

## **The Effects of Learning Environments on Vocational and Technical Education Programmes on Rivers State, Nigeria**

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**Abstract:** *This paper investigated the influence of learning environments on vocational and technical education programmes in Rivers State, Nigeria. A null hypothesis was formulated to guide the study. The ex- post facto design was used for the study. The stratified random sampling technique was used to draw 550 learners from vocational and technical education centers in eight local government areas of Rivers State, Nigeria. The data collected were subjected to data analysis using one way analysis of variance. A major finding emerged which showed that there was a significant influence of the learning environment on the smooth running of vocation and technical education programmes in Rivers State, Nigeria. Based on the finding, it is recommended that government at various levels should improve the learning environments through adequate funding. There is also a need for vocational and technical education instructors to be very much concerned about the quality of their environments for effective teaching and learning activities. The host communities where various vocational training centres have been established should also ensure that the areas are free from violence and safe all lives and properties.*

**Keywords:** *Learning environment, teaching and learning, conducive, social economic, values, technical and vocation education.*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Learning environment is one of the most essential elements in teaching and learning of vocational and technical education programmes. Biao and Tawo (2007) disclosed that, the presence of a conducive learning environment stimulates the learning process of the learners. Therefore the instructor must ensure that a right environment is created for the learners in order to achieve a set objective of producing individuals that are skillfully trained in their vocations.

The role of the physical, social, psychological and organizational environment are of immense relevance in vocational and technical education programmes. Bebebiafiafi (2008) posited that good learning environment are essential for education programmes. He asserted that even oil companies also contribute heavily to the poor conditions of our environment which in turn affect the acquisition of vocational and technical education negatively. Onwuka (1996) stressed the need for vocational educators to be much concerned about the quality of the learning environment for effective learning. The environment may be a classroom, a meeting place or hall, club house, village gathering, open space, community learning centre or the wider society. The environment may be influenced by prevailing socio-economic and cultural values of the community or society.

Nzeneri, (2008) also stated that for teaching and learning effectiveness, the environment is expected to have essential physical facilities, appropriate social working conditions (i.e. conducive interpersonal relations). Appropriate learning conditions are essential for effective participation of the learners and their instructors and such environment should be free from tension, fear or threat and situation that is free from ridicule.

It may be appropriate to assume that the first assignment of the instructor before presenting the teaching materials is to ensure that the physical environment for teaching and learning is properly set. Nzeneri, (2008) further argued that without doubt the physical facilities of the classroom contribute much in setting the stage for instruction. To him, appearance, ventilation, lightening and safety factors contribute to a healthy and pleasant learning environment for adult learners.

The physical learning environment for vocational and technical education learners must be different from the formalistic classroom arrangement for teaching children which is characterized by rows of

small seats or chairs or seats and other learning materials for the learners. Owmondah (2007) observed that, the conducive psychological environment is one that enables the learners see themselves as active participants in the learning process. In the same vein Omieibi-Davids (2006) posited that learning environment should be created in a manner that will make learners feel pleasurable to learn. That is, they should be intrinsically motivated to learn i.e. learning for the joy of learning. The instructors can motivate learners intrinsically by guiding them to satisfy their hunger and thirst for knowledge and curiosity.

Akaninwor (2005) also stated that the adult educator can improve on the psychological climate by offering the learners the opportunity for personal adjustment. This can be done by inculcating in them the feeling that adults can learn, improve in their socio-economic status and personality. This will help them develop positive self-concept (which involves self-identity plus self-esteem and self-ideal). It is only under appropriate psychological environment, which is guided by the instructor, that the adult learner can properly articulate proper self-esteem, self ideal and appropriate expectations of personal growth or development. The facilitators guide them; identify strategies necessary for developing these potentialities.

Nzeneri (2008) further posited that the educator should guide learners to discover their strengths and weaknesses as suggested by cognitive psychologists, expose adult learners to experience which can reinforce their strength and to minimize their weaknesses. From the foregoing, it is imperative that proper learning can only be achieved if the learning environment is made conducive for the learners. This can only be achieved under the psychological environment that is mutual, caring, understanding and orderly. The learning environment should be eliminated of negative outlook, such as anxiety, depression, anger and helplessness.

## **2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Over the years, successive governments had introduced vocational and technical education programmes in the country. These programmes were intended to empower the rural dwellers for skill acquisitions, etc

Consequently, the effective implementation of the vocational education requires that the government should provide apart from adequate funds and vocational education instructors, there should be the exhibition of a conducive learning environment for the teaching and learning vocational and technical education programmes in Rivers

State of Nigeria and the sustainable development of this laudable programme. The effective implementation of vocational education programmes requires such a conducive environment for its continuity.

Although these efforts of government had been an ongoing process many decades programmes, yet it thus appeared that these available vocational education and technical education programmes did not empower those who really constituted the targeted population likely because poor learning environment.

For instance, Dokubo (2007) found out that a skill acquisition centre built in Emohua local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria, is non-functional till date attributable to poor learning environment. For instance, the instructors and learners in most of these programmes appeared not to be properly motivated to perform their duties due to various reasons relating to learning environment, judging by evidences of continued protests, agitations against poor living conditions, arising from, lack of sustainable skills, social amenities and healthy living in these centres.

Looking at the slow pace of these vocational education programmes in the Rivers State, Nigeria, there was doubt as to whether the government was actually playing her role for the success of the programmes in the area. It was in the light of the above mentioned situations that this study was embarked upon to evaluate the extent to which learning environment could influence vocational and technical education programmes in rivers state, Nigeria

## **3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the extent to which learning environments affect vocational and technical programmes in Rivers State, Nigeria.

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Specifically, the objective of this study was to determine the extent to which Learning environments of vocational and technical education programmes may influence the smooth running of the programmes in Rivers State, Nigeria.

### 3.1. Research Question

The study was guided by this research question. To what extent does the learning environment influence vocational and technical education programmes in Rivers State, Nigeria.

### 3.2. Hypothesis

A null hypothesis is formulated to guide the study: The learning environment does not have any significantly influence on vocational and technical education programmes in Rivers State, Nigeria.

### 3.3. Methodology

This study adopted Ex-post Facto research design for this study. The Ex-post Facto research design was used because the study was intended to find out the extent to which the existing learning environments of vocational and technical education programmes offered by various stakeholders in Rivers State, Nigeria has influenced the outcomes of such programmes in Rivers, Nigeria.

This was done through identifying opinions and perceptions of rural a learners and instructors in vocational and technical education programmes.

## 4. POPULATION AND SAMPLE OF THE STUDY

This population comprised all the 2,220 learners in vocational education programmes in 32 learning centres in Rivers State. These learning/skills acquisition centres are located in eight (8) Local Government Areas that make up the Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State, namely; Ogu/Bolo Local Government, Emohua Local Government, Port Harcourt City Local Government, Ikwerre Local Government, Etche Local Government, Omuma Local Governmen Okrika local Government and Obio/Akpor Local Government Areas of Rivers State.

The researcher chose the learners for this study because they were the targeted group that could be empowered economically, socially, politically and psychologically by the use of effective technical and vocational education programmes. The learners gave more reliable responses of the significant influence of learning environment on vocational and technical education programmes.

In order to obtain a reprehensive sample of the population for the study, the stratified random sampling technique was used. The first stage was the stratification of area of study using the local government areas as a criterion. After stratification, the simple random sampling was done in each stratum. According to Denga and Ali (1983), simple random sampling technique refers to the selection procedure whereby all the cases in the defined population have an equal probability or chance of being selected, and the selection of each case from the pool of cases is independent of the selection of another case.

| NAME OF LGA   | NUMBER OF ADULT LEARNERS | NUMBER OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CENTRES | SAMPLE OF LEARNERS | OF |
|---------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------|----|
| EMOHUA        | 350                      | 4                                      | 80                 |    |
| OGU/BOLO      | 100                      | 2                                      | 30                 |    |
| IKWERRE       | 350                      | 4                                      | 80                 |    |
| PORT HARCOURT | 550                      | 10                                     | 100                |    |
| OBIO/AKPOR    | 320                      | 5                                      | 95                 |    |
| OMUMA         | 150                      | 2                                      | 45                 |    |
| OKRIKA        | 200                      | 2                                      | 60                 |    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>2,220</b>             | <b>32</b>                              | <b>550</b>         |    |

Source: Rivers State Ministry of Education Port Harcourt as at February 2010

## 5. INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION

The study collected its data using a structured questionnaire prepared by the researcher. Most of the items were based on abundant review of literature and researcher s personal observation and interviews with some adult learners in the skills acquisition centres in the study area.

## 6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The statistical analysis of data and the results of testing the hypothesis involved in this study are presented below. The general description of data was followed by the hypothesis, treatment of data, interpretation of the results, summary of finding and discussion of results.

By comparing respondents rating on the variable of the study, learning environment, the respondents were classified as high, average and low levels of this variable. Those who scored above the mean were classified as high, within the mean region were classified as average and below the mean as low. Under the influence of learning environment, 196 respondents perceived it as high, 181 as average and 173 as low.

All independent variables and dependent variables were based on respondents perceived assessment of learning environment on technical and vocational education as it affects their empowerment. The means ( $\bar{x}$ ) and standard deviation(SD) were calculated.

## 7. HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The hypothesis was tested a .05 level of significance. This null hypothesis proposed that the learning environment does not significantly influence empowerment of rural adults. The learning environment is the independent variable while vocational and technical education is the dependent variable. Learning environment was categorized as high, average and low based on learners mean response to this variable. Above the mean was categorized as high, within the means as average and below the mean as low. Using the one way analysis of variance these means were compared. The result of the analysis is presented in table 2.

Observation of the table showed that there is a significant influence of learning environment on vocational and technical education programmes ( $F = 3.00$ ;  $P > 0.5$ ). The null hypothesis that speculated that learning environment does not significantly influence empowerment of rural was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted.

Further observation of table showed that learners that perceived their learning environment as high had the highest mean empowerment ( $\bar{x} = 31.97$ ) followed by those perceived the environment as average ( $\bar{x} = 31.75$ ) and low ( $\bar{x} = 31.17$ ). The means when compared statistically using the one way analysis of variance was found to be significant.

**Table2.** One way analysis of variable (ANOVA) of influence of the level of learning environment on vocational and technical education programmes.

| Learning environment. | $\bar{n}$ | $\bar{x}$ | SD   |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|------|
| High                  | 196       | 31.97     | 3.60 |
| Average               | 181       | 31.75     | 3.86 |
| Low                   | 173       | 31.17     | 3.53 |
| Total                 | 550       | 31.64     | 3.68 |

## 8. EFFECTS OF LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA.

This null hypothesis sought to find out the influence of learning Environments on vocational and technical education in Rivers State, Nigeria. The result of the data analysis showed that the F-value is 3.357. ( $F=3.357$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). Since this value is greater than the critical F-ratio of 3.00 at 0.05 level of significance, given 2 and 547 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis was therefore rejected and the alternative was accepted. This implied that the learning environment has significance influence on vocational and technical education programmes in Rivers State, Nigeria.

## 9. CONCLUSION

This finding agrees with earlier works carried out by some scholars. Biao and Tawo (2007) disclosed that, the presence of a conducive learning environment stimulates the learning process of the learners. Therefore the instructor must ensure that a right environment is created for the learners in order to achieve a set objective of producing individuals that are skillfully trained in their vocations.

Nzeneri, (2008) also stated that for teaching and learning effectiveness, the environment is expected to have essential physical facilities, appropriate social working conditions that are free from tension, fear or threat and a situation that is free from ridicule.

Onwuka (1996) also observed that the role of the physical, social, psychological and organizational environment are of immense relevance in vocational education programmes.

These works have shown that learning environment is one of the most essential elements in teaching and learning programmes.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Consequently, from the above findings there is a need for vocational education instructors to be very much concerned about the quality of the learning environment for effective teaching and learning activities. The environment may be a classroom, a meeting place or hall, village gathering, open space, community learning centre or the wider society.

The host communities where various vocational training centres have been established should also ensure that the areas are free from violence and safe all.

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