

Factors associated with perceived effectiveness of the out-of-school youth development and economic empowerment program in Botswana

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the descriptive-correlational study was to determine the perceived effectiveness of the out-of-school youth development and economic empowerment program by youth and youth officers. The target populations were youth funded during 2004/05 and 2005/06 financial years, and youth officers serving in the Department of Culture and Youth during the 2006 calendar year. A random sample of 68 youth from urban and rural locations involved in the out-of-school youth program, was studied. Eighteen youth officers were also involved in the study. Two sets of valid and reliable questionnaires, for youth and youth officers respectively, were used to collect data. Findings revealed that youth and youth officers perceived the program as effective. Factors which explained and predicted perceived effectiveness of the program by the youth included competence of youth officers, and income generated per month. Involvement of stakeholders and number of years in service, explained the effectiveness of the program as perceived by the youth officers. In conclusion, the out-of-school youth program was effective. The main recommendation made was that the Department of Culture and Youth should abide by the strategies it has adopted which made the program effective.

Key words: Effectiveness, out-of-school youth program, unemployment, empowerment

INTRODUCTION

Unemployment is one of the major problems facing the youth in Botswana (Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs, 1996). Out-of-school youth development and economic empowerment program has been one of the strategies used to reduce youth unemployment; but the extent to which it has been effective in attaining its objectives has not been documented. In addition, factors which are associated with the effectiveness of the youth program are scarcely understood.

Program effectiveness answers the question, "Has the program attained its objectives?" Effective appraisal of a system is marked by attainment of its objectives (Keith and Girling, 1991). Youth program objectives which serve as benchmarks for evaluating effectiveness are to: encourage out-of-school youth to venture into

sustainable and viable income-generating projects; promote development of citizen-owned enterprises; foster youth enterprises in agriculture and tourism through effectively pursuing opportunities associated with exploration of natural resources; and reduce rural-urban migration (MoLHA, 2005). These objectives are not mutually exclusive. Some factors are associated with effectiveness of a program, including competency of staff, provision of needed infrastructure, and access to needed resources. For instance, competent officers are expected to impart their skills to the youth during training, which in turn, should be in the position to use such skills in increasing program effectiveness. Hence, Radhakrishna and Yoder (1996) remarked that competency of extension workers was a major constraint in the transfer of technology.

Access to resources was also linked to program effectiveness. Smith and Holdaway (1995) found that the most important constraint to effectiveness was financial support because funding is directly related to the availability of resources, which Nkambule (1998) found was needed for agriculture coordinators to supervise effectively. Similarly, attending short training also improves performance of trainees on the job. Dlamini (2004) reported that attending short business courses led to improved performance of businesses in Swaziland.

Effectiveness of youth programmes could be influenced by many characteristics of the youth themselves such as sex, urban or rural location, and unresponsiveness of youth to empowerment programs (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1970). According to Ronan (1998) the desire to be independent can prompt one to start a business. Carter (2005) and Singh (1994) reported characteristics such as love of knowledge and self confidence, as crucial for people to participate. Brockshus and Miller (1997), Punch (2002) explained that positive role models are essential for young entrepreneurs to succeed. Some characteristics of youth officers such as marital status, competence, number of youth assisted could influence program effectiveness. The perceived effectiveness of the youth program, and the degree to which some of the above factors are associated with, explain and predict effectiveness of the program, constitute the focus of this study.

Purpose, objectives and hypothesis of the study

The purpose of the study was to determine the perceived effectiveness of out-of-school youth program by youth and youth officers in the Department of Culture and Youth in Botswana. The study specifically described the perceived effectiveness of the out-of-

school youth program in attaining its objectives, competence of the youth officers in training the youth, the relationship between perceived effectiveness and selected personal and socio-economic characteristics including competence of youth officers, involvement of stakeholders, availability of resources, income generated per month by the youth, their reasons for participation, educational level, age, and number of years in business. The study also identified differences in perceived effectiveness of the program by the youth and youth officers by sex, location, training before and during the program, family members owning a business (youth), marital status, and number of youth assisted (officers). It also identified the explanatory and predictor variables of the program effectiveness, and tested the hypothesis that competence of youth officers explained much of the variance in perceived effectiveness of the program.

METHODOLOGY

Respondents in the study included all the 33 youth officers serving in the program during the 2006 calendar year, and 118 randomly chosen youth from a total population of 350 on the program, using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula for determining sample size. Two sets of questionnaires, one for youth and the other for youth officers were used for data collection. Each of the two questionnaires had three sections. In Section A, perceived effectiveness of the program was measured as 1 = Very Ineffective; 2 = Ineffective; 3 = Slightly Ineffective; 4 = Slightly Effective; 5 = Effective; 6 = Very Effective. In Section B, perceived competence of youth officers was measured as 1 = Very Incompetent; 2 = Incompetent; 3 = Slightly Incompetent; 4 = Slightly Competent; 5 = Competent; 6 = Very Competent. In section C, respondents were asked to state information related to

their background and demographic characteristics.

Face, content and construct validity of the questionnaires was determined by a panel of nine experts, while pilot-testing was carried out using youth (n = 30) at the Botswana National Youth Council office in Letlhakane, and Letlhakane Senior Secondary School teachers (n = 30). Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients for youth's questionnaire items were .95 and .97 for pilot testing and actual data respectively; .93 and .96 for the corresponding youth officers' data. These indicated high internal consistency of the instruments.

The questionnaire was distributed to the youth through the help of youth officers in their respective localities. Data were collected from 68 accessible youth out of the sample of 118, while three follow-up visits were paid to youth officers to minimize non-responses, but produced no additional response. Copies of the questionnaire for the youth officers were mailed to them and followed up through personal calls to control non-response. Eighteen useable copies of the officers' questionnaire were returned.

Data were analyzed using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS, version 10.0). Descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations, Pearson's and Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficients were used to describe the data. Inferential statistics namely, t-test and regression analysis, were used to determine significance of group differences, explain

and predict factors which influenced program effectiveness at $p \leq 0.05$. Cohen's (1988) descriptors of effect size were used to assess the importance or practical value of differences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Effectiveness of the youth program

Perceived effectiveness of the program was measured by asking the respondents to indicate how effective the youth program had been in terms of attaining its objectives of assisting the youth to venture into sustainable and income generating projects, establishing citizen-owned enterprises, reduce rural-urban migration, engage in agricultural and tourism projects through exploration of natural resources.

Findings in Table 1 reveal that youth perceived the program to have been more effective (M = 4.83, SD = 1.02) in attaining its objectives than the youth officers (M = 4.06, SD = .51). This could be because the expectations of youth in terms of attaining the program objectives were lower than those of youth officers, which could be attributed to little exposure of the youth. The domain that had the highest rating was, "encouraging youth to venture into sustainable projects" (M = 4.56; SD = .91), followed by "reducing rural urban migration" (M = 4.49; SD = 1.13). Youth officers rated "reducing rural-urban migration" (M = 4.33; SD =.63) higher than the other two domains.

Table 1. Perceived Effectiveness of out of school youth program

	Respondents			
	Youth (n = 68)		Officer (n = 18)	
Out-of-school youth program objectives	M	SD	M	SD
Youth to venture into sustainable projects	4.56	.91	4.19	.71
Reduce rural-urban migration	4.49	1.13	4.33	.63
Youth to venture into viable income generating projects	4.17	1.35	3.67	.86
Overall	4.83	1.02	4.06	.51

Scale: 1 = Very Ineffective 2 = Ineffective 3 = Slightly Ineffective 4 Slightly Effective 5 = Effective 6 = Very Effective

Table 2. Perceived competence of youth officers

Area of Competence	Respondents			
	Youth (n = 68)		Officer (n = 18)	
	M	SD	M	SD
Advertising	4.66	.97	4.20	.82
Professionalism	4.60	1.07	4.69	.42
Work relations	4.37	1.17	4.90	.57
Overall	4.53	1.02	4.62	.45

Scale: 1 = Very Incompetent 2 = Incompetent 3 = Slightly Incompetent 4 = Slightly Competent 5 = Competent 6 = Very Competent

Perceived competence of youth officers

Findings in Table 2 show that, youth perceived youth officers to be more competent in advertising (M = 4.66; SD = .97), than youth officers (M = 4.20; SD = .82). Youth officers however, perceived themselves to be more competent in profession-related matters (M = 4.69; SD = .42) and in work relations (M = 4.90; SD = .57) as compared to youth (M = 4.60; SD = 1.07; M = 4.37; SD = 1.17) respectively.

Perceived effectiveness, youth and youth officers' characteristics

Findings in Table 3 show that a significant difference in perceived effectiveness of the program was observed by youth officers in relation to the location of office. Youth officers in rural areas perceived the program to have been more effective (M = 4.06; SD = .35) than those in urban areas (M = 4.03; SD = 1.17), possibly because those in rural areas had less exposure to similar services provided by other organizations and hence had no other services with which to compare the performance of the program. The effect size for the differences was however, small (d = .05), hence the differences were not of practical importance (Cohen, 1998). Differences in perceived effectiveness of the program in relation to all the other background characteristics of the two groups

of respondents were not significant ($p \geq 0.05$).

Data analysis results in Table 4 show that generally, youth officers had higher perceptions about the associations of the variables with perceived effectiveness than the youth. Using Davis (1971) descriptors, the results in Table 4 show a very strong and positive relationship of perceived effectiveness with involvement of stakeholders ($r = .81$), competence of youth officers ($r = .75$), and substantial positive association with reasons for youth participation ($r = .68$), and availability of resources ($r = .61$), were found. The other variables had negligible to moderate association. On the other hand, youth perceived the program effectiveness to have substantial and positive association with competence of youth officers ($r = .65$) and availability of resources ($r = .51$), while the rest of the variables had negligible to moderate association. The number of years of service for officers had a negative correlation ($r = -.48$) with perceived effectiveness of the program, hence as the number of years increased the perceived effectiveness decreased, possibly because the expectations of youth officers increased with increase in number of years in service, hence a reduction in perceived effectiveness.

Table 3. Differences in perceived effectiveness of out-of-school youth program by respondents' demographic and background variables

Respondents	Characteristics	n	M	SD	Statistic	P	d
Youth:	Sex						
	Female	4	4.95	.99			
	Male	2	4.67	.67	t = 1.23	.74	nc
	Location of business						
	Urban	1	4.62	.94			
	Rural	5	4.91	1.05	t = -1.05	.34	nc
	Training before starting business						
	No	2	4.84	.93			
	Yes	4	4.83	1.07	t = .04	.08	nc
	Training during implementation						
	No	2	5.13	.81			
	Yes	4	4.67	1.09	t = 1.79	.08	nc
	Family member owning a business						
	No	2	4.74	.99			
Yes	4	4.89	1.05	t = -.58	.96	nc	
Officers:	Sex						
	Female	9	4.00	.48			
	Male	9	4.12	.57	t = .47	.96	nc
	Location of office						
	Rural	1	4.06	.35			
	Urban	3	4.03	1.17	t = -.10	.00*	.05
	Marital Status						
	Single	1	4.16	.55			
	Married	7	3.93	.51	t = .88	.96	nc
	Training before implementation						
	No	5	4.03	.54			
	Yes	1	4.07	.53	t = -.15	.94	nc
	Number of participants assisted						
	12-26	1	4.04	.44			
>27	6	3.62	.40	t = 1.27	.66	nc	

(.50 - .79); large effect size (d = .80 and above). Set alpha, p ≤ .05. NB: nc- not calculated, since there were no significant d' > Cohen's descriptor of effect size: Small effect size (d = .49 and less); Medium effect size (d = differences at the set alpha level.)

Table 4. Correlations of perceived effectiveness of the youth program and independent variables

Variables	Youth (n=68)	Interpretation	Officers (n=18)	Interpretation
Youth officer's competence (Interval)	.65 _r	Substantial and positive	.75 _r	Very strong and positive
Involvement of stakeholders (Interval)	.44 _r	Moderate and positive	.81 _r	Very strong and positive
Availability of resources (Interval)	.51 _r	Substantial and positive	.61 _r	Substantial and positive
Contribution of socio-economic variables (Interval)	.41 _r	Moderate and positive	.47 _r	Moderate and positive
Reasons for participation (Interval)	.20 _r	Low and positive	.68 _r	Substantial and positive
Income generated per month/salary scale (Ordinal)	.20 _r	Low and positive	-.31 _r	Moderate and negative
Number of years in business/service (Interval)	.23 _r	Low and positive	-.48 _r	Moderate and negative
Educational level (Ordinal)	.02 _r	Negligible and positive	-.11 _r	Low and negative
Age (Interval)	-.09 _r	Negligible and negative	-.18 _r	Low and negative

r = Pearson product moment coefficient; r_s = Spearman rank order coefficient

Explanatory variables of program effectiveness

Stepwise regression was used to determine which variables explained the variance and which best predicted perceived effectiveness of the youth program (Table 5). According to the perceptions of the youth, two independent variables were found to explain and predict the perceived effectiveness of the program, namely, competence of youth officers and income generated through the project per month. Youth officer's competence was found to explain some variance in the dependent variable (39%), while income generated explained an additional 5%. However, from the youth officers' perspective, involvement of stakeholders and number of years in service,

explained and predicted the greatest variance in the dependent variable (66%), while number of years in service explained an additional 18%. The cumulative variance (R^2) explained by the independent variables was 82% (Table 5). The researchers therefore, failed to accept the research hypothesis that competence of youth officers predicts and explains much of the perceived effectiveness of out-of-school youth program ($p \leq .05$). Factors that predicted and explained much of the variance in the program effectiveness were found to be involvement of stakeholders, and number of years in service.

Table 5. Regression analysis for perceived effectiveness of out-of-school youth program by youth and youth officers with independent variables.

Respondents	Independent variables	R	R ²	R ² change	B	β	t-value	p
Youth:	Competence of youth officer	.62	.39	.39	.57	.62	6.66	.00
	Income generated per month	.66	.44	.05	.21	.22	2.40	.02
	Constant				1.34			
Youth officers:	Adjusted R ² = .42; Std. error = .45							
	Involvement of stakeholders	.81	.66	.66	.55	.78	7.62	.00
	Number of years in service	.92	.84	.18	-.45	-.43	4.16	.00
	Constant				2.47			
	Adjusted R ² = .82; Std. error = .37							

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Youth and youth officers, irrespective of their demographic and background characteristics, perceived the out-of-school youth program to have been effective. Hence, this implied that program objectives were met. However, in the absence of targets set by the Department of Culture and Youth, there was no benchmark against which findings could have been compared, therefore, evaluative judgement of the program effectiveness was absolute.

Perceived effectiveness by the youth showed a substantial relationship with competence of youth officers, and also had a moderate relationship with perceived involvement of stakeholders. Factors found to be associated with the effectiveness of the program from the youth's perspective were, competence of youth officers and income generated per month; while from the youth officers' point of view, they were, involvement of stakeholders and number of years in service. These findings implied that the calibre of officers serving in the Department of Culture and Youth was high,

hence were able to make the program a success.

Competence of youth officers and income generated per month significantly explained and predicted perceived effectiveness of the program. Areas of competencies required for youth officers to execute their duties effectively should be identified by both the department and youth officers' training institutions so as to align the curricula of the training institutions with the job descriptions of youth officers. It should be ensured that youth officers to be employed possess requisite qualifications for the actual duties to be performed by them.

Involvement of stakeholders, and number of years in service were also found to explain and predict the effectiveness of the youth program. The Department of Culture and Youth should ensure that all stakeholders from government departments, non-governmental organisations and the private sector contribute towards the youth

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program to facilitate pooling of efforts and resources.

The Department of Culture and Youth should abide by the strategies which are in place that made the program to be perceived as effective. Specific targeted number of youth and number of projects that the department intends to fund within a specified time should be stated, to serve as a benchmark for the Department. The Department should, at least, maintain the prevailing level of qualification for youth officers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The contribution of the Ministry of Education, Botswana, in providing funds to conduct this study is gratefully acknowledged. The permission granted to conduct the study by the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs, Botswana, is also acknowledged with thanks.

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