



Public Sector Initiatives In Youth Entrepreneurial Skills Development In Ghana - Issues Emerging.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of the Skills Training and Employment Placement (STEP) Programme in leveraging participants' entrepreneurial skills. It focused on the perceptions of the youth about the programme. The research design used for the study was evaluative. The stratified random sampling technique was used to select 152 respondents out of a population of 200 youth who participated in the programme in some districts in Northern Ghana from September to September, 2005. A questionnaire and interview schedules were used to gather the data for the study. The findings indicated that the programme helped the respondents to acquire the necessary skills for personal growth and development. It was, however, revealed that proper recruitment procedures were not adhered to. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that, in order to sustain youth development intervention programmes, the Ministry of Manpower Development, Youth and Employment should: forge partnerships with small-scale businesses and micro enterprises that are interested in youth development programmes and come out with a comprehensive youth development policy to serve as a blueprint for competency-based training in the country.

Keywords: Effects, Evaluation, Recruitment, Skills, Micro credit, Youth

INTRODUCTION

All over the world, youth unemployment has been a major concern. Recent literature, including a review by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) of fifty years of its Youth Employment Programme, has shown that the youth employment challenge is nothing new. Issues like job-creation policies and the management of school-to-work transition have remained unresolved. Hence we have a large number of unemployed and underemployed youth all over the world, particularly, in the developing countries. As a result of this, there have been many interventions put in place by both governmental and non-governmental organisations to empower these unemployed youth either to get employed or be self-employed to enable them to contribute to the developmental programmes of their countries. It is also worth noting that the youth are full of potentials which, if properly harnessed, could not only be channelled for the development of the youth themselves but also for sustained socio-economic development of the country.

In Ghana, youth unemployment has been on the increase and a big worry to all governments. In view of this, previous governments have made interventions, the most recent being the Skills Training and Employment Placement (STEP) Programme, which was introduced by the New Patriotic Party (NPP) government. The STEP Programme was started in March, 2002 by the Ministry of Manpower Development, Youth and Employment. This was after the registration of unemployed youth in September, 2001, throughout the country. A total number of 943,212 unemployed youth were registered nationwide during the period. In the Northern Region alone, 52,000 of them were registered. The STEP programme, therefore, conducted development activities comprising training in life skills, vocational and technical skills, business skills, good financial management, workplace exposure, leadership skills, career guidance, job seeking skills, good housekeeping, and sanitation and skills management. This integrated full-time programme was divided into five major components, namely: entrepreneurial skills development training; vocational/technical skills training; vocational agricultural training; apprenticeship/attachment training; and community-based vocational training (Ministry of Manpower Development, Youth and Employment, 2004).

The entrepreneurial skills development training component comprised: training in various inter and intra personal courses such as self-identity and assertiveness development; leadership and organisational skills; financial management; communication; marketing skills; career guidance and business management. This component was for those with tertiary education, specifically from the universities and the polytechnics, and was to enable them set up and manage their own enterprises with a start-up capital from the Micro Credit Fund after the training. Empretec Ghana, an entrepreneurship foundation in the country, was responsible for the training, establishing and monitoring under this component. The second component, vocational/technical skills training comprised of modules of three to six months duration of competency-based training for junior high and senior high school graduates without prior experience in tradesman ship. The vocational or technical modules included: wood carving; cane and basketry; broadloom weaving; batik, tie and dye; screen printing; beads making; food processing; soap and powder making; upholstery; electrical installation; masonry; carpentry; tiling; and flower arranging. The third component of the training programme involved the growing of specific agricultural products for which access to the Micro Credit Fund or the Poverty Alleviation Fund was guaranteed. Linkage to markets, where their products would be sold, was facilitated by the Ministry of Manpower Development and Employment. The training areas included: snail rearing; rabbit rearing; grass-cutter rearing; bee-keeping; mushroom farming; guinea fowl rearing; aquaculture; establishment of economic trees nursery, like mango, cashew and sheanut; and the cultivation of indigenous and exotic leafy vegetables.

The fourth component involved the training of master craftsmen who had earlier received skills enhancement through the Ghana Regional Appropriate Technology and Industrial Services (GRATIS) and the Integrated Community Centre for Employable Skills (ICCES). The skills under this component include: hairdressing; dress-making; catering; batik, tie and dye; welding; masonry; carpentry, vehicle repairs; good housekeeping; and sanitation. The final component involved the community-based vocational skills training, which involved: the manufacturing of local simple farm tools like hoes, hand trowels, rakes; simple processing tools for sheabutter extraction, groundnut extraction, palm oil extraction, cassava processing; cooking tools like aluminum pans and bowls, pots and buckets; and other simple fishing tools.

According to the Ministry of Manpower Development, Youth and Employment (2004), the STEP programme was funded by the government from the Highly Indebted Poor Countries

(HIPC) Fund. Part was also from the World Bank through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF) for the various districts. Part of the funding was also pledged by private organisations through their corporate social responsibilities (CSR) to support the government's fund.

During the period, a total of 200 youth, comprising 135 females and 65 males, went through the training in the target districts to empower them with the necessary skills, practical knowledge and experience and financial support to enable them become economically productive. The cost of training per participant in the district during the period was GH¢120.00 for a maximum period of six months.

Statement of the problem

According to the Ministry of Manpower Development, Youth and Employment (2005), the STEP training programme ended in September, 2005 and a new youth intervention programme, the National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP) was introduced. The revised programme comprised modules, such as agricultural business, information communication technology, trades in crafts, auxiliary health attendants, community teaching assistants, community protection unit, community waste and management unit, and internship with some major departments and agencies. During the period of the implementation of the STEP programme, there were several developmental challenges that the programme faced. It faced financial and other problems that resulted in the programme being suspended and the introduction of the new intervention. According to the Ministry of Manpower Development, Youth and Employment (2005), part of the funding pledged by the CSR to support the government's fund was not forthcoming. In view of this, the support from the government dwindled and was finally suspended. The sponsorship for the participants either from the Ministry or the District Assembly, during the training, was another concern.

According to the Nanumba District Assembly (2006), most of the participants came from disadvantaged families, with serious financial problems and, therefore, could not sponsor themselves when government suspended the funding. Concerns were also raised about the mode of selection of the participants for the training programme. Most of those selected were said to be sympathisers and supporters of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), who had no certificates from the junior high schools, the senior high schools or from the tertiary institutions. More females were also to be considered for the programme, as they were more vulnerable to problems of unemployment.

Finally, there was a problem about the start-up micro financial assistance that was to be given the participants to establish their business after the training. According to the Ministry of Manpower Development, Youth and Employment (2005), the programme was evaluated internally by the Ministry and the implementing agencies and, therefore, could not determine the effectiveness of the programme on the youth, their growth and development as originally intended in the objectives after the training. The need, therefore, to have a more comprehensive external evaluation of the programme has become necessary so as to learn lessons to be incorporated in the new intervention.

Research questions

In order to meet the objectives of the study, the following research questions were formulated:-

- What were the categories and procedures for the recruitment of participants for the STEP programme?
- Which types of skills were acquired and micro financial assistance received under the

STEP programme?

- To what extent did the STEP programme help to reduce the youth unemployment situation in the study district?
- What were the major problems encountered by the participants under the STEP programme?
- How has the STEP Programme helped in Sustaining Youth Development Interventions?

Scope of the study

The scope of the study is limited to the effects of the STEP programme on youth unemployment and their personal growth and development. Issues such as those relating to other human resource management practices, such as trainee management and evaluation, are not considered. The study is strictly limited to the Nanumba District, located in the Northern Region of Ghana. It is from this district that the sample was drawn and all references made. The district had its peculiar problems with regard to the STEP programme. The research findings and conclusions are, therefore, limited to the effects of the programme on youth unemployment in the district and its contribution to the participants' personal growth and development.

Significance of the study

The success of any community development intervention programme can best be measured through a scientific evaluative study. According to McCurdy (1979), programme evaluation is essential for assessing the effectiveness that service delivery agencies make on their target population or communities. He opined that an evaluation is crucial in that it enables human service-delivery organisations to conduct their own SWOT analysis. That is, it affords them an opportunity to introspect themselves in as far as their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are concerned. This type of evaluation, notably prospective evaluation, is necessary for future programme planning. For the purpose of the new youth development intervention introduced after the STEP programme, prospective evaluation will be used in this study. This type of evaluation will offer an opportunity for the Ministry and the implementing agency to learn lessons that will be carried into the new intervention.

Consequently, a formal scientific evaluation research can render several youth development programmes credible and self-sustainable as well as maximise their future funding opportunities for successful implementation. This will help in the sustainability of such youth interventions or programmes. The import of this study is, therefore, to make both theoretical as well as empirical contributions to governments' youth capacity building initiatives in general and specifically to improve the performance of the STEP programme.

Limitations of the study

Some of the participants knew the researcher and this may have influenced the responses given, thus affecting the validity of the findings. This was seen as a limitation during the study. However, the advantage was that the researcher also had insight knowledge about the training programme, which an independent evaluator would otherwise not have solved.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review the relevant literature focused on recruitment, unemployment, skills training, skills training programmes, micro finance, skills management development, and programme evaluation.

Recruitment

Various authorities in human resource practice have made attempts at defining the concept of recruitment. Notable among them are Bernardin and Russell (1998). According to them, recruitment is the process of finding and attracting applicants who are interested in and qualified for position vacancies. According to Gareth, Jennifer and Hill (2000), recruitment includes all the activities that human resource managers engage in to develop a pool of qualified candidates for an open position. Other human resource management practitioners, such as Harris (2000) also observed that recruitment is a process which includes those practices and activities an organisation uses to identify and attract qualified applicants for a position. This means that, during recruitment, many people are given the chance for selection for the positions.

Recruitment should, therefore, encompass both the attraction and the selection of the most qualified personnel. Thus, the ultimate goal of a recruitment process is to appoint the most qualified person(s) without compromising any laid down procedures or laws. Recruitment, as a human resource function in organisations, is the biggest single challenge facing management. Experience shows that certain recruitment sources and methods provide the best candidates for a particular jobs or vacancies. Rebore (1998) and Harris (2000) among others identified that there are two general sources of recruitment, namely: internal source and external sources with their advantages and disadvantages. The internal recruitment source is normally based on well-developed internal labour market arrangements for promotion, training and career development. Harris (2000) has identified recruitment practice as one variable that can affect an applicant's attraction to the organisation. Some of the recruitment practices include: developing an accurate job description; conducting a good interview; strict adherence to selection principles; providing realistic information about the job; creating a good reward system; and a unique organisational culture. Errors in recruitment practices or process can have a major effect on job candidates' impression of an organisation and willingness to work well for the achievement of the objectives. According to Harris (2000), these errors include: reputation and policies of the organisation; the position to be filled may not be attractive; unattractive rewards system; and affirmative system.

Unemployment

The Ghana Statistical Service (2002), described unemployment as a condition in which all people between the ages of eighteen and fifty five in the country that are not working, but are prepared to work. According to Blaug (1973), a person is employed only if one gets adequate income from one's employment to sustain oneself. He then suggests that the ultimate objective of any government policy should not just be to provide more jobs but to provide those jobs that yield enough income to sustain a reasonable standard of living. In the view of Coombs and Ahmed (1974), unemployment is the inability of people, including workers of all categories, to afford regular 'square meals'. They, therefore, see those engaged in one type of work or the other and those who cannot make ends meet, though they are working, as unemployed.

According to the International Labour Organisation (2000), the issue of youth unemployment has for a long time been a major concern for every government as the ultimate objective of their policies is to provide more jobs that will yield enough income to sustain a reasonable standard of living. It noted that the thrust of the issue is twofold, namely: the relevance of the educational system for job placement, and how the acquisition of skills through training facilitates job placements and personal growth and development. Kwesi (2006) did not mince words when he complained about the high rate of youth unemployment in the country. He said that there was a high rate of unemployment among the youth in the country and most of them did not have any qualifications and skills to contribute towards the development of the

country. He added that the rate of unemployment among the youth was about 46 percent and said that was a critical issue that needed the attention of all well-meaning Ghanaians.

Causes of youth unemployment

Education plays a vital role in the human resource development of a country. Harbison (1968) argues that a nation's most treasured and dynamic assets are its human resources. A country's growth and sustenance of development depends on the development of its human resource through the provision of quality education to the youth. The educational system in Ghana is rather said to be the major cause of youth unemployment. Blaug (1973) and the "Deschoolers," such as Illich (1972) and Reimer (1972) have noted that the formal educational system is the main factor contributing to the rising rate of youth unemployment. Many writers such as Harbison (1968) and Dore (1976) have also complained about the schools producing "unemployables".

Rodney (2005) has posited that education is crucial in any type of society for the preservation of the lives of its members and the maintenance of the social structure. He notes that, under certain circumstances, education also promotes social change and the greater portion of that education is informal, being acquired by the youth from the example and behaviour of elders in society.

According to Amedzro (2005), for decades in Ghana no serious attempts were made to create job-training opportunities for the youth and the situation is no different today. It is also to be noted that the three northern regions (Northern, Upper East and Upper West) have the highest illiteracy rates in the country, with the Northern Region having 78.7 percent of the population of 15 years and above being totally illiterate. Upper East has 78.1 percent, while Upper West has 75.5 percent.

Skills training

Skills training facilitates job placements and the human resource development of the youth. Armstrong (2003) defines training as the formal and systematic modification of behaviour through learning, which occurs as a result of education, instruction, development and planned experiences. He notes that training means investing in people to enable them to perform better and to empower them to make the best use of their natural abilities. The training must be strategic, relevant, problem-based, action-oriented, performance-related, and continuous to the people who are being trained for rapid and sustainable socio-economic development.

Skills training according to Rodney (2005), can be used as an empowerment tool aimed at enabling young people to seize identified opportunities and become self-reliant by assisting others, assuming the central role and helping to steer processes of socio-economic, political, spiritual and cultural development as desired. It is also a critical area of human resource requirement for industrialisation and sustainable economic development. However, this has not received the deserved attention in the country's educational policies since independence.

Informal apprenticeship is also one important aspect of skills training. According to the Ghana Statistical Service (2002), this sector contributes over seventy percent of self-employment within the total labour force of over seven million. Youth development programmes usually form part of skills training programmes. This could be done either at the primary phase, the secondary phase or the tertiary phase. According to the International Labour Organisation (2000), special emphasis has been placed on the youth by the United Nations Organisation to

help young men and women in their transition from school to work and to carefully target education and training of women and persons with special needs, such as young people.

Skills training programmes

There are several youth development intervention programmes, in the form of skills training that have been implemented successfully in other countries. According to Mizen (1995), the Youth Scheme in Britain has been a central feature in the restructuring of work and employment to 'modernise' an ailing British economy. According to him, it provides school-leavers with the opportunity to acquire skills that employers need, gives them the 'right attitudes to work that is being demanded by an internationally successful economy and the chance to undertake quality foundation training for jobs. He cited the Integrated Youth Leadership Development Programme (IYLDP) was established in 1991 in South Africa as a case in point that sought to equip young people from deprived with employable skills.

Micro finance

According to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) (1992), micro finance has recently assumed a certain degree of prominence. It is used to reduce poverty in many developing countries. It is based on the recognition that the latent capacity of the poor for entrepreneurship would be encouraged with the availability of small-scale loans and would introduce them to the small-enterprise sector. This could allow them to be more self-reliant and create employment opportunities.

According to IFAD (1992), as at 1992, there were estimated to be three thousand micro finance institutions in developing countries. They included the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh; the Rural Enterprise Programme in Kenya; the Banco Solidario in Bolivia; the Bank Rakyat in Indonesia; and the Bankin Raya Karkara in Niger. Currently, the Rural Banks in Ghana are offering micro finance services to the rural poor. The areas of funding include agriculture, distribution, trading, small craft and processing industries. Schneider (1997) also notes that the word "micro finance" did not exist before the 1970s but has now become a buzz-word among development practitioners. He notes further that this has created a lot of misunderstanding and confusion in the use of the term. The term is variously used to mean agricultural credit, rural credit, cooperative credit, consumer credit, and credit from the savings and loans associations, credit unions or money lenders.

Like any other concept, the micro finance system has its own principles. According to Schneider (1997), its mission is to help poor families to help themselves to overcome poverty. It is, therefore, targeted at the poor, particularly poor women. He went on to say that it is not based on any collateral or legally enforceable constraints, but based on "trust".

According to the United Nations Organisation (1997), micro finance is based on the premise that the poor have skills which remain unutilised or under-utilised and that poverty is not created by the poor. It is created by the institutions and policies which surround them. In order to eliminate poverty, all that is needed is to make appropriate changes in the institutions and policies, and/or create new ones.

In view of the importance of micro finance programmes, governments been called upon to review national legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks that restrict the access of people living in poverty, especially women, to credit on reasonable terms. Since the introduction of micro finance programmes, many institutions have adopted innovative ways of providing credits and savings services to the entrepreneurial poor. Two approaches have been advocated on the role of credit in poverty reduction. While supporters of the Income

Generation Approach (IGA) maintain that credit should be provided mainly to the entrepreneurial poor to enable them to finance specific income-generating activities to increase their revenue, proponents of the New Minimalist Approach (NMA) argue that credit programmes would still be helping the poor fight poverty by giving credit to any poor person who is able to repay a loan without dictating to that person how and what the loan should be used for.

According to Schneider (1997), the success of financial intermediaries at any time depends significantly on how efficiently the transaction is completed. If the transaction cost, combined with high interest rates, requires that the operation in question should generate profit margins of the order of 30 to 50 percent, it is not clear that this would be economically beneficial.

Skills management development

Management development is instrumental for giving managers the necessary skills and perspectives that they need to be successful. This is to guide and encourage individuals in their personal growth and development. By this, they help individuals to promote learning and to provide them with the knowledge and portfolio of transferable skills that will help them to progress in their careers.

According to Mumford (1994), three elements have to be combined to produce an effective management development system. These are:

- Self-development - a recognition that individuals can learn but are unlikely to be taught, and that the initiative for development often rests with the individual;
- Organisation-derived development - the development of the systems of formal development known by personnel and management development specialists; and
- Boss-derived development - those actions undertaken by a senior manager with others, most frequently around real problems at work.

Mumford (1994:42) also makes the point that managers think in terms of activities, not learning opportunities and, therefore: "our main concern must be to facilitate learning through our understanding of real work in the manager's world, rather than attempting to impose separate management development process". He suggests that formal management development processes do not always function as effectively as we would like because: "we have put too much emphasis on planning ahead, and not enough on enabling managers to use, understand and then build on their past experiences" (Mumford, 1994: 42-43).

According to Mumford (1994), management development should, therefore, be regarded as a range of related activities rather than an all-embracing programme. These activities depend on the organisation's technology, its environment, its philosophy and the managers' preparedness to learn. Skills management development is, therefore, very important if the skills training programme is to be sustained.

According to DeSimone and Harris (1998), there are many skills management development training programmes, but the most commonly used are the leadership training and the behaviour modelling training. According to them, the leadership training approach is widely used. This is termed the Leader Match Training. This approach is based on a theory about what leadership is and how it can be acquired. This approach is to improve leadership effectiveness. According to them, this theory is based on the notion that effective leadership occurs when there is a match between the leader's style and the situation he or she faces. This theory proposes that each person has a particular leadership style, based on his or her needs,

that dictates how he or she will act. Because this style is based on the leader's needs, it is very difficult for the leader to change it. It is, therefore, the leader's task to diagnose the situation and either place himself in a situation favourable to the style or modify the situation so that it becomes favourable to his or her style.

The other leadership training approach is the Transformational Leadership Training. According to DeSimone and Harris (1998), the main elements of transformational leadership training include charisma (offering a vision and raising the self-expectations of followers); intellectual stimulation (helping followers change their assumptions and focus on rational solutions); and individual consideration (providing coaching and individual development). This type of leadership training seems to fit most people's idea of a "real leader", especially when they are leading an organisational change effort. In this regard, most organisations have developed transformational leadership training as the process of its leadership development.

Behaviour Modelling Training is a popular training technique that has been used primarily to train people to perform manual, interpersonal and cognitive skills. According to DeSimone and Harris (1998), this technique is based on Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which was applied to supervisory training. The underlying rationale for this form of training is that people can learn by observing other people (models) perform a task, provided they are shown clearly what the components of the behaviour are, remember what the behaviour is, actually perform the behaviour, and are motivated to use what they have learned. This technique, therefore, involves five steps, which are: modelling (showing of film or videotape); retention (trainees perform activities to enhance their memory); rehearsal (each trainee role plays the desired behaviour); feedback (trainees receive feedback on his/her performance); and transfer of training (trainees are encouraged to practise the newly learned behaviour on the job). In behaviour modelling programmes, trainees regroup later to discuss problems and successes in using their newly learned skills.

According to Cole (2000), management development must embrace all managers in the enterprise and must aim at challenging all to growth and self-development. This technique is very important in skills training for the youth and also the management development of the skills training programme. This will ensure the success and sustainability of the programme. In support of this view, Gilley, Egglund and Gilley (2002) have said that, when managerial malpractice is allowed to flourish, the organisation's performance, quality, productivity, and effectiveness suffer greatly. One way of overcoming managerial malpractice is by creating management development initiatives throughout the organisation. This will ensure the improvement and effectiveness of the organisational performance capacity and development of work climate conducive to improved productivity.

Programme evaluation

According to McCurdy (1979), programme evaluation is the systematic application of social research procedures used by evaluators to assess the manner in which social intervention programmes are conceptualised, designed and conducted, and their utility to the beneficiaries. He proposes an evaluation model, which he terms the Integrated Model of Programme Evaluation. He notes that there are many types of the programme evaluation. They include: needs assessment; evaluability assessment; programme monitoring; impact evaluation; cost effectiveness evaluation; and utilization assessment. The researcher, however, chooses the kind of programme evaluation that is appropriate for the study.

The most appropriate type of programme evaluation for the STEP

programme, therefore, is impact evaluation, which seeks to measure its effectiveness on the unemployed youth. This means that the effectiveness of the STEP programme will be determined by whether the services did bring about the desired change in the lives of the youth who underwent the training programme, and the extent to which the observed change(s) as a result of the training, if any, can be detected. Hence, the study seeks to look at the programme generally and make the necessary recommendations in order to make good use of the potentials of the youth. Osborne and Gaebler (1992) said that if you do not measure results, you cannot tell success from failure; if you cannot see success, you cannot reward it; if you cannot reward success, you cannot learn from it; if you cannot recognize failure, you cannot correct it; and if you cannot demonstrate results, you cannot win public support. So, whether the programme achieved its intended results or not depends on a comprehensive evaluation.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study was an evaluative one focusing on the Nanumba District as the case study. Smith (1975) presents an evaluative study in terms of assessing the effectiveness of a social programme already put in place and designed to offer tentative solutions to existing social problems. An evaluative study, therefore, comes out with information, based on facts which are precise and can be used to make a decision on what is to be evaluated. Bordens and Abbott (2002) opine that an evaluative study is one which determines whether things are working or conforming to a designed plan and the indicators could either be outcome or impact based.

The purpose of this study was to assess the extent to which the STEP Programme has helped the youth to be employed or self-employed. An evaluative research design was therefore used because the study employed the survey strategy that sought to determine whether the skills training did bring about the desired change in the lives of the youth who participated in the training programme, and the extent to which the observed change(s) as a result of the training could be detected. To this effect, the research design examined the recruitment procedures of the trainees, the training skills they received, the micro financial assistance they received, the major problems they faced and their employment status after the skills training.

The dependent variable in this regard was the employment status of the trainees. The independent variables were: the recruitment procedures of the trainees; the training skills they received; and the micro financial assistance the trainees received after the skills training. To assess the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable, the survey covered the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the trainees, such as their ages, educational status, recruitment procedures, year of training, skills acquired, difficulties encountered during the training, career development, and micro financial assistance received.

Study population

Nanumba District, the district assembly staff who were in charge of funding The population for the study comprised all those who went through the STEP programme in the programme, the ICCES staff who were responsible for running the programme in the district, and parents of the participants who were made tremendous contribution to the programme. In all, a total number of 200 youth, comprising 135 females and 65 males went through the training programme. The District Assembly staff were 20, the ICCES staff were eight and the parents were also 52. This brings the total to 280 and comprised the study population.

Sampling procedures

Probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used to select the sample. Systematic procedures were followed in order to make the selected group of respondents adequately representative of the population. A purposive sampling technique was first used to select Nanumba District as the study area where most of the STEP participants resided as well as the samples of the District Assembly staff, the ICCES staff, and the parents of the participants. This was used because they made tremendous contribution and had information about the programme. The stratified random sampling technique was used to stratify the participants into the various skills they pursued, while the simple random sampling technique was used to select the final sample size from each stratum. A 76 % response rate was achieved for the study. Table 3 below summarises the sampling selection procedure.

Table 3: The distribution of the population and the selected sample by skills category

Skills category	Population	Percentage	Sample	Percentage
Catering	20	10	15	10
Dress-making	50	25	38	25
Batik, tie and dye	65	33	50	33
Masonry	40	20	30	20
Carpentry	25	12	19	12
Total	200	100	152	100

Source: Primary data, 2011

Sources of data

Data for the study were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained from respondents through the administration of questionnaire and interview schedules. The questionnaire was used for the trainees of the STEP programme, while three interview schedules were used for the District Assembly staff, the ICCES staff and the parents of the trainees. Secondary data, on the other hand, were derived through the analysis of the STEP programme guidelines document and from other published materials such as books, journals, articles, and newspapers.

Data collection instruments

A questionnaire and interview schedule were used to collect the data. The questionnaire, which used both pre-coded and open-ended questions, was divided into four sections comprising details on respondents' biodata, selection and training, employment and career development and issues relating to sustaining youth development interventions. In all, there were 26 items on the questionnaire.

A different interview schedule was designed for each of the three stakeholders. The first schedule was for the District Assembly staff and consisted of 20 questions; another schedule was for the ICCES staff and consisted of 21 questions; and the third schedule was for the parents of the trainees and consisted of 18 questions. Each of the respondents in all cases was asked to respond to the close and open-ended questions.

Data processing and analysis

Data processing and analysis include the process of editing, coding, inputting, and running of the results. The data collected qualitatively was categorised in a particular order of priority into variables by first coding the responses into variables. This was after the data had been cross-checked and screened in the field by the researcher for consistency. In all, a total of 122 respondents, representing 80 percent of the sample, responded, and the data were judged

good enough to be used for the analysis (Table 4). The analysis was based on frequency distribution and cross-tabulation. Before the analysis, the variables were first entered into the variable view. Then the data was entered into the data view of the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS Version 16.0) software for the frequency distribution and cross-tabulation.

Table 4: Sampling distribution of the respondents by skills category

Skills category	Frequency	Percentage
Catering	12	10
Dress-making	32	26
Batik, Tie and Dye	41	34
Masonry	21	17
Carpentry	16	13
Total	122	100.0

Source: Primary data, 2011

Finally, the analysis and the interpretation of the findings were done, based on the selected variables. The variables, such as education, recruitment, skills acquired, and micro financial assistance, were related to employment status. This was based on the assumption that those who have skills training will have gainful employment. The variables were measured and coded before the entries were made.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings were based on 122 responses, representing 80 percent of the sample. The discussion of the findings has been grouped into five sections, namely: categories and procedures of recruitment; types of skills and micro financial assistance; extent to which the STEP programme helped to reduce youth unemployment; major problems encountered under the STEP programme; and extent to which the STEP programme helped in sustaining youth development interventions.

Characteristics of the respondents.

Age and sex distribution of respondents

The STEP programme tried to increase the number of young women in the programme as they are more vulnerable to unemployment problems due to high school drop-out rates. Frictional unemployment is mostly common among women in developing countries (Harbison, 1968). The policy was therefore, to recruit between 60 and 70 percent female. This was to give the young women employable skills to enable them become independent and to contribute their quota towards sustainable national development. It was also to help most of them have opportunities in accessing the micro financial assistance because, most of the borrowers of the Grameen Bank were women who were fast in making repayments. This enabled most of them to cross the poverty line (United Nations Organisation, 1997). This principle was therefore, applied in the recruitment for the STEP programme, where more females were considered.

The age and sex distribution of the respondents is shown in Table 5. The table shows that 85 of the respondents recruited into the programme were female, while 37 of them were male. This was to enable the females develop their potentials for sustainable financial assistance and gainful employment. From the table it is observed that the majority of them (57 %) were between the age group of 18 and 22. This can be attributed to the high school drop-out rate and a lengthy period without youth intervention programmes like the STEP programme hence

the special interest placed on them to help them in their transition from school to work (International Labour Organisation, 200). This underscores the notion that policies concerning development intervention programmes for the youth must reach the very young ones at the primary or the junior high school levels for them to have adequate career guidance while in school. Those in the age-group 23 to 27 constituted 27 percent of the respondents. It was observed that only 16 percent of the respondents were below 18 years.

Table 5: Age and sex distribution of respondents

Age Group	Male		Female		Total	
	No	%	No.	%	No.	%
Below 18 years	7	19	13	15	20	16
18 – 22 years	20	54	50	59	70	57
23 – 27years	10	27	22	26	32	27
Total	37	100	85	100	122	100

Source: Primary data, 2011

Educational qualification of respondents by sex

The STEP programme targeted unemployed young men and women who had either junior high school or senior high school certificate or have dropped out of school from these levels. It also targeted a few of those who had graduated from tertiary institutions. From Table 6, it was observed that 95 of the respondents completed senior high school, while those who completed junior high school were 27. From Table 6, it was also observed that out of the 95 of the respondents who completed senior high school, 68 percent of them were female, while 32 percent were male. For the 27 who completed junior high school, 74 percent of them were female, while 26 percent were male. The programme therefore favoured the intake of females from both the junior high school and the senior high school levels in the district.

Table 6: Educational qualification of respondents by sex

Sex/Educational Qualification	JHS		SHS		Tertiary		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	7	26	30	32	-	-	37	30
Female	20	74	65	68	-	-	85	70
Total	27	100	95	100	-	-	122	100

Source: Primary data

Recruitment procedures of respondents

Proper recruitment procedures of qualified young men and women, who were interested and qualified provided the best candidates for the STEP programme. Of all the recruitment procedures, the open interview is said to be the best and followed by selection (Bernadin and Russell, 1998). Those who were referred or nominated did not go through the best recruitment method. Hence best recruitment practices included developing accurate job description, conducting good interview, strict adherence to selection principles and providing realistic information about the job (Harris, 2000). From Table 7, it was observed that out of the 122 respondents, only 17 percent were recruited through open interview, while nine percent were recruited through selection. This means that only 26 percent of the respondents went through the best recruitment procedures, which are open interview and selection. It was also observed that 48 percent of the respondents were recruited through the referred method, while 26 percent were nominated. This means that those who did not go through the best recruitment procedures were 74 percent. Best recruitment sources, internal and external were employed (Robore, 1998 and Haris, 2000). This could be one of the possible reasons why the STEP programme was suspended, because the best recruitment procedures were not adhered to

for all the participants during recruitment, to ensure the sustainability of the programme.

Table 7: Recruitment procedures of respondents

Recruitment Procedure	Frequency	Percentage
Open interview	21	17
Selected	11	9
Nominated	32	26
Referred	58	48
Total	122	100

Source: Primary data, 2011

Skills components acquired and micro financial assistance

This section looked at types of skills acquired under the STEP programme, year of training, duration of skills training, and micro financial assistance given to the respondents after the training.

Skills components acquired

The STEP programme conducted an integrated full-time training in five major components in entrepreneurial skills development, Vocational/technical skills, and good housekeeping, sanitation and management skills. However, the respondents in the Nanumba District went through five practical skills training components, namely: dress-making; catering; batik, tie and die; masonry; and carpentry. This was to facilitate their job placements and human resource development. From Table 8, it can be observed that 10 percent of the respondents were trained in catering, while 34 percent were trained in batik, tie and dye. It can also be observed that 26 percent of them were trained in dress-making. All these were skills components pursued by the females. It can be observed from table 9 again that 17 percent of them pursued skills in masonry, while 13 percent pursued skills in carpentry. All these skills components (masonry and carpentry) were also pursued by males. This type of skills acquired by the participants will enable them to perform better and empower them to make the best use of their abilities (Armstrong, 2003). According to the participants some skills like catering were quite intensive and, therefore, expensive. This explains why only 10 percent of them were trained in catering. They said the dwindling support from the government and corporations was another factor. However, they saw this area to be very good for self-employment opportunities in the district as against batik, tie and die in which 34 % of them were trained.

Table 8: Skills components distribution of respondents

Skills component	Frequency	Percentage
Catering	12	10
Batik, Tie and Dye	41	34
Masonry	21	17
Carpentry	16	13
Total	122	100

Source: Primary data, 2011

Year of STEP training

After the registration of the unemployed youth in September, 2001, the STEP programme started in March, 2002 under the five practical skills training and ended in September, 2004. From Table 9, it was observed that most of the respondents undertook their training in 2003. Those who were recruited and trained that year were 57 percent. Those who were recruited to start the training programme in 2002 were only 26 percent of the total

respondents. The number recruited and trained went down again in 2004. That year, only 17 percent of the respondents were recruited and trained and this formed the last batch of the training. The period between the registration of the unemployed youth and the commencement of the STEP training was short. This therefore, encouraged the unemployed youth to show much interest in the training programme.

Table 9: Year of STEP training of respondents

Year of Training	Frequency	Percentage
2002	32	26
2003	69	57
2004	21	17
Total	122	100

Source: Primary data, 2011

Duration of skills training

It was interesting to note that all the 122 respondents completed their skills training successfully. This shows how desirous they were to have skills because it will be used as an empowerment tool, which will make them become self-reliant (Rodney, 2005). It was therefore, evident that the introduction of the youth development intervention (STEP programme) was very timely. The training took them between three and six months to complete. From Table 10, it can be observed that 94 of the respondents completed the skills training within three months. They were in batik, tie and dye, dress-making and masonry. The remaining 28 completed their skills training within six months in catering and carpentry. The cost of training in these skills was very high and participants were highly supported by the District Assembly because of the potential for job opportunities in the district.

Table 10: Duration of skills training of respondents

Skills Category	3 Months		6 Months	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Catering	-	-	12	43
Batik, Tie and Dye	41	44	-	-
Dress-making	32	34	-	-
Masonry	21	22	-	-
Carpentry	-	-	16	57
Total	94	100	28	100

Source: Primary data, 2011

Micro financial assistance

Experience in youth development intervention programmes has shown that skills training alone is not enough to provide the youth with employment and career development. Some form of micro financial assistance has tremendous impact on the future of the youth in terms of setting up their small-scale enterprises to earn some income and career advancement (United Nations Organisation, 1997). This micro financial assistance, according to the STEP programme, is to serve as start-up capital for the trainees, which will afford them the opportunity to be self-employed after acquiring the skills. This is in line with the principles of micro financial assistance, which are to help poor families to overcome poverty and is offered for creating self-employment for income-generating activities (Schneider, 1997). Two forms of micro financial assistance were made available to the trainees, depending on their financial background. These were: micro credit fund; and poverty alleviation fund, both aimed at helping the youth to help themselves to overcome poverty. According to the District Assembly, which was responsible for the management of the programme, 74 percent of the respondents

were given micro financial assistance, while 26 percent of them were not given. However, those who were not given were linked up for employment within the district. From Table 11, it can be observed that out of the number that received the micro financial assistance, 36 percent were given the Micro Credit Fund, while the remaining 64 percent were given the Poverty Alleviation Fund. With the Micro Credit Fund, the principal and the interest were repayable, while, with the Poverty Alleviation Fund, only the principal was repayable. The 64 percent of the respondents who received the Poverty Alleviation Fund was an indication that the programme was to help the youth establish themselves to overcome poverty.

Table 11: Types of micro financial assistance received by respondents

Micro financial Assistance	Frequency	Percentage
Micro credit fund	32	26
Poverty Alleviation Fund	58	64
Total	90	100

Source: Primary data, 2011

Extent to which the STEP programme helped to reduce youth unemployment

This section looked at the employment status of the participants after the skills training. This was to show whether the programme helped to reduce youth unemployment in the district.

Employment status of respondents

From Table 12, it can be observed that 48 percent of the respondents were self-employed, while 39 percent of them were employed in other sectors in the district. However, 13 percent of them said they were unemployed. Hence, the 13 percent who indicated that they were unemployed, may not be so, because they were selective in terms of job opportunities as indicated by the District Assembly and collaborated by some of the parents.

Table 12: Employment status of respondents

Employment status	Frequency	Percentage
Employed	47	39
Self-employed	59	48
Unemployed	16	13
Total	122	100

Source: Primary data, 2011

Major problems encountered under the STEP programme

Even though all the respondents completed their skills successfully, it was not without problems. They saw these problems as challenges, which they had to overcome in order to be successful in life. This is as a result of management development skills training that they had. This gave them insight in the organisation's performance, quality of what they will do in order to improve on their effectiveness (Gilley, Egglund and Gilley, 2002). The problems they faced were: financial; family problems; quality of training; and the skills they acquired. From Table 13, it can be observed that four percent of the respondents said the major problem they faced during the training was family problems. Those who said that the quality of training was the major problem they faced were 13 percent, while 22 percent said their major problem during the training period was the comprehensive skills training. However, majority (61 percent) of the respondents said they had difficulties with regard to how the programme was managed. This was because the scheduled training periods coincided with the farming season. This did not, however, discourage them from pursuing the skills training programme. It was also

observed that those who faced financial problems came from very disadvantaged families and, therefore, could not be sponsored nor supported by their parents. However, 94 percent of the respondents indicated that these difficulties were addressed before the end of the training programme. This, according to the District Assembly, was made possible because some of the parents assisted by contributing money and food items for the participants.

Table 13: Major problems encountered by respondents

Problems	Frequency	Percentage
Family	5	4
Training	16	13
Financial	74	61
skills	21	22
Total	122	100

Source: Primary data, 2011

Sustaining youth development interventions

The questions under this section were framed in order to solicit ideas on how to sustain youth development intervention programmes, such as the STEP programme.

Management development skills

Management development skills training is to provide the participants with the necessary skills and perspectives that they need to develop their career to be successful. This will therefore, help in sustaining the skills training programme (Mumford, 1994). This was, therefore, made part of the training programme to help the participants of the STEP programme to effectively manage their enterprises. Most of the participants (92%) indicated that they were given management development skills training and it was adequate for them to be successful in the management of their business.

The role of the skills and micro financial assistance

The issues dealt with under this section included: the role of the skills and micro financial assistance in sustaining youth development interventions. All the respondents, who were employed (87 percent), indicated that the programme had been very helpful in getting employment or establishing a business enterprise. It was only the 13 percent who were unemployed who indicated that the programme was not helpful to them. This finding confirms the existing knowledge that skills training facilitates job placements and the human resource development of the youth (Armstrong, 2003). This, therefore, shows the extent to which the STEP programme helped the youth to get employment. With regard to the micro financial assistance, 66 percent of those given, indicated that the assistance had been very helpful in establishing their business enterprises, while 17 percent said that it was helpful to them in establishing their business enterprise. This shows the extent to which the micro financial assistance helped the youth to establish their business enterprises in the district. This finding also confirms the existing knowledge that micro financial assistance is an effective tool in freeing people from poverty and helps to increase their participation in the economic and political process of society (United Nations Organisation, 1997).

Usefulness of skills trainings

In all, 87 percent indicated that the programme was very useful to their personal growth and development, while 13 percent attested to the contrary. The specific areas of concern according to the latter included: making the right decisions about their business; determination to succeed; improving on their knowledge and skills through skills

development; prudent business management practices; and putting what they had learned into practice. This means that their own-self-determination and the amount of efforts that they put in, as architects of their own lives, towards achieving their own goals, was a determining factor in eradicating poverty (Rodney, 2005).

Suggestions for improvement of youth development interventions

In an evaluative research like this, it is important to solicit suggestions from the respondents for the improvement of the programme being evaluated. It is to know whether things are working or conforming to designed plan (Borden and Abbott, 2002).

With regard to the STEP programme, the respondents suggested that the skills training programme for the youth should be continued. They however, said there was the need to introduce a financial management skills course as part of the programme. Sixty five (65) percent of the respondents suggested that the programme should be focused on providing skills strictly for the informal sector, and not for the formal sector jobs, which are almost non-existent.

On the quality of training, they said it was quite poor due to lack of adequate funds, some untrained staff, outdated curricula, poorly maintained equipment and building, and lack of adequate stationery. They, therefore, suggested improvements in all these areas. The respondents also suggested that the STEP programme should establish a working relationship and enter into contracts with small-scale businesses and micro enterprises that are interested in youth development programmes. According to them, this could afford good job opportunities to the qualified and experienced youth.

It was intimated that the programme did not make provision for career progression of participants, that is, an opportunity to move from one level of training to the next. They then suggested a progression from semi-skilled level, to the craft and technician level, and then to the technologist level after acquiring competence on the job. The respondents generally commended the implementers of the programme for their good work, despite all the initial difficulties. They expressed their gratitude for the opportunity afforded them by the programme. They finally suggested the full involvement of parents in matters of the programme for them to supplement or make some contributions towards the training. However, 65 percent of the respondents were not happy about the suspension of the programme. They said the government should have addressed the problems and continued to provide the youth with the necessary skills, instead of the current modules of the National Youth Employment Programme, which they thought were not sustainable due to lack of adequate financial support.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The main findings of the study are as follows:

- The majority (70%) of the youth who took part in the programme were females who have completed senior high schools and junior high schools and are mostly between the ages of 18 to 22 and 23 to 27.
- Best recruitment procedure was not adopted for the selection of participants for the programme, as majority of them (74%) were either nominated or referred. Only 26 percent of them were selected through the best recruitment methods (open interview and selection).
- The study established that very few (10%) of the respondents were trained in skills, such as catering, that had very high employment opportunities.

- The majority (90%) of them were trained in skills such as dress-making, batik, tie and dye, masonry, and carpentry. These skills have very low employment opportunities due to high number of apprentices in these trade areas.
- It was observed that the majority (74 %) of the participants were assisted with micro finance. Out of this, most of them (64 %) were assisted with the Poverty Alleviation Fund, due to the poverty level in the district.
- The rest (36%) were assisted with the Micro Credit Fund to help establish their business enterprises.
- A large number of the participants (87 %) were gainfully employed after the skills training.
- Most (48 percent) of the employed were self-employed, managing their own businesses.
- The remaining 39 percent of them were employed in other sectors within the district.
- The majority (61%) of the respondents had problems with regard to how the programme was managed. This had to do with the financial support given to them by the District Assembly.
- It was established that the training periods coincided with the farming season and most of the parents of the participants were farmers. In view of this, four percent had problem with the training period.
- All the respondents (87%) employed indicated that the programme had been very helpful in getting employment or established a business enterprise.
- Most (87%) of the participants given micro financial assistance indicated that the assistance had been very helpful in establishing their business enterprises.
- Eighty seven percent of the respondents indicated that the skills training they had had been very useful to their personal growth and development.
- In terms of their personal roles towards their personal growth and development, most (87%) of them indicated that they were aware of their roles to face current challenges.
- Most (65%) of the respondents suggested that the programme should be focused on providing skills strictly for the informal sector, and not for the formal sector.
- Eighty seven percent of the respondents suggested that the STEP programme should establish a working relationship and enter into contracts with small-scale businesses and micro enterprises that are interested in youth development programmes.
- Sixty five percent of the respondents suggested the full involvement of parents on matters of the programme for them to support or make some contributions towards the training of such interventions.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the summarised findings, it is evident that most of the participants recruited were female who had completed junior high school and senior high school but did not have the required grades to further their education. Also the procedures used in recruitment of the participants for the programme were not consistent with the best recruitment procedures. Best recruitment procedures entail the usage of open interview and selection but the programme used nomination and referred, thus making it unlikely for the real needy to be selected for the programme.

Although there were many skills under the STEP programme, it was evident that the participants in the Nanumba District went through only five skills components, namely: catering; dress-making; batik, tie and dye; masonry; and carpentry. They were, therefore, limited in terms of choice of skills to pursue. Most of these skills like dress-making, batik, tie and dye and masonry were however, not very marketable in the district.

Based on the summarised findings, it is evident that two forms of micro financial assistance -

the Micro Credit Fund and the Poverty Alleviation Fund - were made available to the participants after they acquired the skills. This helped most of the trainees to get established in terms of gainful employment to overcome poverty. This shows the importance of micro finance in terms of job creation for the youth. Hence this has shown that skill training alone is not enough to provide the youth with the necessary employment opportunities but also some form of micro financial assistance has tremendous impact on the future of the youth in terms of gainful employment.

It was discovered that majority of the participants were employed or self-employed. This has made them to earn some income and to make right decisions about their businesses, which made them to become productive and economically active members of the society. This has, therefore, helped to reduce youth unemployment in the district, to some extent. It has also helped them in terms of their career development, which enhanced their spirit of teamwork wherever they went. The study has, therefore, demonstrated the success of the programme in enabling the unemployed youth to get employment.

It was also evident that majority of the participants had problems with how the programme was managed. This had to do with the financial support given to them by the District Assembly. It was evident that the training periods coincided with the farming season and most of the parents of the participants were farmers. In view of this, four percent had problem with the training period.

It was observed that all the respondents employed indicated that the programme had been very helpful in getting employment or established a business enterprise and the micro financial assistance had been very helpful in establishing these business enterprises. Most of the participants also suggested that the programme should be focused on providing skills strictly for the informal sector, and not for the formal sector, establish a working relationship and enter into contracts with small-scale businesses and micro enterprises that are interested in youth development programmes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study and the conclusions, the following recommendations were made:

- Implementing development intervention programmes, such as the STEP programme, requires the adoption of the best recruitment methods. This will help in recruiting interested and qualified applicants and will, therefore, ensure the sustainability of the programme. The Ministry of Manpower Development, Youth and
- It is important, when implementing skills training programmes, to train the participants in vocational skills that will help most of them instead of just a few. There were other important vocational skills that would have been more beneficial to the participants. It is, therefore, recommended that the District Assembly should next time implement this type of vocational skills training.
- In future, Poverty Alleviation Fund, instead of the Micro Credit Fund, should be given to participants who would go through skills training. This is recommended because of the financial background of the participants who went through the skills training and the purpose of the Poverty Alleviation Fund. Hence, the District Assembly should next time give the participants Poverty Alleviation Fund and properly monitored them to ensure the effective use of the fund to help these youth to overcome poverty.
- Future youth development intervention programmes should be restructured to equip the participants with additional skills such as financial management that would enable

them to have a sense of determination, hard work, commitment, sacrifice, and high risk management. This will help them to take risk in prudent management of their business to speed up their personal growth and development.

- The Ministry of Manpower Development, Youth and Employment should try and forge partnership with small-scale businesses and micro enterprises that are interested in youth development programmes and come out with a comprehensive youth policy document, which will be used to plan proper and sustainable skills training programmes as youth development interventions.
- The Ministry of Manpower Development, Youth and Employment should establish a working relationship and enter into contracts with small-scale businesses and micro enterprises that are interested in youth development programmes. This will afford good job opportunities to qualified and experienced youth who go through skills training. This will also prepare them for career progression.
- In order to make the new youth development intervention (NYEP) programme self-sustaining, the Ministry of Manpower Development, Youth and Employment should try and forge partnership with private organisations through their corporate social responsibilities, to establish a Youth Development Intervention Fund in the country. This will make resources readily available for all the modules under the programme.

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