

The Challenges of Rural Manpower Planning in Akamkpa Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract: Rural areas in Nigeria have remained the most backward enclaves of economic space. This region which has more than 60% of the nation's population constitutes an indispensable factor in the overall development of the country. However, this study is concerned generally with the challenges of rural manpower planning and development in Akamkpa Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria. The paper examined the manpower skills needed in Akamkpa in order to match manpower demand and also the problems and prospects of skills development and what implication such findings have in the context of rural manpower planning and utilization. The study identified the type of skills and empowerment scheme needed and also the challenges and solutions to rural manpower planning and development. Data used in the study was generated from the field through semi-structured interviews (SSI), questionnaires, and on-the-spot observations. A stratified sampling technique was used to administer the questionnaire while the chi-square test analysis was adopted to test the formulated hypothesis. Findings revealed among others that skills acquisition and empowerment is very essential for rural man-power planning and development in Akamkpa. It was revealed that lack of proper orientation, poor political leadership and lack of skills acquisition and empowerment programme are the major challenges of rural-manpower planning and development in Akamkpa. Based on the findings, it is recommended that skills acquisition and empowerment scheme should be initiated in order to match manpower demand in the area, skills like fashion design, welding, truck driving and mechanic, hair making, make-up artist and barbing. Policy makers in Cross River State should carry out an intense effort to transform Akamkpa communities by making available sufficient economic activities, infrastructural amenities, good housing condition and industries in order to create employment opportunities for the available man-power which will in turn reduced the rate of emigration.

Keywords: Rural manpower Planning, skill acquisition, Empowerment and Akamkpa Local Government Area.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The importance of human factor in economic development has long been recognized by early economists. Adam Smith considered a man's talent to be part of his fortune as well as that of the society to which he belonged. Alfred Marshall stressed that the most valuable of all capital is that invested in human beings. It is therefore not surprising that an increasing number of plans for economic development include aspect of man-power planning such as education, training, skill development and adaptation, apart from strategies for alleviating demographic problems that are regarded more as social issues.

In this regard, Dr. Mahathir, Former Prime Minister of Malaysia on 29 March 1984 declared that; "The wealth of a nation is not something that can arise of itself. It can increase or decrease, depending on the intelligence and wisdom of the people. The people must therefore produce their output wisely before they can enrich themselves and the nation. Hence, the ultimate source of wealth of a nation is its manpower and its ingenuity" [1].

Rural manpower planning like national manpower planning is focused with (i) promoting the fullest possible use of the available labour supply in terms of both persons and time unit of labour flow (ii) increasing the (man hour) productivity of this labour force and (iii) meeting the skill requirement for rural development (William & Richter, 1971). However, the most common objective of rural manpower planning is to match labour supply and demand, that is to tackle unemployment problem in rural areas and thereby contributing to economic growth. Tackling unemployment problems is a function of opportunities, skills and educational qualification. But it should be noted that the strong determinant of manpower requirement are skills and educational qualification increasingly needed for skilled workforce as a basis for future development".

In Nigeria, one of the most turbulent phenomenon of the twenty first century is the problem of manpower planning and development. The need to develop and manage the indigenous manpower in Nigeria in order to serve as the propelling force for the growth and development of the nation has been approached with a mechanism that is unable to match the magnitude of the problem.

The history of manpower planning in Nigeria has obviously been that of experimenting with one concept after the other. The institutionalization of manpower development scheme can be traced to the 1920's when the British colonial office adopted the strategy of community development model for rural areas of all colonial territories. It aim then was to make up for the short comings of traditional British school system by imparting skills such as carpentry, house building, and shoe repairing, in community development centers [2].

In the early 1950s, it was commonly believed that development was synonymous with economic growth which called for the need to raise investment ratio and establish industries. When the futility of this conception was realized, development economist and social scientist looked for other pre-requisites such as education. It was revealed that without a corresponding change in attitude to work or opportunities for rural development, education only turn out a large number of white-collar workers without skills who could neither be willing to stay in the village nor be able to find jobs in the cities. This vexing experience of poor manpower planning in Nigeria has continued till present.

Interest in rural manpower planning development in this region is not new, what is new however, is the unprecedented concern as the problems of emigration increases at a faster rate, while the control mechanisms seems inadequate to equate the stipulated problems.

Akamkpa Local Government Area is both a paradox of agricultural activities and industrialization. It host the largest forest area in Cross River State with rich agricultural lands, lots of mineral resources such as limestone, granite and sand which has led to the establishment of many quarrying companies in old Netim and also a cement industry in Mfamosing. The region have a tourist site, an agro-based industry, large palm fruit and rubber plantation, higher institution and good road network.

Despite this, this region is faced with high rate of emigration due to unemployment. These problems have assumed enormous magnitude to the extent of becoming devastating and this has raised the following questions;

- a) What are the available manpower in this region?
- b) What are the manpower skills needed in this area in order to match manpower demand?
- c) Can these skills or training be acquired individually or through government assistance?
- d) What kind of course/courses should secondary school leavers from Akamkpa study in the university?
- e) What are the challenges of manpower development in Akamkpa?

These are some areas of the problem that triggered this investigation. Therefore, this paper seeks to outline and profer answers to the questions raised above.

This study is significant in understanding the challenges of manpower planning and development in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State, with the view to solving the problem associated with rural manpower planning. The work will also add to other works done in the field of rural development planning in Cross River State and beyond such as those of Ochiche et al [3], Eja et al [4], Ochiche and Adie [5], Eneji et al [6], Ntamu et al [7] and Efiog et al [8]. Also, the findings of this study will enlighten the general public on the need for rural manpower planning and will also help in the building of models that will help tackle the problems of rural manpower planning.

Rural manpower development: The humanistic approach

In making a case for education, training and skill acquisition, that is geared towards man centered development and for the utilization of the potential force that lies in the great majority of Nigeria people. Batten had this to say

“From whatever angle we view the factors which of present hinder African progress, the misuse of land, the inefficiency of labour, the poor organization of production and marketing, the prevalence of disease, the lack of education or the difficulty of promoting sound political development, we are brought back at the end of two root causes: The poverty of most rural African and the lack of education” (Batten, 1948).

Humanistic approach to development planning is a viable alternative to the sectoral, structural, materialistic approaches that have beclouded development efforts in Nigeria. It proposes a re-evaluation and a re-organization of the sectoral and structural approaches to planning which have characterized government development activities over the last forty years [2] [13].

Humanistic approach to manpower development involves improving individuals and group consciousness towards meaningful cooperation with other human individual and human groups for the good of all. This approach to manpower development maintains that by heightening or changing man's ability to appreciate his own endowment, armed him with a new vision and a new tool in order to shape communal space and therefore shape his life and fortune, only the type of self-consciousness that humanistic approach to

manpower development generates can bring about self-emancipation and make the rural people exert sufficient control over an environment that appears to them as given and unchangeable.

A humanistic approach to manpower development requires that first, we look at the problem of manpower development. Different as this assignment is, a good deal could be achieved if the facts of the situation are well known. For example, we must be fully aware of the limitations in our knowledge of what manpower development really is and how these limitations affect manpower planning, development and employment opportunities. The problems of applying these universal indices that stimulate manpower development such as orientation, training, skill acquisition, coaching, education and mentoring, across the nation and cultures must be studied and understood [12] [11]. It is such an approach that will expose the misuse, abuse and under-utilization of human and natural resources.

Humanistic approach requires the type of education that awakens human consciousness to the realization of the fact that what distinguishes the rural areas from the city are not the bright lights, the paved streets, the high concentration of people, opportunities and activities. These are consequences of lop-sided development which should not be mistaken for development per se. Real development should rather be seen as a liberating process taking place first within the minds of men [2]. Battens clearly stated that the man or woman who have learnt to read develop a new self-confidence and hence a greater willingness to become interested in developmental projects or other kinds”.

By educating the people and inculcating self-confidence and self-reliance in them through orientation, training, coaching, mentoring, skill acquisition and education, we prepare them for the future task.

Rural manpower planning: The dominant model

How to determine the future skills and training needs of the labour market in developing countries is a question that has confronted manpower analyses and educational planners for decades. There is no easy solution simply because no one can forecast the future end, therefore what labour demands are likely more than one can predict [9].

The dominant model of manpower planning according to Youdi (1985) in [10] is what is known as the “manpower-requirement approach or model. It first came to widespread prominence in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)’s Mediterranean Regional Project (MRP) in the early 1960’s. The three major steps in manpower forecasting are: (a) projecting the demand for educated manpower (b) projecting the supply of educated manpower, and (c) balancing supply and demand. Each is next taken in turn, following Youdi’s approach.

a) The demand side

There are five main steps to assess the number of workers by educational level over time. Following the MRP methodology

i = economic sector, j = occupation, th – educational level, a = age, s = sex

- i) Estimating the future level of GDP or output (X)
- ii) Estimating the structural transformation of the economy as expressed by the distribution and output by economic sector (x.ix) as it evolves overtime
- iii) Estimating labour productivity by economic sector (li/xi) and its evolution overtime
- iv) Estimating the occupational structure of the labour force within economic sectors and its evolution over time (Lij/Li).
- v) Estimating the educational structure of the labour force in given occupations within economic sector over time (Lij_{ia}/Lij).

The supply side

There are four basic steps

- i) Estimating the P_{a,s,k} by age, sex and educational level
- ii) Assessing the number of graduates, drop outs by ages, sex, and educational level, E_{a,s,k}.
- iii) Finding the labour force participation (L^s) by applying age, sex, educational level, labour force participation rates to the number of graduates L_{a,s,k}.
- iv) Estimating the occupational supply based on the labour supply by education level possibly using an education to occupation matrix M_{k,j}.

Hence the supply function for educated labour looks something like

$$L_{j,k}^s = f(P_{a,s,k}, E_{a,s,k}, L_{a,s,k}, M_{k,j})$$

Balancing labour supply to demand

This adjustment according to Youdi, is normally done in two ways. First, if L^D_j is very different from L^S_j, due for instance to poor data equality and not backed up by apriori reasoning, the manpower planner will

tend to sue an adhoc adjustment mechanism and go back to one or more of the key assumptions and itemize them. For example, too much optimism on labour productivity could reduce the demand for labour while too much optimism on labour participation rates could increase the supply of labour. Clearly, if reconciliation is not possible, then this has significant implications for policy action to narrow the gap between educated labour supply and its demand.

Method of study

Data for the study were obtained from both the primary and secondary sources of data. Primary source of data include civil servants, traders, artisans and farmers in Akamkpa. Field observation, questionnaire and on-the-spot interview were the methods employed to illicit information from this sources. Secondary data were obtained from topographic maps which give information on general location. Documented information in published and unpublished source was also consulted.

Table, chart, simple percentages was used to present and analyze the data collected from the field for better understanding. A stratified random sample method was adopted to administer the questionnaires. It was structured into 3 categories, and out of 100 questionnaire, 30 questionnaires was administered for civil servants, 40 questionnaires for traders, 30 for artisans in the study area.

The chi-square (X^2) test analyses was used to examine the dependency relationship existing between skill acquisition, empowerment and manpower development and planning in the Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State.

The hypothesis that was tested states that Skills acquisition and empowerment is a requisite for rural manpower development and planning in Akamkpa L.G.A.

II. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

As earlier stated, inhabitants of Akamkpa utilize their rich agricultural land, forest and mineral resources for their source of livelihood. During the discussion and interviews sessions, the researcher gathered that the inhabitants of Akamkpa uses their agricultural lands, forests and solid mineral as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Utilization Resource Endowment in Akamkpa

Agricultural land	Plantation agriculture – e.g. palm fruit plantation (AYIP EKU OIL PALM ESTATE), cocoa plantation, plantain and banana plantation and rubber plantation (Cres Rubber Plantation Estate) commercial and subsistence farming – e.g. cassava farming Gardening – e.g. Itume garden such as coconut, cocoyam, yam, water leaves, vegetables, okro and maize
Forest	Business – firewood, timber products for buildings and for sale, hunting, medicinal herbs, fruits, bamboo, tourism; Akamkpa national park
Solid minerals	Granite and sand chipping (for sale and building) limestone for industries and for local use

Source: Field survey, 2019

The study was interested in finding out the major resources available in the region which creates employment opportunities for the inhabitants

Occupational structure of the study area

Result as shown in figure 2 depicts the occupational structure of the study area. The figure shows that approximately 20 percent of the population engage in trading which covers petty sales, drinking bar/restaurants, food products, sand/granite and salts. 37 percent of the population engages in farming activities which covers plantation, commercial and subsistence farming. 8 percent occupy themselves with handicraft such as hair making, sewing, make-up artist, carpentry, welding and building. 10 percent of the population are civil servants that work in government owned ministries, schools and institution, such as courts, secondary school, primary schools, college and thus also include teachers in private owned primary and secondary schools. 20 percent thrive in transportation as commercial bus drivers, truck drivers and commercial cyclist while 5 percent of the population work in quarry and cement industries. The study reveals that farming is the major occupation of this area.

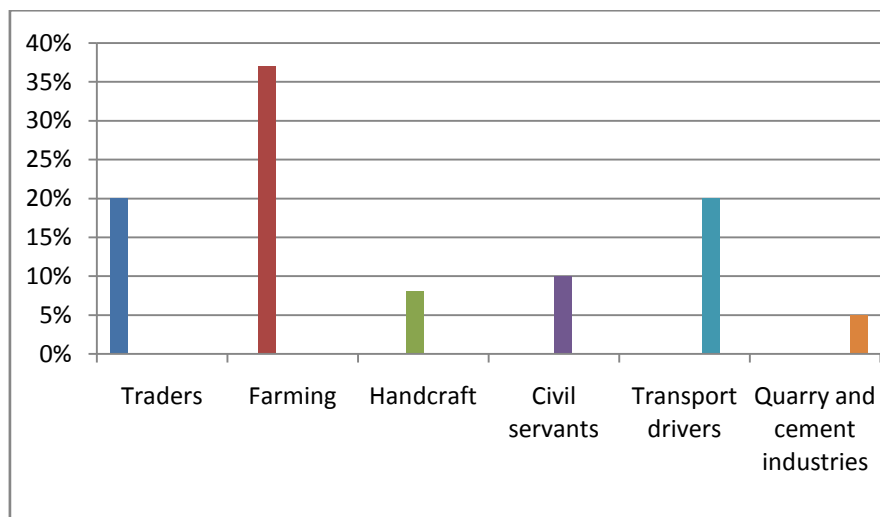


FIG 1: Graph showing different occupations

Skills, training and education needs

Field observation and semi-structured interview (S.S.I) were employed to gather information on the future needs of Akamkpa in order to curb the challenges of manpower planning. During focused group interviews, the researcher asked the people to mention what is really needed in Akamkpa in order to solve the problem of emigration and unemployment.

The table below shows manpower needs ranked in order of preference.

Table 2: Manpower needs ranked in order of preference

1.	Acquisition of skills such as make-up, hair making, nail painting, sewing, furniture design, welding, barbing, phone repairs, electrician, truck driving and truck repairs, motorcycle mechanics.
2.	Education – secondary school leavers should focused in the study of engineering courses, such as mechanical, electrical and civil engineering courses and also agricultural related courses in polytechnics and universities
3.	Empowerment programme – youths should be empowered with motorcycle and trucks for the purpose of business.

Source: Fieldwork 2019

Challenges of manpower development and planning

Further findings on the challenges of manpower development and planning in Akamkpa revealed this. This was gathered through separate interview session.

- 1) Lack of proper orientation to remove the emotive, perceptive, psychological and unnecessary institutional barriers to development from the minds of the inhabitants of Akamkpa who perceived skilled acquisition as the thing of old. Real development can first take place within the mind of men (Ebong et al., 2006).
- 2) Poor political leadership: Inadequate initiation of empowerment and skill acquisition scheme by the government, that is lack of skill developmental scheme
- 3) Inconsistency in Nigerian educational system in the aspect of creating a curriculum based on creative/knowledge based ideas in order to take care of today and future of the nation manpower needs
- 4) Corruption and embezzlement of fund meant for manpower development
- 5) Lack of fund by individuals to engage themselves in skill acquisition of their choice.

Test of hypothesis

The chi-square test (X^2) was adopted to test the hypothesis

$$X^2 = \frac{\sum(O - \Sigma F)^2}{\Sigma F}$$

Where

O = The observed value of distribution

Σ = Summation sign, ΣF = Expected value or frequencies

The degree of freedom for chi-square is computed as $DF = (R - 1) (C - 1)$

Where DF = Degree of freedom, C = Column, R = Row

Hypothesis

H₀: Skill acquisition and empowerment is not a requisite to rural manpower development and planning in Akamkpa

H₁: Skill acquisition and empowerment is a requisite to rural manpower development and planning in Akamkpa

Table 3: Chi-square analysis of the relationship between skill acquisition, empowerment and rural manpower development and planning

Variable	Skill acquisition	Empowerment	Total
Civil servants	22	8	30
Traders	18	22	40
Artisans	21	9	30
Total	61	39	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

Table 4: Contingency table of the hypothesis

O	ΣF	O - ΣF	O - ΣF ²	(O - ΣF) ² /ΣF
22	18.5	3.7	13.69	0.74
18	24.4	6.4	4.96	1.68
21	18.3	2.7	7.3	0.4
8	11.7	3.7	13.69	1.17
22	15.6	6.4	40.96	2.62
9	11.7	2.7	7.3	0.62
				X ² = 7.96

Calculated value

N = 100; significance level = 0.05, df = 2; X² = 7.76, calculated value; Table value 5.991 at df =2

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 4 above indicates that X² value of 7.76 is greater than the table value of 5.991 at 0.05 level of significance with 2 degree of freedom. This means that the X² value is statistically significant. Hence, the H₀ is rejected at 0.05 while the H₁ is accepted. This implies that skill acquisition and empowerment is very essential for manpower development and planning in Akamkpa.

On the other hand, since the test implies that skill acquisition and empowerment is very essential for manpower development and planning in Akamkpa, this means that lack of skill acquisition and empowerment are the major challenges of rural manpower development and planning in Akamkpa.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Having conducted this study on the challenges of rural manpower planning in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State, the study concludes that skills acquisition and empowerment is essential and necessary for rural manpower development and planning in Akamkpa. It also reveals that lack of skill acquisition and empowerment scheme, lack of education and proper orientation to remove emotive and psychological barriers from the minds of men, corruption, embezzlement and lack of fund are the major challenges of rural manpower development and planning in Akamkpa. In order to address the challenges identified in the study area, the following recommendations are made;

a) Skill acquisition/development programme:

The government and concerned private agencies should pick inhabitants of Akamkpa and train them to acquire skills or develop those that have. For example make-up artist, nails painting, and hair making especially for those leaving around the “Cross River State College of Education”. Barbing, truck driver and repairs, phone repairs, electricians etc.

b) Empowerment: Youth willing to drive should be empowered after training in driving with trucks for their granite and sand business. The trucks can be procured and given to them on rents and at minimum cost

c) Proper orientation should be given to secondary school leavers on the course they should study in universities and polytechnics in order to be gainfully employed after graduating. Also an orientation should be given to the inhabitants of Akamkpa on the need for skills acquisition

d) Agricultural micro-credit loans: Government should provide micro credit loans and facility to farmers. This will boost great lot to their farm business and livelihoods [14]

e) Craft revival: The craft of the people can be revived through awareness in seminars and workshops, while providing a market for them in the area [15]

f) Insecurity of purpose, corruption, embezzlement of money meant to execute rural development projects by government officials in Nigeria need to stop for the rural transformation process to be fruitful.

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