

EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES OF SKILL ACQUISITION CAPACITY BUILDING STRATEGY FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN NSUKKA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

This study sought to uncover the hurdles encountered in skill acquisition programmes as a means of fostering community development in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State. Two research questions and a null hypothesis guided the investigation. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study included the entire population of beneficiaries who had undergone skill acquisition training within Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State, through programs organized by non-governmental organizations. A sample size of 384 beneficiaries was determined using the Cochran formula for populations of indefinite size, with participants selected using snowball sampling techniques. This sample was evenly distributed between rural and urban areas, with 192 respondents from each. Data were collected using a self-structured questionnaire developed by the researchers titled: "Skill Acquisition Capacity Building Strategies Questionnaire (SACBSQ)," which was validated by three experts. Reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach Alpha which gave a coefficient of 0.85. Analysis was conducted using mean scores and standard deviation to answer the research questions. The findings of the study revealed common challenges faced in skill acquisition capacity-building efforts for sustainable community development. These challenges included insufficient training timeframes, funding shortages for skill acquisition centers, limited facilities, and lack of post-training support from stakeholders, low motivation among trainees, youth disengagement, and overemphasis on formal education certificates. Based on the findings, it is recommended, among other suggestions, that there should be an increase in governmental support for skill acquisition initiatives to amplify their influence on sustainable community development.

Keywords: Assessment, skill acquisition, capacity building strategies, community development

Introduction

In the intricate tapestry of community development, skill acquisition and capacity building serve as a cornerstone, intertwining economic growth, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability. Recognizing the transformative potential of these strategies, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other stakeholders invest in initiatives aimed at empowering individuals through skill development. However, amidst these efforts; challenges persist, demanding thorough examination. This study draws inspiration from scholarly discourse to unravel the complexities surrounding skill acquisition in community development. Capacity building is a pivotal component in the complex process of community development, necessitating deliberate and systematic planning to identify, fortify, and sustain the requisite skills for thriving communities. Defined as the competencies, methods, and means necessary to accomplish tasks, capacity in the realm of community

development underscores the imperative for active engagement in local and regional regeneration. LaFond and Brown (2003) characterize capacity building as empowerment, an ongoing process aimed at enhancing the abilities of individuals, groups, organizations, or systems to meet objectives and address stakeholders' needs. This study aligns with the perspective of UNICEF (2012), viewing capacity building as a continuous endeavor through which individuals and societies enhance their abilities and skills to confront development challenges.

Skill acquisition emerges as a prominent strategy within the spectrum of community development initiatives, valued for its effectiveness in imparting the necessary skills for economic viability and social empowerment. Recognized by Rowland and Paul (2006) for its ability to provide local solutions to local problems, skill acquisition empowers communities to address challenges independently, fostering self-reliance and resilience. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)(2014) acknowledges skill development as a fundamental component of capacity building, emphasizing actions aimed at enhancing skills, knowledge, and attitudes to bring about desired developmental changes. In the context of community development, skill acquisition encompasses supporting individuals and communities in identifying and meeting their needs, building on existing skills, and providing experiential learning opportunities to foster holistic growth. For instance, in Nsukka Local Government Area (LGA) of Enugu State, skill acquisition has emerged as a proactive approach to community development, reflecting a commitment to empower residents and foster inclusive, sustainable development. Collaborative efforts between the government, NGOs, and other stakeholders have led to the establishment of numerous skill acquisition centers aimed at equipping individuals with the skills needed to thrive in various economic sectors. Despite these commendable efforts, challenges persist in the implementation of skill acquisition capacity-building strategies. This study seeks to explore these challenges comprehensively, addressing issues such as accessibility, relevance, resource constraints, cultural sensitivity, monitoring and evaluation, and others identified in the context of skill acquisition as a capacity-building strategy.

Importantly, among the challenges to be explored are the prevailing emphasis on academic excellence over practical skills, inadequate time frames for training, shortages of qualified trainers and training facilities, insufficient funding of skill acquisition centers, lack of follow-up on trained individuals, inappropriate evaluation strategies, lack of motivation among trainees, lack of interest among youths, and the societal preference for formal education certificates. By delving into these challenges, this study aims to provide valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and community leaders, facilitating the development and implementation of more effective skill acquisition capacity-building strategies for sustainable community development in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State.

To improve skill acquisition capacity building for sustainable community development, several strategies can be implemented based on identified challenges. LaFond and Brown (2003) emphasize the importance of enhancing access and inclusivity by developing programs that ensure equitable opportunities for all community members, including marginalized groups. This may involve establishing outreach initiatives or online platforms to broaden participation. Rowland and Paul (2006) stress the significance of aligning skill acquisition programs with the specific needs of the community through comprehensive needs assessments and community consultations. Tailoring training curricula to address local economic opportunities and social challenges ensures relevance and effectiveness. Collaboration and resource mobilization, as advocated by UNDP (2014), are essential. This entails forging partnerships between government agencies, NGOs, and private sector organizations to secure funding and expertise for skill acquisition initiatives. Noya and Clarence (2009) highlight the necessity of investing in the professional development of

trainers to ensure high-quality training delivery. Providing opportunities for trainers to update their skills and incorporate innovative teaching methods enhances the overall effectiveness of skill acquisition programs. By implementing these strategies, communities can build robust skill acquisition capacity that empowers individuals and fosters sustainable development.

Despite commendable efforts and a strategic focus on skill acquisition, observations indicate that the anticipated impact of this strategy on community development in Nsukka has not materialized (Noya and Clarence, 2009). In contemporary Nigerian society, where white-collar job opportunities are highly limited, despite government advocacy for skill acquisition and proactive measures taken by Nsukka people, many youths in both rural and urban areas lack a sustainable source of livelihood and the necessary skills to make a living. This situation has led to increased poverty, criminal activities, drug abuse, and a general lack of development. Consequently, the apparent disparities between the efforts invested in skill acquisition and the actual outcomes on the ground suggest that the skill acquisition strategy for community development in Nsukka Local Government Area has fallen short of expectations. Recognizing this gap, there is a clear need for a comprehensive survey to address the shortcomings and explore potential solutions. The existing literature highlights the importance of bridging this gap to ensure that skill acquisition initiatives effectively contribute to sustainable community development in Nsukka.

Statement of the Problem:

In the pursuit of community development within Nsukka Local Government Area (L.G.A.), the adoption of skill acquisition as a capacity-building strategy faces multifaceted challenges. Despite the collective efforts of the local government, non-governmental organizations, philanthropists, and community elites, the effective implementation of skill acquisition programs encounters obstacles. Challenges include ensuring accessibility and inclusivity, evaluating the relevance of imparted skills to community needs, addressing resource constraints, navigating cultural nuances for program effectiveness, and establishing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for long-term success. Moreover, the implementation of skill acquisition encounters additional hurdles. The prevalent emphasis on academic excellence over practical skills hampers the widespread acceptance of skill acquisition initiatives. Inadequate time frames for training, a scarcity of qualified trainers, poor funding for skill acquisition centers, and a shortage of essential training facilities further impede comprehensive skill development. Insufficient follow-up on trained individuals, inappropriate evaluation strategies, a lack of motivation among trainees, and limited interest among the youth pose additional challenges. The societal premium placed on formal education certificates exacerbates these issues, diminishing the recognition and value attributed to skill acquisition initiatives. Despite the establishment of skill acquisition centers and ongoing advocacy for skill development, the persistent challenges question the efficacy of skill acquisition as a capacity-building strategy for community development in Nsukka L.G.A. This study aims to explore the challenges of skill acquisition capacity building strategy for community development in Nsukka L.G.A in Enugu State, Nigeria.. The ultimate goal is to propose well-informed recommendations for the enhancement of skill acquisition initiatives, fostering sustainable community development in Nsukka.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the challenges of skill acquisition capacity building strategy for community development in Nsukka L.G.A in Enugu State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the challenges of skill acquisition capacity building strategy for sustainable urban and rural community development in Nsukka L.G.A.

- ascertain the possible solutions to the challenges of skill acquisition capacity building strategy for sustainable community development.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- What are the challenges of skill acquisition capacity building strategy for sustainable urban and rural community development in Nsukka L.G.A
- What are the possible solutions to the challenges of skill acquisition capacity building strategy for sustainable community development?

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁. There is no significant difference in the challenges of skill acquisition capacity building strategy for sustainable community development between rural and urban dwellers in Nsukka L.G.A., Enugu State.

Methods

The study employed a descriptive survey research design to investigate the challenges of skill acquisition capacity building strategies for community development in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State. The population consisted of all participants and benefactors of skill acquisition training organized by various entities, including the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and philanthropists in the area. To determine the sample size, the Cochran formula for an indefinite population was utilized, resulting in a sample size of 384 benefactors and participants of skill acquisition capacity building programs. Sampling was conducted using snowball sampling techniques. Initially, the researcher identified benefactors and participants through skill acquisition training centers, who then aided in identifying additional participants. A total of 192 respondents each were sampled from both rural and urban areas of Nsukka L.G.A., amounting to the desired sample size of 384 for the study. Data collection was facilitated through a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher titled Skill Acquisition Capacity Building Strategies Questionnaire (SACBSQ). The questionnaire utilized a four-point rating scale ranging from Strongly Agreed (SA) with a value of 4 points to Strongly Disagreed (SD) with a value of 1 point. The questionnaire employed positively worded items for responses, with values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 corresponding to Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree, respectively. The reverse was true for negatively worded items. The instrument was validated by three experts, two from Adult Education and one from the Research, Measurement and Evaluation Unit of the Department of Science Education, all in the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. To ensure internal consistency, Cronbach's Alpha was used to calculate the reliability of the instrument which yielded an estimate of 0.85. Mean scores and standard deviations were computed to address the research questions. The arithmetic mean of the item scale is 2.50. Therefore, any item with a weighted mean value of 2.50 or higher was considered accepted, while any item with a weighted mean below 2.50 was considered rejected or not accepted.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the challenges of skill acquisition capacity building strategy for sustainable community development in Nsukka L.G.A.?

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation of Respondents on the challenges of skill acquisition capacity building strategy for sustainable community development in Nsukka L.G.A., Enugu State

		N = 384		
S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Emphasis on academic excellence in lieu of skills	2.76	1.04	Accepted
2	Poor time frame allotted for training	2.77	0.64	Accepted
3	Inadequate qualified skilled trainers	2.32	0.67	Rejected
4	Poor funding of skill acquisition centres	2.79	0.61	Accepted
5	Shortage of training facilities	2.88	0.46	Accepted
6	Lack of follow –up on trained by the stakeholders	2.52	0.57	Accepted
7	Inappropriate evaluation strategies	2.21	0.62	Rejected
8	Lack of motivation on the side of trainees	2.79	0.93	Accepted
9	Lack of interest among the youths	3.19	1.06	Accepted
10	High premium attached to formal education certificate	3.27	0.96	Accepted
Grand Mean		2.79	0.33	Accepted

The study's findings, as presented in Table 1 illustrate the mean ratings and standard deviations of respondents (including beneficiaries and participants in skill acquisition programs) concerning the challenges associated with implementing skill acquisition as a capacity-building strategy for sustainable community development in Nsukka L.G.A., Enugu State. The identified challenges encompass various aspects, including an emphasis on academic excellence over practical skills (mean = 2.76; SD = 1.04), a constrained time frame for training (mean = 2.77; SD = 0.64), inadequate funding for skill acquisition centers (mean = 2.79; SD = 0.61), a shortage of training facilities (mean = 2.88; SD = 0.46), lack of follow-up by stakeholders on trained individuals (mean = 2.52; SD = 0.57), insufficient motivation among trainees (mean = 2.79; SD = 0.93), a lack of interest among youths (mean = 3.19; SD = 1.06), and a high premium placed on formal education certificates (mean = 3.27; SD = 0.96). However, items 3 and 7 shows mean ratings below the acceptance threshold (within the range of 1.50-2.49), indicating disagreement among respondents. Consequently, the challenges of inadequate qualified skilled trainers (mean = 2.32; SD = 0.67) and inappropriate evaluation strategies (mean = 2.21; SD = 0.62) are not perceived as significant obstacles for skill acquisition as a capacity-building strategy for sustainable community development in Nsukka L.G.A.

Research Question 2: What are the possible solutions to the challenges of skill acquisition capacity building strategies for sustainable community development in Nsukka L.G.A.?

Table 2: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation of Respondents on the possible solutions of skill acquisition capacity building strategy for sustainable community development in Nsukka L.G.A

S/N	Item Statement	N = 384		Decision
		\bar{X}	SD	
1	Promotion of skills in place of certificate	3.15	1.08	Accepted
2	Employment of more skilled trainers	2.18	1.05	Rejected
3	Proper funding of skilled acquisition centres	3.14	0.68	Accepted
4	Provision of counsellors to the skilled acquisition centres	2.96	1.22	Accepted
5	Development of follow – up mechanism to ensure that the participants are practicing the skills acquired	2.90	1.15	Accepted
6	Provision of tools and establishment fund for participants	2.79	0.81	Accepted
7	Increase in the creation of awareness on skill acquisition	2.28	0.72	Rejected
8	Provision of enough time frame for skill acquisition training	2.69	0.76	Accepted
9	Skills needed in immediate community should be taught to the participants	2.99	0.29	Accepted
10	Government, other providers of skills and trainers should allow the participants to make choice of the skill they want to acquire	3.08	1.09	Accepted
Cluster Mean		2.72	0.36	Accepted

The results presented in Table 2 depict the mean ratings and standard deviations of respondents, shedding light on potential avenues to enhance the skill acquisition capacity-building strategy for sustainable community development in Nsukka L.G.A. These possible suggested solutions encompass several key areas, including prioritizing practical skills over formal certificates (mean = 3.15; SD = 1.08), ensuring adequate funding for skill acquisition centers (mean = 3.14; SD = 0.68), providing counseling services within these centers (mean = 2.96; SD = 1.22), implementing follow-up mechanisms to support the application of acquired skills (mean = 2.90; SD = 1.15), supplying necessary tools and startup funds for participants (mean = 2.79; SD = 0.81), allowing participants to select their preferred skills (mean = 3.08; SD = 1.09), and teaching skills directly relevant to the local community (mean = 2.99; SD = 0.29). However, items 2 and 7 registered mean ratings within the disagree range (between 1.50 and 2.49), indicating dissent among respondents. Therefore, the propositions of employing more skilled trainers (mean = 2.18; SD = 1.05) and increasing awareness about skill acquisition (mean = 2.28; SD = 0.72) are not perceived as effective solutions to the challenges of skill acquisition capacity-building strategy for sustainable community development in Nsukka L.G.A.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the challenges of skill acquisition capacity building strategy for sustainable community development between rural and urban dwellers in Nsukka L.G.A., Enugu State.

Table 3: t-test Analysis of the significant difference in the challenges of skill acquisition capacity building strategy for sustainable community development between rural and urban dwellers in Nsukka L.G.A., Enugu State

Govt. sec. sch. Type	N	Mean	SD	Df	t- cal	Sign	Dec
Rural dwellers.	192	2.78	0.82	382	-0.51	0.60	Not Significant
Urban dwellers.	192	2.77	0.80				

The results presented in Table 3 indicate that the t-test analysis conducted to assess the significant difference in the challenges of skill acquisition capacity-building strategies for sustainable community development between rural and urban dwellers in Nsukka L.G.A., Enugu State. The analysis yielded a t-value of -0.51, with a degree of freedom of 382 and a corresponding significance value of 0.60. As the significance value of 0.60 exceeds the predetermined level of significance set at 0.05, the null hypothesis, which posits that there is no significant difference in the challenges of skill acquisition capacity-building strategies between rural and urban dwellers in Nsukka L.G.A., Enugu State, is not rejected. Thus, it can be inferred that there is no substantial difference in the challenges faced by rural and urban dwellers regarding skill acquisition capacity-building strategies for sustainable community development in Nsukka L.G.A., Enugu State.

Discussion

The finding of the study underscores the shared challenges in skill acquisition capacity-building strategies for sustainable community development between rural and urban dwellers in Nsukka L.G.A., Enugu State. These challenges encompass an undue emphasis on academic excellence at the expense of practical skills, insufficient time frames for training, inadequate funding for skill acquisition centers, a shortage of training facilities, a lack of follow-up on trained individuals by stakeholders, a dearth of motivation among trainees, disinterest among the youth, and a high premium placed on formal education certificates. The findings of the study align with the study of Noya and Clarence (2009), who emphasized the need for governments, both local and national, to adopt nuanced capacity-building strategies to address economic decline, unemployment, and benefits dependency, taking into account the challenges inherent in the chosen strategy.

Moreover, the study's findings illuminate pivotal pathways for enhancement, which include advocating for skills over certificates, ensuring adequate funding for skill acquisition centers, providing counselling support for participants, establishing robust follow-up mechanisms, supplying necessary tools and start-up funds for participants, allowing ample time frames for skill acquisition training, teaching skills relevant to local communities, and empowering participants to select their preferred skills. These improvements are indispensable for cultivating widespread enthusiasm for skill acquisition, thereby contributing to job creation, crime reduction, economic sustainability, and ultimately fostering enduring community development. These insights align with the perspectives of Rowland and Paul (2006) who posited that stress the significance of aligning skill acquisition programs with the specific needs of the community through comprehensive needs assessments and community consultations. Tailoring training curricula to address local economic opportunities and social challenges ensures relevance and effectiveness. Similarly, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2014) postulated that collaboration and resource mobilization are essential to forge partnerships between government agencies, NGOs, and private sector organizations to secure funding and expertise for skill acquisition initiatives.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study underscores the multitude of challenges confronting skill acquisition as a strategy for sustainable community development in Nsukka L.G.A. These challenges encompass an overemphasis on academic achievements over practical skills, inadequate training durations, funding shortages for skill acquisition centers, deficiencies in training infrastructure, insufficient stakeholder follow-up on trained individuals, low motivation among trainees, and youth disengagement, among other issues. To bolster the effectiveness of skill acquisition as a vehicle for community sustainable development, several enhancements are recommended.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study makes a significant contribution to the existing knowledge on skill acquisition as a strategy for community sustainable development, focusing on the challenges and improvement mechanisms in Nsukka L.G.A., Enugu State. By distinguishing between rural and urban contexts, it offers a nuanced understanding of specific challenges, including an undue emphasis on academic excellence, inadequate time frames, funding constraints, and a lack of follow-up mechanisms. The research goes beyond identification to provide actionable insights for stakeholders, emphasizing the importance of context-sensitive approaches in community development. The recommendations underscore the need for collaborative efforts involving various stakeholders to address these challenges effectively. In summary, this study enriches our understanding of skill acquisition's complexities in community development and provides practical, locally relevant recommendations for sustainable strategies.

Educational Implications for Adult Education

This study bears significant educational implications for adult education, particularly in the realm of skill acquisition and community development. A fundamental reorientation of educational priorities is suggested, urging a shift towards prioritizing practical skill acquisition over an exclusive focus on academic excellence within adult education curricula. Programs must be tailored to address challenges identified in the study, such as time constraints and funding limitations, necessitating flexibility to accommodate the diverse needs of adult learners. Incorporating counselling and support services into adult education initiatives is recommended to address motivational issues and create a conducive learning environment. Additionally, enhanced evaluation mechanisms are crucial to systematically track participants' progress and application of acquired skills. Advocacy for policy changes, increased funding for skill acquisition centers, and aligning governmental policies with identified improvement strategies are essential roles for educational institutions and advocacy groups. A community-driven learning approach is advocated, ensuring that adult education programs reflect the specific needs of the local community for enhanced relevance and sustainable development. Moreover, inclusive decision-making processes, involving adult learners in determining the skills they want to acquire, can empower learners and foster a sense of ownership and motivation within educational programs. In summary, embracing these educational implications aligns adult education with broader societal goals, contributing to the empowerment and development of communities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Stakeholders should actively promote the value of practical skills over academic certificates.
2. Implementing bodies should consider the provision of counselling support within skill acquisition centers.

3. There should be an effort to ensure the availability of necessary tools and establishment funds for participants.
4. Stakeholders should prioritize teaching skills that are directly relevant to the immediate community.
5. Government should actively support skill acquisition capacity building initiatives to enhance their impact on sustainable community development.

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