t = 15.895$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ); relatively contributed to indices of vocational skills acquisition training. It was recommended that intervention programmes should always be designed based on the socio-economic contexts of beneficiary target groups to capture their needs.

### INTRODUCTION

Attempts to address the employment needs as well as the problems of poverty, illiteracy, gender related issues, occupational and vocational skills acquisition for economic self-reliance of individuals and communities are replete in Nigeria. Agencies established to address these problems included the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Better Life for Rural Women, Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), Agencies for Adult and Non-formal Education, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) (Akintayo and Oghenekohwo 2004; Akanji 2008). These agencies have undertaken to ensure the non-formal training of youths and adults on vocational skills acquisition through work-oriented functional literacy to capture skills in garri processing, carpentry, soap and pomade making, baking and confectionary skills, barbing and hair dressing, computer literacy skills, family health and HIV/AIDS, life skills for community-decision making, peace and conflict resolutions and bargaining power. They also

provide training in the areas of sideline jobs for extra incomes, mechanic work, environmental management techniques, tie and dye, laundering, block moulding, mason, arts and craft, shoe-making and repair, fish farming, animal farming and crop production, bee-keeping, tailoring, and many others.

The essence of these vocational skills acquisition programmes is yet to be felt at both individual and community levels especially within the south-south. This is due to the apparent poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and general underdevelopment in the area. The dilemma that this situation creates is whether these vocational skills acquisition programmes do normally have any bearing with the social, cultural and economic contexts of their beneficiaries. It is doubted whether at all, the social factors like literacy level, marital status, age and gender of target participants are considered in the planning process. The same doubt applies with the cultural factors like language, values, norms and beliefs systems of the people. Also, the economic context (occupational type, employment status and poverty levels of target participants are feared to have not being given adequate consideration in the process of designing such programmes. The extent to which these factors matter may

equally not have been ascertained by providing agencies. One fundamental problem with non-formal education and training programmes is the top-bottom approach in their design and delivery process. This approach tends to make well intentioned programmes look like imposition on the people with far many negative effects.

Many NFE vocational training programmes have been carried out over time in the South-south political zone of Nigeria without visible impact in the area. Consequently, unemployment, illiteracy, youth restiveness and glaring underdevelopment are still prevalent. There seems to be some disconnect between these programmes and the unimpressive situation in the South-South. To unearth this disconnect, this study investigated the influence of some social and economic factors on vocational skills acquisition training programmes for adult learners in selected agencies in South-South, Nigeria.

### METHODOLOGY

Survey research design was adopted for the study. Furthermore, the multi-stage sampling procedure, comprising stratified, purposive, proportional and simple random sampling techniques was deployed to select 1,712 respondents among adult learners. Two self-structured instruments: Vocational Skills Acquisition Training Predictor scale, ( $r = 0.76$ ); and Focus Group Discussion (FGD)/Oral Interview (OI), were used to collect data. Two research questions were raised and answered. Data were analyzed using One-way analysis of variance, multiple regression and correlation, tested at 0.05 alpha levels; while content analysis was used for FGD and OI. Six development agencies were focused for data collection. Nine hundred and eighty-eight (988) questionnaires were retrieved and used as bases for data analysis.

### Literature Review

#### *Socio-economic Factors and Vocational Skills Training Programmes*

A discourse on social factors raises some questions: what is/are social factor(s)? Indeed, one of the most confusing subject matters in educational and social science research is the delineation of social and cultural factors within the context of their causal and/or effectual relationship

with educational or sociological phenomena. The distinction often appears more complex when taken together with demographic variables. The tendency has generally been to easily mix up categorization whereby some social variables are considered along with economic variables, while often mixing demographic variables with cultural and social variables. However, this contradiction fits into various approaches used in adult education research. For example, because of this complex web of inter-relationships in the sociological circumstances of research targets in adult education, methodologies and research designs tend to favour anthropocentric approach (Kassam 1981); community surveys and participatory research (Bhola 2000). These approaches are unique to humanistic studies where adult education belongs because they engender full integration of the researched and the researcher into the research social milieu in a process of participation, interaction and integration. Moreover, they are dialogical and therefore andragogical in nature.

Economic variables are no less intertwined in their internal relationships and their relationship with social and cultural variables. The most commonly identified economic indicators by various development scholars include income level, unemployment and under-employment status; poverty level (Yesufu 2000; Agabi 2000). Economic policies such as privatization, Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP), liberalization in Africa often come with undesirable economic consequences. Privatization for instance, often throws out people from their employment and they suddenly become unemployed. This condition instantly produces a telling effect on their income. The skills they possess may not be transferred to suit situations of urgent importance. The need for skill development programmes which should respond to their present state of affair become imperative. Lifelong learning for such category of persons should demand a re-orientation through appropriate course design through which the adults can be put back on track. Changes in technology in Africa may also affect skills and knowledge demand among population groups. Even among the employed, changes in work-place practice engender new demands for knowledge and skills. Although a host of social and economic variables account for viable prediction of socio-economic development programmes. In this study, the social variables cov-

ered include, gender, marital status and literacy; while the economic variables were poverty, employment status and occupational status.

### ***Gender and Vocation Skills Training Programmes***

Several studies have been carried out on sexual division of labour, explaining the relationship between sex and vocations. Citing one of such studies by Murdock (1987), Holborn and Haralambos (2008) reported that vocations such as hunting, lumbering and mining are predominantly male roles, while cooking, water carrying, making and preparing of clothes (modern sewing, tailoring and fashion designing) are largely female roles. Gender sensitivity in life-long learning has received the nod of many international agencies in development.

Writing on gender and its place in determining the type of skill acquisition programme for beneficiary groups, Stromquist (2002: 23) stated that "gender is an element of social relationship that operates at multiple levels. It affects every day interactions, public institutions, work and the household". The consequences of gender distinctions as Stromquist observes are notably reflected in politics, economic, social and cultural spheres. Within the cultural sphere, gender asymmetries are expressed and reproduced through definitions of femininity and masculinity (including prescribed types and emotions), supported by such mechanisms as ideology, sexuality, language, law, schooling, work, mass media, etc.

In the views of feminist scholars, gender is a social marker that affects men and women and that it affects all women negatively regardless of social class and ethnicity (Stromquist 2002). In several indigenous communities, traditions and culture tend to create norms that restrict women physical and mental space. In most cases, norms of feminism and masculinity restrict their chances of fields of study and occupations. The same discrimination rears up in politics against women. It is in realization of the effects produced by this ancient stigmatization of women and the new momentum of change in the world that international cooperation has been mobilized to avail women the right to social inclusion through appropriate legislations and policies.

Similarly, Appiah-Donyina (2000) declared that sex and gender are the two basic differences between men and women; while sex is the physi-

cal biological difference between the two referring to female and male births, gender refers to the social role expectations people have for someone due to his/her being male/female. Therefore, gender attitude and behaviours are subject to change over time, because they are learned. To this extent, gender is socially determined while sex is biologically determined. Gender therefore is a sociological concept, which defines socially constructed varied roles which men and women play in their daily lives (Klesing-Rempell and Zuinino-Encues 2004). So, whereas gender is a social and cultural construction, sex upon which it is based, is biologically determined. Biological (genetic) factors account for sex differences in the physiology and anatomy of males and females, but cultural factors explain gender in terms of roles and statutes, which globally confer more power on men than on women. In the context of this study therefore, focus on gender involves a critical examination of the social relations between men and women or between the sexes within society.

Relating this conceptualization of gender to poverty intervention programmes, Appiah-Donyina (2002) explained that:

*Adapting a gender focus to developmental issues is the result of the realization that women often do not benefit from developmental activities and in several cases become poorer and more marginalized (p. 59).*

From this explanation, one may therefore say that the ultimate goal of seeking to introduce the gender variable in development research is to achieve gender equity at least to give women and men informal and effective right of participation in every sphere of life in line with the Hamburg declaration that supported the rights of women (UNESCO 2003). This suggests further that intervention agencies should be critical to undertake community analysis/need surveys so that the profile and characteristics of all the elements in the community population are brought to sharp focus without any element of bias. Only in this way will providers demonstrate their sensitivity to gender issues.

### ***Literacy Level of Participants and Vocational Skills Training***

As a social variable, illiteracy or literacy transcends many areas of human (individual and national) development. It is a social variable with

correlation value to many indices of development. Studies relate literacy to poverty or *vice versa* (Omolewa and Adekanbi 1998; Klesing-Rempel and Zuinino-Encues 2004; Obanya 2004; Oxenham 2004).

To Torres (2006), literacy remains a key basic learning need which relates to many human satisfactors, and is essential for meeting several learning needs (BLN). Basic Learning Needs as conceptualized by Torres, are derived from and relate to basic needs of individuals, groups and societies. Basic needs (BLN) vary according to individual's age, gender, context, culture and individual interests, motivations and preferences. It is therefore not surprising that the concept and scope of literacy as well as the needs for literacy in the lives of individuals and groups have changed and expanded considerably across cultures. The realization of this dynamic character of literacy introduces a strong need for development agencies and professional adult educators to be critical of the steps and approaches they take or intend to take to address social and economic problems of the illiterate populations.

The intimacy of vocational and technical skills training with literacy is explained in the works of Torres (2004), where it is contended that literacy is the most important passport to lifelong learning as reading and writing skills accompany people throughout their life and enable them to keep informed and intellectually active. That literacy is essential for human development and for improving people's quality of life.

Rogers (2005) reports that literacy provision in its traditional sense, does not help in dealing with the problems of illiterate adults who are exposed to literacy programmes. According to his argument:

*The combination of literacy with vocational training has been tried in developing countries many times, but it has rarely been successful. When non-literate trainees on vocational skill training programmes are given the choice, most of the trainees do not feel the need for literacy training (p. 59 – 60)*

A plausible explanation to this experience conveys the understanding that literacy training offered may not be relevant to the vocational training which forms the participants' occupational background. It is further reasoned that providers of vocational training in the absence of literate trainers, employ the services of conventional literacy learning providers who deploy

their traditional standardized school-type learning programmes where literacy in the 3Rs is taught separate from the vocational skill demand. This process of literacy delivery leaves learners with the impression that the purpose of literacy is for futuristic gains as opposed to the need for immediate application of what is learnt to their related vocations or occupations. As an alternative approach, Rogers (2005) recommended "embedded literacies" where for instance a tailor often will keep a notebook of customers' names, measurements, list of materials, designs, and so on. Shop keepers may have a record of goods, their prices, names of customers, credit offered and paid. These various elements in one particular trade constitute relevant literacies embedded within the productive activity which are very useful to all forms of occupations.

In forging an understanding for literacy, the modified version of UNESCO definition of literacy is important to this study. It states:

*A literate person is one who has acquired the knowledge and skills indispensable to the performance of all activities for which literacy is necessary in order to play an effective part in his group and his community; and whose achievement in reading, writing and arithmetic are such that they enable him to continue the development of the community and to participate actively in the life of his community (UNESCO 2003: p. 21).*

The definition is emphatic of functionality as the key ingredient of a literate person. This suggests the opposite of who an illiterate is. The functionally illiterate person is therefore one who cannot engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his/her group and community and also enable him/her to continue to use reading, writing and calculation to his/her own and the community development. From the definitions given, it is recommended that literacy practices must first be properly infused into the community's way of life before they can become relevant tools for development in such communities. In other words, literacy programmes may rarely work out for participants if there is no cultural integration of literacy practices into the life of the community. For example, computer literacy in a predominantly farming setting, without the culture of using computers will naturally atrophy and render the knowledge irrelevant to any human activity. This is because, in the community under refer-

ence, computer literacy has no relationship with their ways of life and sustenance. Knowledge of the literate environment therefore is important for planning a successful and sustainable literacy programme for groups or individuals.

### ***Poverty Levels of Participants and Vocational Skills Training Programmes***

The meaning and measurement of poverty has important implications for lifelong learning for adult learners. International attention has impressively been drawn to the burdening issue of poverty reduction now more than ever before. This is with the adoption of the international target proposed by the development assistant committee of the OECD which sets a target to reduce by half the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015 (Maxwell 1999). What this target might mean is obscured because of the bewildering ambiguity with which the term poverty is used, and by the many different indicators often proposed to monitor poverty. Maxwell (1999) noted some of the indicators of poverty to include income poverty, or human development; sustainable livelihood or social exclusion; current consumption and future security. In all of these, different concepts imply different interventions.

It is important to note that these different concepts have developed rapidly over the last three decades. ODI (1999) observed that there are nine fault lines in the current debate on the meaning and measurement of poverty. There is, for example, the argument on the importance of monetary variables over objective or subjective measures; and on the link between material income and wider functioning society. Most people agree that money income bracket or consumption on its own is an imperfect measure of welfare, and also recognizes the need to take account of variability over time. There is also the idea or notion of relative deprivation which also is widely accepted as an important poverty indicator.

Similarly, Kareithi (2000) submitted that the meaning and qualitative dimensions of poverty can become clearer by taking the people's own perception of poverty and the context specific identification of aspects of deprivations and their priorities. This is important not only in understanding people's well-being but also in the design of poverty reduction intervention measures. It is also important as these measures can help

predict lifelong learning outcomes for adult learners. Kareithi (2000), further perceived and described poverty at the level of individual and household as characterized by people walking bare footed, lacking food (going hungry), scavenging in dustbins, lacking shelter, living in crumbled structures and showing evidence of inability to send children to school. These characterizations lend a clue to the fact that poverty is a problem of adulthood, meaning that the only educational intervention that will suit its purpose is adult education.

The frontiers of poverty have extended to include sustainable livelihood by DAC (2006) in recent times against the need to measure progress towards the achievement of the international development targets. Broadly interpreted, poverty is also seen as a situation characterized by lack of basic means to live in dignity (Duke 2004). Duke further stressed that a multi-dimensional understanding of poverty can help define poverty as a human condition characterized by sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for enjoyment that leads to adequate standard of living and other civil, economic, political and social rights.

Preece (2004) also asserted that the significant part which education and training has to play in fostering the means to overcome poverty is no longer in doubt. Despite the number of innovative adult education programmes and research studies, the role of adult education remains according to Preece:

*... an under-explored concept in current national poverty reduction papers. Moreover, in lifelong learning policy debates, adult education is often relegated to basic education or those countries where poverty is a feature for substantial populations. Adult education is potentially much more than literacy or basic education. ... successful education is multi-pronged. It requires grass root, bottom-up development in participatory, partnership approach, which includes recognition of indigenous knowledge and starts with problems that are of immediate relevance to peoples' contexts (Preece 2004, Conference Paper p.2).*

Informed by the potential of adult education and training in poverty reduction, studies have been conducted to establish the impact of such training on knowledge of targets and their poverty characteristics (Valerio 2003). The results

indicated that investments in lifelong learning for poverty stricken adults are productive and that what poor people learn from such programmes does help them to raise their income and move out of poverty.

Repeated studies by Burchfield et al. (2002a, 2002b) in Bolivia and Nepal respectively; Rogers (2005) in Nepal; and Mia and Hassan (2004) in Bangladesh were lacking in baseline data. The source of information came from beneficiary learners rather than strictly measured observations. Overall findings however indicated positive results. Oxenham et al. (2002), Ashe and Parrott (2001); Cawthera (2003), with the exception of Fieldrich and Jellema (2003) provided further useful research evidences that beneficiaries of learning programmes aimed to reduce their poverty benefited as they could use the various skills gained to improve their uses of land, water, crops and money. They could also gainfully feel less vulnerable to being cheated in monetary transactions, since they could now keep their records. Klesing-Rempel and Zuñino-Encues (2004) under the force of a poverty reduction NGO reported on a study of some indigenous people surrounded with poverty. All the benchmarks that were identified were reported met at the end of the project with project sustainability indicators extant.

### ***Occupational Types of Participants and Vocational Skills Training Programmes***

In debunking the Euro-centric hypothesis on the absence of any form of education before westernization, Omolewa (2002) affirmed that Africa was rich in its traditional educational system. According to him, in this form of education, it was mostly apprenticeship as parents transfer knowledge to their children by making them to do what they see them do. This suggests that African education system was vocationally and occupationally based. It was therefore of high relevance to the vocations of the people. Human society traditionally is occupation bound. Individuals within the society locate their aptitudes within the spread of occupational chances and develop their living from there. Consequently, they draw their economic relevance from the work they do. Unfortunately, societal problems have been traced to issues of unemployment, lack of relevant skills resulting from lack of training and educational opportunities for citizens. In this

study, occupational types refer to modern and traditional work-based activities that command economic value for individuals and their communities.

In a review of the problems that affect the Niger-Delta region and its people, Nyong and Oladipo (2003) and Oladipo et al. (2003) lamented that the main problems that affect the people are related to type and relevance of skill and empowerment for skill utilization in industries. This observation insinuates that traditional economy of the people has been dislodged for industrial economy with the result that their traditional knowledge and skills no longer carry relevance in relation to the new economic structure. This is further explained by the fact that: "... in that area, in many instances, targeted skills may not be relevant to economic and social environment of the people, particularly the youth and women" (Oladipo 2003: 270). In that regard, it was quickly opined that any skill that would be introduced should prepare trainees for employment particularly self-employment, for poverty alleviation and should encourage the creation of a pool of skilled manpower for industries to draw from.

The case of the Niger-Delta region therefore demands that since traditional occupations have been dislodged by the new oil industrial economy, interventions should provide training on skills that will have economic value for both the people and the industries (nomothetic and ideographic considerations) (Edem 1995). A situation where the fishermen and the agricultural farmers no longer find their occupations valuable to them due to environmental degradation and pollution implies that their traditional occupational skills no longer have utility value.

The International Conference on Sustainable Development in the Niger-Delta (2003) after a consideration of the issues that be-devil the area, recommended skills acquisition training and re-training programmes taking cognizance of: "Specific economic activities in the trainees' locality; social groups (women and youth, etc.); traditional activity patterns and life styles" (p. 57). It also noted that agriculture which is the traditional occupational practice of the area and industrialization should be the major sectors where training programmes should draw their contents from to make beneficiaries of such training useful to the economy of the area (Conference Proceedings, p. 57).

### ***Employment Status and Vocational Skills Training***

Employment related programmes are replete in most of the developing countries. This is as a result of glaring high rates of unemployment among the adult population. Many reports of graduate unemployment at all levels of educational completion are given. (Ngwu 2001, 2003). Agencies like the National Directorate of Employment in Nigeria, National Poverty Eradication Programme were created out of the need to provide self-employment through vocational skill training for many of these unemployed to enable them gain economic self-reliance (NDE 2003).

The unemployment rate in Nigeria has remained over and above 15 and 21% since the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Ngwu 2003). Konig (2004) reported further that the recent world recession has led to higher unemployment rates in developing countries. In these circumstances, school leavers are faced with more difficult unemployment situations. The result is that most primary, secondary and post-secondary school leavers revert to the informal sector for employment and skills training. Ngwu (2003) had earlier estimated that a total of 2 million apprentices are provided for in the informal sector in Nigeria as compared to half a million in the wage professions and the large industrial and commercial enterprises. According to Ngwu (2003), presently informal sector, road side workshops, stalls and shades flourish in Nigeria and constitute a major source of employment and occupational training for youths and adults especially in the sprawling metropolitan cities.

There is therefore, little wonder why the idea of using non-formal education approaches to enhance employment creation has become widely acceptable in developing countries. One of the most critical variables often recommended for consideration in non-formal lifelong learning and education according to Ngwu (2003), is an analysis of policy environment. This policy environment covers needs assessment and socio-economic survey in order to construct a scenario for the design of non-formal education programmes. Dimensions of such analyses take into simultaneous consideration the development, educational, unemployment/training policy contexts, as well as the community context of an intended non-formal education programme. Hanushek (2003) further pointed out that this considerations

are the minimum necessary to adequately identify and prepare an employment oriented non-formal rural education programme before ever going on to the more specific in-depth analysis of primary data for social and economic analysis of needs of target individuals and communities.

In the present context of National Policy on Education in Nigeria, FRN (2004), there is an effort to modify the educational system towards the path of vocational orientation in the primary and junior secondary school levels. However, it is obvious that the policy has apparently not addressed the employment problem of majority of the country's youth who have gone through and who will come out from these levels of educational training. This neglect has led to an upsurge in unemployment rates in the country affecting youths who remain so until they enter their adulthood.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Research Question 1: Composite and Relative Effect of Social Factors (Literacy, Gender) on Lifelong Learning (Vocational Skills Acquisition Training) Programmes**

Table 1 presents the results of One-Way ANOVA showing the joint effect of social factors (literacy and gender) on vocational skills acquisition training for adult learners. As reflected on the table, there is significant positive influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable ( $R = 0.359$ ). The total contribution of the independent variable is however, 12.2% ( $R^2 = .122$ ) of the variance observed in the dependent variables, which is statistically significant  $F(3, 984) = 48.458$ ;  $p < 0.05$ . The result indicates that all the social factors combined had a significant joint effect on the extent of their determination of vocational skills acquisition programmes for adult learners in the South-South, Nigeria. The observed F-ratio (48.458) is significant at  $p < 0.05$  level which is an indication that these variables, when jointly considered can enhance the achievement of need-based skill acquisition programmes for target clienteles. As can be seen on the table, the magnitude of the significant influence that these variables have on vocational skills acquisition training is reflected in the regression values  $R = .359$ ,  $R^2 = .122$  and

Adj.  $R^2 = .126$ . From this result, it could be concluded that 12.2% of the total variance of vocational skills acquisition is accounted for by a linear combination of the total independent variables. This logically means that the independent variables are viable and potent factors in the design, formulation of contents and implementation of vocational skills acquisition training programmes for adult learners. Their non-consideration in the process of programme design and implementation could therefore lead to their unimpressive impact on target beneficiaries.

**Table 1: One-Way-ANOVA showing the composite effect of social factors on vocational skills acquisition training for adult learners.**

| Model      | Sum of squares | df  | Mean square | F      | Sig.              |
|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|-------------------|
| Regression | 1605.592       | 3   | 535.197     |        |                   |
| Residual   | 10867.747      | 984 | 11.044      | 48.458 | .000 <sup>a</sup> |
| Total      | 12473.339      | 987 |             |        |                   |

R = .359

$R^2 = .122$

Adj.  $R^2 = .126$

The result of findings above corroborated the studies by Fasokun (1998), Nyong and Oladipo (2003) that since jobs are becoming multi-skilled, training by non-formal education for employed and unemployed will respond to the social contexts of all learners. Furthermore, the result of the study affirms Stufflebeam (2003) context, input, process and product (CIPP) framework for planning programme evaluation. In this case, knowing the literacy needs and levels of target population; their gender and gender roles through situation analysis within their social context could provide sufficient information that can guide programme design and implementation strategies that will result to impressive programme outcomes that meet the needs of participants.

Table 2 presents the result of the relative contribution of each of the social variables on vocational skills acquisition training for adult learners. The result shows that there is significant contribution of social variables to the determination of vocational skills acquisition training for adult learners. Marital status had the highest contribution  $\hat{a} = 0.396$ ;  $t(2, 984) = 11.978$ ;  $p < 0.05$ . This is followed by gender and literacy level with  $\hat{a} = .133$ ;  $t(2, 984) = 4.215$ ;  $p < 0.05$  and  $\hat{a} = 1.33$ ;  $t(2, 984) = 4.133$ ;  $p < 0.05$  respectively.

Literacy level, gender and marital status have

therefore explained their relative importance in determining the nature of vocational skills acquisition training for adult learners seeking gratification in training that can enhance their need for self-reliance in an economy that is saddled with problems of unemployment and poverty.

**Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis showing the relative effect of social factors on Lifelong Learning (Vocational Skills acquisition training) for adult learners.**

| Model          | Unstandardised coefficients | Standardised coefficients | T      | Sig  |
|----------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
|                | $\hat{a}$                   | $\hat{A}$                 |        |      |
| Constant       | 13.270                      | 1.394                     | 9.520  | .000 |
| Literacy       | .160                        | .039                      | 4.133  | .000 |
| Gender         | .270                        | .064                      | 4.215  | .000 |
| Marital Status | .688                        | .057                      | 11.979 | .000 |

The significant influence of marital status to indices of vocational skills acquisition programme may be linked to the fact that knowledge of this status will assist planners to know not only their family needs but the timing of the training programmes. It is important that intervention agencies know and understand through the process of needs survey the social dynamics of vulnerable groups. Programme type, goals, objectives, input materials, implementation strategies and time can be determined accurately through such in-depth knowledge. As in this study, depending on the numerical strength of those within the category of married and unmarried adults (15 years and 46), vocational skills training programmes can be determined peculiar to the needs and aspirations of these social class within their social environment.

## Research Question 2:

### Composite and Relative Effect of Economic Factors (Employment Status, Occupational Type, Poverty/Income Level) on LIFELONG LEARNING (Vocational Skills Acquisition Training) for Adult Learners

As shown in table 3, it is clear that economic variables (employment status, occupational types and income/poverty levels) of participants have significant positive correlation with the quality and value of vocational skills acquisition training for adult learners with  $R = .384$ . The joint contribution of these factors accounted for 14.8% of the total variance observed in the independent

**Table 3: One-Way-ANOVA showing the composite effect of economic factors on Lifelong Learning (Vocational skills acquisition training) for adult learners.**

| Model      | Sum of squares | Df  | Mean square | F      | Sig.              |
|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|-------------------|
| Regression | 1840.568       | 3   | 613.523     |        |                   |
| Residual   | 10632.771      | 984 | 10.806      | 56.778 | .000 <sup>a</sup> |
| Total      | 12473.339      | 987 |             |        |                   |

R = .384

R<sup>2</sup> = .148Adj. R<sup>2</sup> = .145

variable which is statistically significant  $F(2, 984) = 48.458$ ;  $p < 0.05$ . This implies that a typical poverty alleviation programme should adopt an integrated approach in its planning and implementation strategy. This finding by this particular analysis is in line with the case of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) reported by Osuji (1993). Groups identified based on their occupational needs, employment status and poverty or income levels were given related skills acquisition training covering various aspects of poverty alleviation and economic empowerment. These included training for leadership and organizational skills, income generating skills in various occupational skills such as poultry raising, sericulture, fishing; managerial and community skills and health education as part of a deliberate functional literacy for self-reliance in preventive health measures. Capacity building strategies to encourage target groups to engage in economic activities that will promote individual and collective employment and income generating activities were designed based on assessment of their economic context.

From table 4, it could be seen that all the economic factors made significant relative contributions to the vocational skills acquisition training for adult learners. Poverty level  $\hat{\alpha} = 0.56$ ;  $t(2, 984) = 0.062$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ; employment status  $\hat{\alpha} = 0.179$ ;  $t(2, 9984) = 4.892$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ; and occupational type  $\hat{\alpha} = .399$ ;  $t(2, 984) = 8.155$ ;  $p < 0.05$ . This result indicates that occupational type, employment status and poverty levels of beneficiaries of vocational skills acquisition training programmes are viable factors for consideration when designing skills acquisition training programmes. This result agrees with Holborn and Haralambos (2008) in their view that since poverty, whether absolute or relative is multi-cultural and multi-dimensional, it requires a consideration of a wide range of its indicators to achieve a suc-

cessful initiation, design, planning, and implementation of a poverty reduction intervention programme for the poor. From this result, it can be observed that poverty, unemployment and occupational types within the study area are underdevelopment asymmetries. Therefore, non-formal vocational skills acquisition training intended to tackle poverty alleviation within the region must give equal attention to these indicators.

**Table 4: Multiple regression analysis showing the relative effect of economic factors on Lifelong Learning (Vocational skills acquisition training) for adult learners.**

| Model                | Unstandardised coefficients |            | Standardised coefficients |  | T      | Sig  |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--|--------|------|
|                      | B                           | Std. Error | Â                         |  |        |      |
| Constant             | 19.627                      | .589       |                           |  | 33.306 | .000 |
| Employment status    | .220                        | .045       | .179                      |  | 4.892  | .000 |
| Occupational type    | .409                        | .050       | .399                      |  | 8.155  | .000 |
| Poverty/income level | .438                        | .081       | .256                      |  | 11.062 | .000 |

In summary therefore, it has been revealed by this study that literacy, gender and marital status considered here as social variables have relative influence on their determination of vocational skills acquisition programmes for the adult poor. Their joint contribution was equally significant to warrant their joint consideration in planning poverty intervention programmes targeting poverty alleviation. Also, it was evident that poverty levels, occupational types and employment status identified as economic variables were closely related in their level of significant contribution to determination of vocational skills acquisition programmes. Again, all the economic variables showed significant joint contribution to the indices of vocational skills acquisition training programmes.

## CONCLUSION

The study investigated the influence of some socio-economic variables on vocational skills acquisition programmes for adult learners in South-South, Nigeria. From the result of the data analysis and the implications of these results, it is concluded that socio-economic characteristics of economically depressed people have significant influences on vocational skills acquisition

training programmes that can address their situation. The fact that various efforts by government and non-governmental agencies to improve the socio-economic well-being of the people in the area through such training programmes have not made impressive impact suggests that there is some disconnect. It is probable that this disconnect can be located in the apparent *top-bottom* approach to rural development in Nigeria, where intervention programmes are often designed without appropriate situation analysis or community survey. Accordingly, intervention agencies should seek to always survey the socio-economic circumstances of the people prior to programme design and implementation. Situation analysis offers an opportunity for the intervention agencies, government and target beneficiaries to jointly participate in identifying, assessing and prioritizing the needs of the people against their social, cultural and economic relevance.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Development agencies within the south-south geo-political area of Nigeria and beyond should consider the planning and implementation of all poverty alleviation programmes based on extensive community surveys covering deferent social and economic characteristics of the target beneficiary groups. These should include among others, gender classification, marital status, literacy levels; occupational types, income or poverty levels and employment status of would-be beneficiaries. In all circumstances, the identified target group must participate in the process of community needs analysis to ensure that their felt needs are adequately conveyed towards a need-driven intervention programme.

In other words, in considering the provision of vocational skills acquisition training as a viable strategy for poverty alleviation, educational planners should take a critical look at the linkages that such programmes will have with the social, cultural and economic contexts of the target groups. This entails an in-depth community analysis by which each of these broad contexts is subjected to detailed and critical analysis.

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