

ARE WE CLEAR ON INDIGENISATION AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT IN ZIMBABWE? THE VIEWS OF SOME YOUNG ZIMBABWEANS ON THE GOVERNMENT'S INDIGENISATION AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES

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ABSTRACT

Post-colonial Zimbabwe has witnessed two major black empowerment initiatives, namely the land reform and the indigenisation programmes. Through these initiatives, the government has repossessed land and resources from the minority white population and redistributed them to the majority black population. The indigenisation programme has been criticised by some, whereas others have hailed it as a significant milestone in the empowerment of the local black people. The government of Zimbabwe has sought to empower various sectors of the population, namely the youth, women and men. However, the indigenisation and youth empowerment initiatives have either been misunderstood by, or are unknown to a number of young people, who have therefore not benefited from them. The purpose of the study was to find out whether a particular group of young people in Bulawayo knew about the indigenisation and youth empowerment initiatives and to elicit their views about these programmes. The target population was a church youth empowerment group, which had four subgroups of twelve members each. The qualitative research methodology was applied, with the case study research design and focus group interviews being used to gather data. Data analysis was conducted on the narratives of the research participants. The study revealed that the majority of the young people who participated in the study were not well informed regarding the indigenisation programme.

Keywords: indigenisation; youth; black empowerment; wealth; funds



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INTRODUCTION

The African continent has over the years witnessed considerable activity and dialogue and numerous initiatives that have sought to correct the economic and social imbalances brought about by colonisation, which resulted in political and economic resources being placed in the hands of the minority white colonial settlers. Black economic empowerment initiatives have been on the rise, as governments have tried to redistribute resources and means of economic production to the majority blacks. Such initiatives have been both commendable and necessary, although at times their execution has raised questions. Countries such as South Africa and Zimbabwe have been noteworthy in developing initiatives to empower their local black communities. In South Africa, black empowerment initiatives have been spearheaded by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), which has emphasised that the main objective of black economic empowerment (BEE) is to increase the number of blacks who manage, own and control the country's economy (DTI 2003). In Zimbabwe, initiatives such as the indigenisation and youth empowerment programmes were established to empower the youth in the country. Chinamasa (2013, 206) states that the youth constitute more than half of the Zimbabwean population, and that the 2014 National Budget was to support various projects and programmes seeking to enhance youth participation in all aspects of the economy. Dube (2013) discusses a number of government youth empowerment initiatives and reports that community share ownership trusts (CSOTs) are mandated to provide youth employment and implement poverty alleviation projects in their areas. These are supervised by the Ministry of Youth Development, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment in conjunction with the Ministry of Local Government Rural and Urban Development.

The establishment of the Ministry of Youth Development, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment in Zimbabwe was an indication of the government's commitment to empowering the youth of the country. However, it is not clear whether the youth of Zimbabwe are aware of the youth empowerment opportunities, programmes and initiatives, and whether there is enough information available to young people about these. Indigenisation and youth empowerment programmes and initiatives for the benefit of the youth must be clearly explained and made accessible to all, and all necessary information needs to be disseminated properly to the target population. If this does not happen, rumours and miscommunication can result in a misrepresentation of noble initiatives. Without outreach and public broadcast initiatives designed by the respective ministries, there may be a danger of young people from peripheral and marginalised communities missing opportunities to develop themselves and their communities. Karikoga (n.d.) emphasises that if it is to succeed, the youth empowerment policy as an indigenisation and economic empowerment initiative has to be in tandem with educational policies. For instance, the majority of young people do not understand the concept of national indigenisation and economic empowerment.

DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED IN INDIGENISATION AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

The indigenisation and youth empowerment programmes have experienced both problems and successes. Some of the problems have arisen from the lack of communication between the youth and government regarding youth empowerment initiatives. The Youth Development Department in the Ministry of Youth Development Gender and Employment Creation Zimbabwe (2000) noted the lack of information regarding youth development programmes, skills training courses, jobs, and start-up funding for income generating activities in the country. Chinamasa (2013, 97) further highlights the lack of clarity on key policies, particularly the indigenisation and economic empowerment programme, as being among the difficulties facing the country. This points to the ambiguity relating to the indigenisation programme, as it was not clear how it was functioning, and investors and locals who were supposed to benefit lacked the necessary details.

Matyszak (2014, 10) identifies some of the problems encountered in the indigenisation programme. For instance, monies provided for the Youth Empowerment Fund trickled out to beneficiaries in small amounts, mainly taking the form of paltry amounts for poultry projects, and only the “deserving” benefited. Thus, such initiatives at times fund small projects but do not empower the youth to participate in larger projects which require more capital. Matyszak (2014, 10) further reveals that some politically connected beneficiaries received amounts much larger than the average, and opposition supporters and those from Matabeleland received little, if anything. Moreover, in such indigenisation initiatives, some regions and or communities are marginalised and do not benefit from initiatives meant to develop the whole country.

Another significant problem in indigenisation and youth empowerment in Zimbabwe has been that of capacity. The Youth Forum Information and Publicity Department (n.d.) reports that some young people literally buy proposals that make the grade without having the basic skills to run businesses; as a result their initiatives fail before they even take off, resulting in non-repayment of the loans granted. Maphosa (1998) notes that the problem most frequently identified by indigenous businesspeople was the shortage of capital. Karikoga (n.d.) further observes that most financial institutions have set stringent collateral requirements for young people applying to secure financial resources. These are some of the financial constraints that have hindered young people from accessing funds and/or benefiting from indigenisation initiatives.

Malaba and Chipika (2012) emphasise concerns about the possibility of “elite indigenisation” being the final outcome of this transformation. Minister Kasukuwere admitted that “in the scheme of things, some indigenous Zimbabweans may benefit more than others. However, should an elite indeed be established, then food for thought is, whether an indigenous elite is worse than a nonindigenous elite” (*New African Magazine* 2013, 47). Corruption has been a significant threat to indigenisation initiatives. The Youth Forum Information and Publicity Department (n.d.) has reported

cases of corruption involving Central African Building Society (CABS) officials who offer to facilitate young people's access to the loans in exchange for US\$2,000 of the US\$5,000 made available.

Statistics show that 70 per cent of Zimbabwe's population of 13 million people live in rural areas and play no part in Zimbabwe's mainstream economy. The same statistics show that 70 per cent of the overall population are the youth, aged between 0 and 35 years, who play no part in Zimbabwe's mainstream economy (Dube, 2013). Karikoga (n.d., 2) provides the following statistics:

Of the about 9 520 000 Zimbabwean youths, 1 332 800 have left the country to the Diaspora. 2 142 000 unemployed, 571 200 are employed, 3 094 000 are school and college going age, while 2 380 000 have passed on (approximate estimates). For the purposes of gender equality, sex distribution has been deliberately left out. The \$1 000 per youth loans are targeted to benefit the unemployed youths, however 1 713 600 youths of the targeted (unemployed) group are not in picture of this development.

The Youth Forum Information and Publicity Department (n.d.) laments the absence of proper and efficient structures to ensure that loans are granted to deserving applicants. Whereas the indigenisation and empowerment drive has a body that works to regulate and spearhead the initiative, no such institution existed for the Youth Development Fund.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There seems to be ambiguity and confusion relating to indigenisation and youth empowerment, as the young people who are supposed to benefit from these initiatives are not in fact doing so, and are not even aware of the initiatives established to assist them.

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to find out whether the Zimbabwean government's indigenisation and youth empowerment initiatives were known and understood by a church youth empowerment group in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- i. To establish whether the young people had benefited from indigenisation and youth empowerment initiatives;
- ii. To establish whether young people were well informed about the indigenisation and youth empowerment programme;

- iii. To determine the views of young people on indigenisation and youth empowerment;
- iv. To examine the capacity of young people to participate in indigenisation and youth empowerment; and
- v. To determine the interest in indigenisation and youth empowerment projects among young people.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- i. Have young people benefited from the indigenisation and youth empowerment programme?
- ii. Are young people well informed about indigenisation and youth empowerment?
- iii. What are the views of young people about indigenisation and youth empowerment?
- iv. Are young people capacitated enough to participate in indigenisation and youth empowerment initiatives?
- v. Are young people interested in indigenisation and youth empowerment initiatives?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research methodology was applied in this study. This research approach is well suited for exploring hidden reasons behind complex, interrelated, or multifaceted social processes, such as inter-firm relationships or inter-office politics, where quantitative evidence may be biased, inaccurate, or otherwise difficult to obtain (Bhattacharjee 2012, 105). Qualitative research provides information about the “human” side of an issue, that is, the often contradictory behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals (Family Health International 2005, 1).

RESEARCH DESIGN

A case study design was used for the study, the case being the church youth empowerment group mentioned. Runeson and Host (2009, 135) explain that an interpretivist based case study (of which the study reported on here is an example) attempts to understand phenomena through the participants’ interpretation of their context. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, 253) emphasise that contexts are unique and dynamic, hence case studies investigate and report the complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance. Noor (2008, 1602) makes the observation that a case study is not intended as a study of an entire organisation, but focuses on a particular issue, feature or unit of analysis.

STUDY POPULATION

The study population was a church youth empowerment group. This youth group had four subgroups of twelve members each, the purpose of which was to identify strategies for empowering the youth in the church. These subgroups were made up of young people ranging in age from 15 to 31 years and included young people still at school and those who had left school; the latter group comprised of young people who were unemployed, young entrepreneurs, and young people who were employed. After the focus group interviews were conducted, follow-up discussions took place on WhatsApp with those groups about issues that needed further clarification.

SAMPLING

Purposive sampling was applied in this study, as only young people in the church and involved in youth empowerment initiatives were chosen as the sample frame.

DATA-GATHERING INSTRUMENTS

Four focus group interviews were conducted. A standard open-ended interview guide was used with all four groups. In addition, further discussions were conducted with these groups on WhatsApp.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

The data analysis was narrative, since the study was qualitative.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Since the research was interpretivist in nature, subjectivity was exercised; this entailed the researchers interacting with the research participants in order to collect data. The researchers therefore had to be honest and ensure that confidentiality was maintained and that the consent of the respondents and the parent institution was sought and the necessary permission granted. The researchers made sure that no facts were altered and that no misrepresentation occurred. The researchers undertook to use the data collected for academic purposes only, and gave the undertaking that findings were to be used for academic purposes exclusively.

Research participants took part in the study voluntarily, and interviews were conducted at times convenient to them. Participants signed consent forms prior to completing questionnaires and before being interviewed.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

How the youth have benefited from indigenisation and youth empowerment initiatives

The research participants were asked whether they had benefited from the indigenisation and youth empowerment programme. Responses indicated that none had as yet benefited directly. Two participants, who were civil servants, stated that they had applied for the loans that were accessible through CABS, but had been unsuccessful. The majority of the participants, however, stated that they had not applied for any youth empowerment funds and/or loans.

Participants were asked whether they knew any young people who had benefited from the youth empowerment initiatives. All responded that they did not know of anyone who had benefited from loans distributed by CABS. Some reported that friends had applied for the loans, but had not secured them.

Whether young people are well informed about indigenisation and youth empowerment

Participants were asked their views concerning the availability of information about indigenisation and youth empowerment. One participant responded as follows:

We hear about this indigenisation and youth empowerment on television, but that just ends there. We have not ever seen anyone from government especially the responsible Ministry having means to enlighten us on these initiatives. It is scary for us to go to Mhlahlandlela [government offices in Bulawayo] and just barge into offices and start asking. We do not know who to approach.

Another participant responded:

Some of us have not had the privilege to be educated, thus, most of these programmes are packaged in English and that automatically disqualifies us the unlearned.

The majority of the young people were not aware of the existence of the Ministry of Youth Development, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment, and the general feeling was that information on indigenisation and youth empowerment was not readily available and accessible to all young people. The research participants also reported that they usually heard about youth empowerment programmes long after the closing dates. They also made the observation that the installation of satellite dishes in Zimbabwe had led to a breakdown in communication between the government and locals because locals were following radio and television stations of other countries such as South Africa, and thus any news that the government tried to disseminate through local television and radio stations did not reach the intended audiences. Thus, it was possible that young

people in Zimbabwe might be missing out on youth empowerment initiatives promoted via national radio and television.

The researchers ascertained that the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) Department of Indigenisation and Empowerment and the Ministry of Youth and Economic Empowerment had Facebook pages and a website containing information about indigenisation, and therefore formulated a question in this regard. Participant responses revealed that the majority had not seen any Facebook pages and homepages containing this information. One respondent reported having encountered the Ministry's website and the Facebook page, but that these sites did not have enough information that could be of use in helping young people understand the indigenisation and youth empowerment drive.

Young people were further asked whether the Ministry had ever organised public broadcasting and awareness campaigns to disseminate information about economic empowerment and indigenisation. None of the participants reported ever having encountered or attended any roadshow, event or exhibition organised by the Ministry to reach out to young people. One respondent stated:

It just shows that the Ministry has not been committed to empowering youths. Youths are in universities, workplaces, schools and at home, for those who are unemployed, and thus anyone who has a programme targeting the youths must know where to find or reach out to them. Just being present on the web is not enough.

The researchers pointed out that the Minister of Youth Development, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment was present at a workshop at which young people submitted business proposals. The study participants stated, however, that they were unaware of the workshop and the presence of the Minister there.

Asked whether they understood what indigenisation was, from a government point of view, the majority of the participants reported hearing on the news that foreign-owned companies were required to cede 51% of their shares to locals or indigenous Zimbabweans. They did not interpret indigenisation in this context as applying to them because they did not know how to obtain shares, nor did they have the funds to do so. The majority of the participants also stated that they had heard a lot of criticism of the indigenisation policy, but had not read legislation and policy documents that would shed light on it.

None of the research participants had read any legislation in Zimbabwe that promoted indigenisation. When questioned, only two knew who the incumbent Minister of Youth Development, Indigenisation and Empowerment was. The majority did not know the name of the Minister, nor where the offices of Youth Development, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment were located.

Views of the Youth on Indigenisation and Youth Empowerment

The young people were asked their views on indigenisation and youth empowerment initiatives in the country. The majority were of the view that indigenising resources was a noble idea that was long overdue. However, they had questions about the implementation of these initiatives, as they were of the view that such programmes benefited only the elite, and those who were politically aligned and politically connected. One of the participants stated:

In this country resources and opportunities are only availed to youths who are politically connected. Whenever you hear news of resources being availed to all of us, just know that the politically connected youths have benefited.

Another participant expressed the following view:

Bulawayo and Matabeleland are regions that are always marginalised. Resources meant for youths will benefit youths from other provinces and not our provinces. That is why youths from Matabeleland always resort to migrating to South Africa, it is because there is nothing for us here in Zimbabwe.

Other participants explained that the US\$1000 and US\$5000 said to be given to young people were not enough to start meaningful business ventures. They cited the high operational costs of businesses in Zimbabwe, and suggested that grants and loans extended to young people needed to be higher. However, other participants disagreed, expressing the view that the little money that was available had to be shared among all the youth in the country.

Participants were further of the opinion that the indigenisation and youth empowerment initiatives were instituted by politicians who targeted specific companies and or businesses. The feeling was that these politicians were to benefit the most, and that only “crumbs from the table” were to be left over for the youth.

Some participants felt that not everyone was cut out to be a farmer or business owner, and that some people were meant to follow careers in areas such as sport, science and art: in consequence, indigenisation was not going to make sense to everyone. These participants expressed the view that the country’s economy was supposed to accommodate all fields, thus giving the youth numerous options to choose from rather than forcing them to become entrepreneurs only. The views of the participants on indigenisation and youth empowerment varied widely. Participants in one of the focus group interviews felt that the indigenisation and youth empowerment programmes in fact contributed to the demise of the country’s economy, with one of the interviewees stating:

Policies like indigenisation chase away investors and multinational companies and that means our economy cannot grow and jobs are not created. Furthermore, a lot of indigenous entrepreneurs are failing and have resorted to job cuts and closing companies.

Capacity of the Youth to Participate in Indigenisation and Youth Empowerment Initiatives

Government may come up with sound indigenisation and youth empowerment programmes, but the youth must have the capacity to make a success of whatever programme is introduced. The researchers therefore asked the research participants whether they had the capacity to excel in the government's indigenisation and youth empowerment programmes. These respondents raised a number of interesting issues, which are discussed below.

The young people felt themselves inadequately equipped to start and grow a business: having just come from college or emerging from unemployment, they felt that they lacked the information and skills necessary for successfully running formal businesses. They explained that this was why a number of young people were resorting to informal businesses such as cross-border trade and vending, which did not require much skill. The participants emphasised the difficulty associated with registering a company, as most did not know how to go about the process. One participant was of the view that government had not done enough to capacitate the youth, as there were no capacity-building initiatives to train and mentor young people to become successful businesspeople.

Participants felt that programmes like indigenisation were not meant for young people who lacked education: in order to apply for funds young people were expected to write business proposals, and those who lacked education were excluded in consequence. These participants felt strongly that youth empowerment should empower all young people, regardless of their educational background. One participant expressed the view that the requirement of having to write business proposals would affect those who were uneducated, and especially those in rural areas.

Another issue that was raised by the majority of the participants was that of capital and collateral. These young people felt that the funding made available by the government was inadequate, as a number of applicants did not get funding; therefore, a number of young people who had business ideas did not have the capital to start their businesses. Participants also mentioned that most financial institutions such as banks required collateral before extending loans. This was a problem, as they did not have collateral in the form of immovable property such as a house. They acknowledged the fact that the Old Mutual funds did not require any collateral, however, and considered this commendable.

Interest in Indigenisation and Youth Empowerment among the Youth

The researchers sought to investigate whether the youth were at all interested in indigenisation and economic empowerment initiatives instituted by the government. The response was positive, as the participants stated that they were indeed interested in

such initiatives. These young people stated that they supported the indigenisation and youth empowerment drive, but that it needed revision.

However, some participants were not interested in indigenisation and youth empowerment, expressing the view that indigenisation was a political party election campaign strategy implemented to coerce the masses to vote: indigenisation and economic empowerment were meant to pacify the masses and give them a false impression that government had their interests at heart, whereas in fact the opposite was true. These participants felt that they could not support initiatives that were not genuine and open from the outset.

Some of the participants who were not interested in these initiatives stated that they wanted a country where career growth was a possibility, and they were therefore interested in becoming professionals in different fields. Two members of this youth group reported that they had applied for funds and been turned down, and that they had found this discouraging.

Recommendations

Clarification regarding indigenisation and economic empowerment is essential, as misconceptions abound, and many young people miss opportunities because of ignorance in that regard. Based on the findings and conclusions arrived at in this study, it is recommended that the Ministry of Youth Development, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment should improve its communication in this regard. The Ministry needs to reach out to as many young people as possible, and this will necessitate outreach programmes in schools, universities, churches, and so on. It was also recommended that the Ministry communicate opportunities that arise in such a way that all young people have an equal opportunity to benefit from them. This might include the strategic establishment of satellite stations so that young people can just walk in for guidance. Furthermore, it is recommended that schools and/or the education system be used to equip students with entrepreneurial skills and a business leadership mindset rather than an employee mindset.

CONCLUSION

Indigenisation and youth empowerment are initiatives that hold considerable promise if the community and stakeholders such as the youth are consulted and informed about their existence. In general young people did not know about the youth empowerment and indigenisation initiatives. Most of the research participants did not know about the Ministry of Youth Development, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment and they had not received information pertaining to loans and funds available to the youth in Zimbabwe. In consequence, the youth were not benefiting from, and were losing interest in youth empowerment initiatives.

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