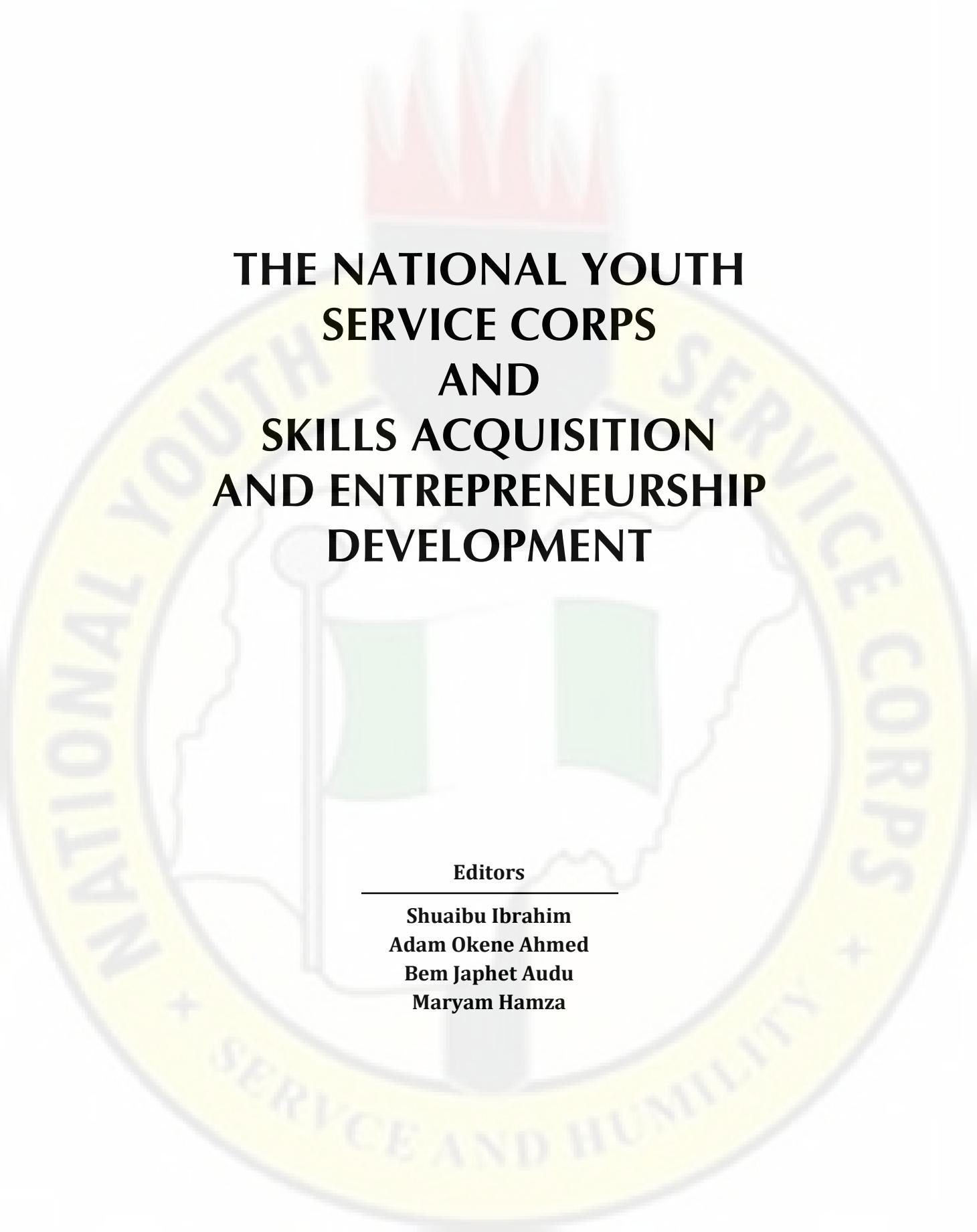


THE NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE CORPS AND SKILL ACQUISITION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Shuaibu Ibrahim
Adam Okene Ahmed
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Maryam Hamza



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Bem Japhet Audu, Maryam Hamza

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CONTENTS

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|------|
| Contents | - | - | - | - | - | - | v |
| Preface | - | - | - | - | - | - | viii |
| Acknowledgment | - | - | - | - | - | - | xii |
| Introduction | - | - | - | - | - | - | xiii |
| | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Methodological and Theoretical Issues on Skills Acquisition | | | | | | |
| | <i>Jamilu Ibrahim Mukhtar</i> | - | - | - | - | - | 1 |
| 2 | The Role of NYSC in Human Capacity Development in Nigeria Since 1973 | | | | | | |
| | <i>Anas Lawal</i> | - | - | - | - | - | 24 |
| 3 | Institutional Framework and the Philosophy of NYSC Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) Initiative | | | | | | |
| | <i>Rabiatu Ibrahim Abdullahi</i> | - | - | - | - | - | 42 |
| 4 | An Assessment of the Training Modules and Curriculum of SAED | | | | | | |
| | <i>Abubakar Yusuf Umar</i> | - | - | - | - | - | 60 |
| 5 | National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the War against Poverty (WAP) Agro-Entrepreneurs' Empowerment Programme in Nigeria, 2009-2020 | | | | | | |
| | <i>Ozinna Tochukwu Ntukogu</i> | - | - | - | - | - | 89 |
| 6 | Loans and Credit Facilities for Socio-Economic Development: An Overview of the CBN Youth Entrepreneurship Development Program (YEDP) and BOI Graduate Entrepreneurship Fund (GEF) in Partnership with NYSC | | | | | | |
| | <i>Haliru Sirajo and Mohammed Liman Murtala</i> | - | - | - | - | - | 120 |

| | | |
|-----------|--|-----|
| 7 | The Role of Private Enterprises in the SAED Programme | |
| | <i>Abubakar Yusuf Umar</i> | 149 |
| 8 | Strengthening NYSC and Private Sector Partnership on Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development | |
| | <i>Jibunor Udoka Victor</i> | 169 |
| 9 | NYSC Skills Acquisition Programmes and Igbo Youth Empowerment in Nigeria | |
| | <i>Orji Ifeanyi Boniface</i> | 189 |
| 10 | Skill Acquisitions and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED): Exploring the Trajectory through Beneficiaries | |
| | <i>Jamiu Yusuf Danga</i> | 211 |
| 11 | The Role of National Youth Service Corps Scheme in the Development of Human Capacity in Nigeria | |
| | <i>Onuorah Onyeka Leo</i> | 237 |
| 12 | National Youth Service Corps Ventures and Socio-Economic Development | |
| | <i>Suleiman Bilal Ishaq</i> | 255 |
| 13 | National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)/Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Programme in Nigeria | |
| | <i>Nuralsah Zubairu</i> | 274 |
| 14 | National Youth Service Corps and Sustainable Development in Nigeria | |
| | <i>Ladi Charles Chiwar</i> | 287 |
| 15 | The Prospect of Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) in Youth Empowerment in Nigeria | |
| | <i>Mercy Chat Adam</i> | 304 |

| | |
|---|---------------|
| 16. Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim: An Overview of His Achievements as the 18th NYSC Director-General | |
| <i>Bem Japhet Audu and Maryam Hamza</i> | - - - - - 316 |
| Index | - - - - - 337 |

PREFACE

Poverty is one of the most challenging issues facing the developing countries with serious socio-economic and political implications, especially African states where growth and development in the continent has been stunted for long. This is because, poverty is connected to issues of insecurity, corruption, illiteracy, high mortality rate, high incidence of diseases, prostitution, high rate of violent and non-violent crimes and weak democratic institutions.

For this reason, Nigerian government and policy makers have been trying, using different policies to create employment, empowerment and arrest poverty in the country. These include the Back to Land, National Development Plans, Indigenisation, Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDAN), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Farm Settlement Scheme (FSS), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution, among others. All these programmes failed to create enough employment opportunities for the teeming Nigerian youths.

The fundamental origin of unemployment in Nigeria lies in the educational curriculum devoid of entrepreneurship skills, technical and functional needs of the dynamic global society. It is against this background that the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme, primarily established in 1973 to inculcate national cohesion and integration had to shoulder the responsibility of training of the youths in skills acquisition and entrepreneurship. The scheme started the skill acquisition from agricultural production, direct farm training and agro-allied processing with the launching of the NYSC-WAP (War Against Poverty) accompanied by loans. In 2012, the scheme introduced the Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development programme which commence training from the NYSC orientation camp where about 20 enterprises are learnt.

This book examines the activities, nature of training and the contributions of NYSC to the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills generally by the Nigerian youths. This book also encapsulate the local and international collaborations with public agencies and private sectors which sponsor finances, training, expertise supply of equipment and general needs of capacity building development to the corps members. Examples include the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), the Bank of Industry (BOI) as well as several research centers like International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), among others.

This book also underscores the performance of the NYSC scheme in capacity building and refocusing the mindset of the Nigerian youths towards job creation, entrepreneurship and self-reliance away from the slavery of white-collar job which are not available in the country.

This book encompasses the framework, methodology, theories, and structure of the NYSC scheme in the capacity building development of the Nigerian youth through some of her cardinal programmes. Such packages where NYSC offers direct training investments, include: SAED, WAP, ventures and business enterprises, farm, establishments among others.

It appraises the support and joint programmes of other non-governmental and state agencies with similar visions and mandates like the MDGs/SDGs, Youth Entrepreneurship Development Program (YEDP) and BOI Graduate Entrepreneurship Fund (GEF) which are responsible for funding of after training projects and start up loans for youths to establish their choice enterprises.

The volume finally attempted evaluation of the challenges confronting the NYSC Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Programmes, and general capacity building development for Nigerian youths appraising the prospects and achievements recorded so far since the inception of the scheme. Indeed despite the enormous issues challenging the progress of the skill acquisition and business or entrepreneurial

development of the Nigerian youths. Several distinctive instances of success in some places like the Igbo youths in Lagos and Katsina are captured in this edition.

Different state and non-state actors, including international organisations have continued to confront issues of poverty through various means and strategies. In fact, this was why 189 heads of states and governments, during the Millennium Summit of the United Nations (UN) in September 2000, declared to free their people from wretchedness, extreme poverty and their underlying causes. This declaration produced eight target goals known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set to be met by 2015.

Among the goals listed, poverty and hunger eradication was the number one goal. It could be argued that poverty and hunger eradication features as the number one goal of the MDGs because of the strategic impact they had on development planning and implementation processes. Hence, the UN recognises that poverty and hunger eradication is the foundation upon which other development goals can be built. Since then, different programmes were launched through governmental and non-governmental institutions so as to ensure that this goal was achieved by 2015. However, despite the huge successes and achievements recorded by the MDGs, it became obvious that the MDGs were coming to expiration by 2015 and the achievements were uneven; so in 2012, member states of the UN met and changed the declaration from Millennium Development Goals to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with poverty eradication still as number one goal.

Consequently, since the advent of the New Millennium, just like in other developing countries, Nigeria has rolled out different strategies and poverty alleviation schemes in her quest for development. Some of these schemes include Trader Money, Backward Integration, *etcetera*. However, these empowerment programmes could not stall youth

unemployment because, they were lacking in scale and scope. Most of these initiatives were theoretical and not youth specific but youth parasitic because people have embraced the culture of receiving rather than engaging in productive activities. For these reasons, these programmes had little impact considering the enormity of unemployed graduates and youths in the country which continues to go higher.

The NYSC has been charged along with other duties, to empower the youths of Nigeria so as to alleviate poverty in the country. Hence, one of the major ways through which the scheme has been empowering the youths is through the NYSC War Against Poverty (WAP) Programme. This programme is aimed at training serving youth corps members in different agricultural entrepreneurial fields so as to prepare them for integration into the economy, the labour market and the entrepreneurial world. By so doing, the programme also creates employment not only for the beneficiaries of the scheme but also, the teeming youths that would be employed by the trained agricultural entrepreneurs, thereby, reducing unemployment, poverty and hunger in Nigeria in particular.

The NYSC has since added to the strategy of youth empowerment by launching and diligently implementing the various components of the NYSC Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development Programme. Judging from the success story of the SAED programme so far, there is great optimism that the NYSC SCHEME is poised to actively engage and empower our teeming youths for self-reliance

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May God Bless us all.

Shuaibu Ibrahim, Adam Okene Ahmed, Bem Japhet Audu and Maryam Hamza.

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xii

INTRODUCTION

Brief History of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC)

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) was established in 1973 by the government of General Yakubu Gowon. The history of the scheme is traceable to the events that took place in Nigeria towards the last half of 1960s. The years 1967-1970 were characterized by the Nigerian civil war. At the end of the war, the General Gowon administration came up with new policies that would promote post-conflict peace, reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction. Consequently, the vital need for national unity led to the birth of the NYSC idea. The NYSC Scheme came into being through Decree No. 24 of 22nd May 1973. It states that the NYSC is being established with a view to the proper encouragement and development of common ties among the youths of Nigeria and the promotion of national unity. After 20 years of existence, the 1973 Decree was repealed and replaced with No. 51 of 16th June, 1993, now referred to as the National Youth Service Corps Act, Cap. N84, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004. The Act is preserved by Section 315 (5) (a) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended), thereby, making the NYSC Act part and parcel of the constitution.

According to Section 1(3) of the NYSC Act, the objectives of the Scheme are to:

- (a) inculcate discipline in Nigerian youths by instilling in them a tradition of industry at work and of patriotic and loyal service to Nigeria in any situation they may find themselves;
- (b) raise the moral tone of the Nigerian youths by giving them the opportunity to learn about higher ideals of nation achievements, social and cultural improvement;

- (c) develop in Nigerian youths the attitudes of mind, acquired through shared experience and suitable training, which will make them more amenable to mobilization in the national interest;
- (d) enable Nigerian youths acquire the spirit of self-reliance by encouraging them to develop skills for self-employment;
- (e) contribute to the accelerated growth of the national economy;
- (f) develop common ties among the Nigerian youths and promote national unity and integration;
- (g) remove prejudices, eliminate ignorance and confirm at first hand the many similarities among Nigerians of all ethnic groups; and
- (h) develop a sense of corporate existence and common destiny of the people of Nigeria.”

In order to achieve the objectives stated above, Section 1(4) of the NYSC Act provides that the Scheme shall ensure:

- “(a) the equitable distribution of members of the service corps and the effective utilization of their skills in area of national needs;
- (b) that are far as possible, Nigerian youths are assigned to jobs in States other than their States of origin;
- (c) that such group of Nigerian youths assigned to work together is as representative of Nigeria as far as possible;

- (d) that the Nigerian youths are exposed to the mode of living of the people in different parts of Nigeria.
- (e) the Nigerian youths are encouraged to eschew religious intolerance by accommodating religious differences;
- (f) the members of the service corps are encouraged to seek a year for their one year national service, career employment all over Nigeria, thus promoting the free movement of labour;
- (g) that employers are induced partly through their experience with members of the service corps to employ more readily and on a permanent basis, qualified Nigerians, irrespective of the States or origin."

Basically, the aims and objectives of the NYSC is to reinforce institutional efficiency and effectiveness as well as youth development in the country. It is accepted in several quarters that NYSC is a viable platform for the transitioning of youths into self-reliant adults and the improvement of general welfare and development. The NYSC programme has since inception facilitated steady and effective supply and distribution of skilled manpower, breaking of social and cultural barriers as well as the building of friendly bridges across ethno-linguistic boundaries. It has also assisted in the promotion of values, national unity and development, rekindled interest in neglected but vital areas of national development and promoted leadership qualities in the youths. The Scheme has four (4) cardinal programmes which are: Mobilisation/Orientation, Primary Assignment, Community Development Service and Winding-Up/Passing- Out Exercise.

The maximum age requirement for youths under the scheme is thirty (30) years old. They are also engaged in community development programmes and activities. According to Section 2(2) of the NYSC Act, the only groups of youth exempted are those that have served in the

Armed forces or the Nigerian Police for a period of more than nine (9) months or in the security agencies, those over thirty (30) years of age and those conferred with National Honours. In addition, the choice of youths above every other age group was based on the fact that they are considered the most active change agents needed in building a united Nigeria, and a way of achieving this is for the youths to imbibe and nurture a sense of common belonging and national consciousness which would transcend political, social, state and ethnic loyalties.

At the onset of the NYSC in 1973, only 2,346 graduates were mobilized. However, judging by the evolution of the Scheme, there has been a phenomenal increase in the number of graduates that are participating annually. NYSC is capable of bringing out the best qualities in Nigerian youth and imparting in them the right attitude and value for nation building that serves as catalyst to national development, sense of pride and fulfillment of its participating graduate youths. The criteria observed in the deployment of Corps members include:

- the equality of states,
- ability of states to absorb the service of participants,
- posting based on concessional considerations (marital and health grounds), posting on demand from various federal government establishments,
- the supportive role of a government is also increasingly becoming a factor in the placement of corps members,
- the deployment of corps members has retained its traditional process with the majority of corps members going to the classrooms.

The Scheme's presence is felt and noticed in all the LGAs in the country, creating higher emphasis in the rural and grass root development in line with its objectives since inception.

Methodological and Theoretical Issues on Skills Acquisition

1

Methodological and Theoretical Issues on Skills Acquisition

Jamilu Ibrahim Mukhtar

Introduction

From a cursory look at the foundational work of Byan and Harter in 1899¹ and subsequent literature on skill acquisition, the subject is said to be a century's old area. Paradoxically, however, skill acquisition is one of the few areas that received less methodological and theoretical contributions. But the availability of body of literature on

¹Anglim, JeromyKyram, 2011, p. 1

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jamilu Ibrahim Mukhtar

entrepreneurship whose theoretical developments (Schumpeter², Ahmed and McQuaid³, Bula⁴ can be related to skills acquisition provides an opportunity for methodological and theoretical analysis, especially in the Nigerian context. Irrespective of the various conceptual views of entrepreneurship-as an innovation, creativity, risk-taking, ownership of a company or an enterprise⁵, etc. The basis for classifying skills acquisition as an aspect of entrepreneurship in Nigeria is the fact that most of the activities upon which Nigerian youths are expected to acquire skills in are technical vocational education and training (TVET)⁶ or vocational business education (VBE)⁷ areas, which are similar to economic aspect of skills acquisition (e.g. tailoring, fashion and design, embroidery, crafts work, bead-making, weaving, paint work, soap-making, and horticulture, taxi driving, among others). The technical vocational education and training (TVET) areas differ in some respects from the social or recreational (such as learning public speech, ski boarding, roller skate, bike riding, chase game, and gymnastics).

To accommodate each type of skill, scholars in the area of educational psychology have divided skill into three broad types: cognitive, affective and motor skill acquisition. Cognitive skill acquisition involves receiving knowledge and information. Affective skill acquisition involves the process of developing self-esteem and fair play. Motor skill learning is acquiring physical motor skills as in sport and gymnastics.⁸For a systematic learning and proficient application of any

²as cited in Grebel, Pyka and Hanusch, 2001

³ Ahmed and McQuaid, 2005

⁴Bula, 2012

⁵See Barringer, B.R. and R.D. Ireland." Entrepreneurship: Successfully launching new ventures",

Pearson Harlow, UK.

⁶ Umar, M. A. P.116.

⁷Udo, Magnus, 2015

⁸Saltzman and Munhall, 1992

Methodological and Theoretical Issues on Skills Acquisition

acquired skills, methods and models are essential. This is because students are expected to develop and enhance skills and capabilities in critical and analytical thinking, information retrieval, evaluation and problem solving; skills in conducting and evaluating research that are helpful to students' ongoing personal and professional lives; methods and theories that have been linked to positive learning outcomes for students and learners.⁹

In view of this background, the paper will form a discourse on the methodological and theoretical issues on skills acquisition. The paper is divided into six sections, with this introductory remark representing the first section. Section two is about conceptual clarifications, Section three discusses the convergence between methodological and theoretical issues in skills acquisition. Section four involves the practicality of the methods and theories of skills considerations. Section five concludes the paper.

Conceptual Clarifications

This section deals with the clarification of key concepts: skills acquisition, methodology, and theory based on review of previous work and working definition for them.

Skills Acquisition: Skill is the result of deliberate, consistent practice, and in early-stage practice, quantity and speed trump absolute quality.¹⁰ The faster and more often you practice, the more rapidly you'll acquire the skill. Efforts to improve the standard and quality of acquisition of skills and competencies inherent in Vocational Business Education (VBE) courses to maximum level seems to be slowed down by a number of factors such as VBE students low interest in the skills and competencies, curriculum structure, inadequate personnel,

⁹Akuegwu, Basil and Nwi-ue, Felix, 2018, p. 34

¹⁰Kauffman, 2013

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jamilu Ibrahim Mukhtar

inadequate equipment and facilities for the teaching and learning of the skills, inadequate material resources for training and others.

The emphasis on economically oriented skills acquisition in Nigeria is as a result of the economic condition of the country, while the social and recreational activities skill acquisitions are more common in economically advanced countries, like the United States and Japan. Because of economically driving skills in Nigeria and the socially driven skills in other parts of the world, it is difficult to have a single definition of the concept of skills acquisition in this context. Consequently, this paper will use Nduka-Ozo's deliberate bias by labeling skills acquisition as "entrepreneurship skills acquisition."¹¹ However, the present study differ from Nduka-Ozo's entrepreneurship skills acquisition, because her concept of entrepreneurship skills acquisition did not recognise the recreational activities which can also be creatively used as profit-making enterprises like all other entrepreneurial activities.¹²

Skill acquisition, as defined by Idoko is the form of training by individuals or group of individuals that can lead to acquisition of knowledge for self-sustenance.¹³ It involves the training of people in different fields of trade under a legal agreement between the trainers and the trainees for certain duration and under certain conditions. Skill acquisition requires practicing the skill in question. It requires significant periods of sustained, focused concentration, creativity, flexibility, and the freedom to set your own standard of success¹⁴.

Methodology: Methodology is often used arbitrarily, which can lead to a sort of methodological potpourri. Subsequently, one seldom hears questions asking, for instance, what a certain methodology has to do with a certain type of research, what is the nature of the question and

¹¹ Nduka-Ozo, Stella Ngozi, 2017

¹² Ibid, p. 978

¹³ Idoko, Cletus Usman, 2014 p.51

¹⁴ Kaufman, Josh, 2013, P. 19

Methodological and Theoretical Issues on Skills Acquisition

what (core) theoretical perspectives are used to explore and conceptualise the issue at hand. As a result, the importance of defining the nature and possible contribution of a specific kind of research is often ignored. It is not surprising that in many studies – directed either at regular students, teachers or doctoral students – methodology forms a difficult, and preferably avoided, subject of conversation. In academic life in general or at least in carrying out a decent piece of research, proper and transparent choices are the key to success¹⁵.

This paper will adopt Jonker and Pennink's view of methodology as a kind of 'action reading' or more precisely as, an 'action repertoire.' According to Jonker and Pennink, action reading means: preparing a type of repertoire, based on a set of premises, (theoretical) considerations and practical conditions, according to which the researcher structures the logic of his research given the question he wants to answer. An implicit yet important assumption here is that the researcher should be able to justify the reasons for this choice of a specific (research) approach and make sensible choices based on the different requirements of a particular question. There are methodologies that steer action for all kinds of activities (both mentally and literally) inside as well as outside organisations. So a methodology is not only about doing research, it is about acting.¹⁶

The working definition of methodology in this paper is, therefore, the set of techniques, principles and procedures for accomplishing certain task, usually from theoretical to practical. There are various ways or methods of knowing the unknowns, to answer the inquisitiveness. Among the various methods, the scientific method is probably the most widely used. The scientific process aims at describing explanation, and understating, of various known or unknown phenomena in nature. Thus, it increases the knowledge of human beings in multifarious ways.

¹⁵Jonker, Jen and Pennink, Bartjan, 2010, p. 21

¹⁶Jonker, Jan and Pennink, Bartjan, 2010, P.22

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jamilu Ibrahim Mukhtar

Any scientific process may have three basic steps: systematic observation, classification, and interpretation. Scientific methods are characterized by their objectivity, generality, verifiability, and creditability. Objectivity refers to procedures and findings not influenced by personal feelings, values, and beliefs of a researcher. Thus, objectivity in a scientific process ensures an unbiased, unprejudiced, and impersonal study¹⁷.

Theory: Theory is a systematic explanation of social and natural phenomena. It is an abstract statement that seeks to understand, explain and predict phenomena. Key defines theory as: "a systematic attempt to understand what is observable in the world. It creates order and logic from observable facts that appear tumultuous and disconnected."¹⁸A good theory would: "identify relevant variables and the connections between them in a way that testable hypotheses can be generated and empirically established" or: "... a statement of relations among concepts within a set of boundary assumptions and constraints."¹⁹An important part of theory is the demonstration of relations between variables within a conceptual framework. Please observe the similarity here between what defines a model and a theory! A 'good' theory in the social sciences should meet the following criteria: it must be (a) falsifiable, (b) logically coherent, (c) operationalisable, (d) useful and (e) possess sufficient explanatory power in terms of scope and comprehensiveness. Key argued that "good theory should have both explanatory value as well as predictive value". Good theory, according to Labovitz and Hagedorn,²⁰ must also be supported by a plausible or logical explanation to suggest how and why things happen.

¹⁷Sahu, Pradip Kumar, 2013

¹⁸Key, S. Toward a new theory of the firm: a critique of 'stakeholder' theory.

Management

Decision, 37(4) (1999), pp. 770, 317.

¹⁹Bacharach 1989, p. 496

²⁰ As cited in Jonker, Jan and Pennink, Bartjan,2010

Methodological and Theoretical Issues on Skills Acquisition

A solid theory should also include the underlying logic and values that explain the observable phenomenon.

Conceptual models are inescapably based on theory or at least theoretical notions. Without this theoretical input, it is impossible to make a focused construction of a specific reality up front. Theory tells you where to look, what to look for and how to look. It is simply impossible to observe any aspect of reality, any phenomenon or problem without having a kind of theory in mind. That might sound quite conclusive by what we see, what we think is important, what we select for further inspection: it is all driven by theory. Without theory we cannot make meaningful sense of empirically generated data or distinguish useful results. Without it empirical research merely becomes 'data-dredging'.²¹ Therefore the nexus between methodology and theory, as well as theoretical models is inherent and inseparable.²²

Methodological and Theoretical Issues in Skills Acquisition: The Convergence

The paper will discuss the methodological and theoretical issues in skills acquisition in this section with the point of convergence between theory and method which are manifest if implemented. As an outcome of his review of several theories and models of skills acquisition, Anglim²³ maintained that a body of research has emerged showing four different theoretical positions, thus: (a) most tasks have a wide range of possible strategies (b) some strategies are more effective than others; (c) more effective strategies tend to be used with practice; and (d) strategy shift, although commonly gradual, is sometimes abrupt.

²¹Jonker, Jan and Pennink, Bartjan, 2010

²²Dorward, Andrew, 2014, p.1

²³Anglim, 2011

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jamilu Ibrahim Mukhtar

Basically, skills acquisition owed so much to practice and performance. Practice can refer to many activities. Within the skill acquisition literature, practice tends to refer to the effect of repeated task performance. Such a definition is distinct from the everyday use of the term which often includes adaptive training and external instruction. In skill acquisition studies, practice is commonly operationalised as either the amount of time spent practicing the task or the number of practice trials, where little has been made in the literature of this distinction. The focus on repetition leads to research designs where initial instructions are provided but typically no additional instructions are given once practice is initiated²⁴.

Task performance has been defined and measured in many different ways. At an abstract level task performance is any evaluative attribute of task execution. More typically, task performance is operationalised as completion time, accuracy, quality, or attainment. Attainment measures are merely a multiple of the inverse of completion time. As mentioned in the introduction, this thesis focuses on tasks where performance is operationalised as task completion time. This includes both reaction time when responding to stimuli, and also task completion time on tasks involving multiple steps. Task completion time is applicable to a large number of tasks where it is speed of performance which is the main attribute that distinguishes levels of performance. Focus on task completion time also provides a link with the general chronometric aims of cognitive science.

Together, the relationship between practice and performance is known as the learning curve, reflecting the seemingly lawful improvement in performance that occurs with practice. Such a relationship can and has been modelled at both the individual-level and the group-level. Individual-level modelling occurs when the raw data is the performance over practice for an individual. Individual-level parameter

²⁴Udo, Magnus, 2015, p. 28

Methodological and Theoretical Issues on Skills Acquisition

estimation may be done separately for each individual or parameters can be estimated simultaneously using approaches such as nonlinear multilevel modelling. Group-level modelling occurs when raw data is averaged over participants, typically using the mean, for a given trial or block of trial²⁵.

Learning the basics is a constant struggle. As learner practices motor activity, her muscle coordination becomes more automatic and synchronised with her mental processes. She gains the ability to pay more attention to the subtle elements of what is being done, and she learns to adjust her approach to the feedback she gets from the environment. She starts doing more of what works, and less of what does not. Eventually, she is able to perform without conscious attention to every detail. In academic literature, this general process is called the “three-stage model” of skill acquisition, and it applies to both physical and mental skills. The three stages are:

1. **Cognitive (Early) Stage**—understanding what you’re trying to do, researching, thinking about the process, and breaking the skill into manageable parts.
2. **Associative (Intermediate) Stage**—practicing the task, noticing environmental feedback, and adjusting your approach based on that feedback.
3. **Autonomous (Late) Stage**—performing the skill effectively and efficiently without thinking about it or paying unnecessary attention to the process.

To acquire research skills, Badke (2012) identified a number of abilities which graduate students/Corps members need to possess:

- a. Understanding the nature of the information resources available in their discipline.
- b. Stating research problems clearly and concisely
- c. Knowledge of research databases e.g. google

²⁵ Anglim, 2001

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jamilu Ibrahim Mukhtar

- d. Capabilities for critical thinking to be honed in realistic research situations.

Furthermore, acquiring research skills may be enhanced by addressing and improving learners' perceptions of their research environment as well as raising their awareness of variations of conceptions and approaches to research. This is institutional responsibility, which ought to be seriously undertaken to achieve the desired goals and objectives.²⁶

Kauffman's Ten (10) Methods of Skill Acquisition

Kauffman gave a checklist of ten (10) methods of skill acquisition, which he referred to as ways to cultivate a "temporary obsession", in acquiring any new skill. Rapid skill acquisition happens naturally when you become so curious and interested in something that other concerns fall away, at least temporarily.²⁷ Think of these principles as ways to identify a skill worthy of temporary obsession, focus on it, and remove barriers that distract you from effective practice. Here are the ten major principles of rapid skill acquisition:

1. Choose a Lovable Project.

Rapid skill acquisition is guided by choosing an activity the learner loves the most. The more excited learners are about the skill they want to acquire, the more quickly they will acquire it. Karl Popper has popularised the idea of *scientific falsifiability*, which in layman's terms means "if you cannot potentially prove something wrong via observation or experiment, it is not actually science"²⁸. Popper said that "the best thing that can happen to a human being is to find a problem, to fall in love with that problem, and to live trying to solve that problem, unless another problem even more lovable appears." Kaufman

²⁶Akuegwu, Basil and Nwi-ue, Felix, 2018, 31-32.

²⁷Kauffman, Josh. 2013, p. 22

²⁸Kaufman, Josh. 2013, p. 23.

Methodological and Theoretical Issues on Skills Acquisition

argued that if you want a formula for living a satisfying, productive life, you cannot go wrong with that one.

In practice, finding a lovable project is an individual matter. For example, an individual may not love to learn music on her current list of skills to acquire because she has no urgent need to learn it at the moment, while she has many other projects she is more interested in learning, such as learning football and public speech. Amongst the list of lovable project, there is also *prime skill* (that is, one's most lovable project). If you focus on acquiring your prime skill before anything else, you will acquire it in far less time. You naturally learn things you care about faster than things you do not.

2. Focus Energy on One Skill at a Time

In practice, acquiring new skills requires concentrated time and focused attention. One of the common mistakes made is when acquiring new skills people attempt to acquire many skills at the same time. If a learner has only an hour or two each day to devote to practice and learning, and he spreads that time and energy across twenty different skills, no individual skill is going to receive enough time and energy to generate noticeable improvement²⁹A trainee should be exposed to only one new skill they wish to acquire and put all focus and energy into acquiring that skill, and place other skills on temporary hold. For example, a Corps member that started learning software work should not combine it with phone repair, fish production, and carpentry at the same time. Doing so will only make him “jack of all trade, master of none”.

3. Define Your Target Performance Level.

Your target performance level is a brief statement of what your desired level of skill looks like. It can be a single sentence description of what a learner/Corps member is trying to achieve, and can do at the end. The

²⁹ Kaufman, Josh 2013, p. 24

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jamilu Ibrahim Mukhtar

more specific their target performance level is, the more meaningful it is. Defining one's target performance level permits an imagination what is to be done and how to perform it in a certain way. Once you determine exactly how good you want or need to be, it is easier to figure out how to get there. In other words, individuals should articulate their problem and how to address it. Charles Kettering, the inventor of the electric automobile ignition system noted "A problem well stated is a problem half solved."³⁰ How you define your target performance level depends on why you chose to acquire the skill in the first place. Once you reach your initial target performance level, you can always choose to keep going if you wish. The best target performance levels seem just out of reach, not out of the realm of possibility. As a rule, the more relaxed your target performance level, the more rapidly you can acquire the associated skill.

4. Deconstruct the Skill into Sub-skills.

Most of the skills people acquire are actually bundles of smaller sub-skills. Therefore when someone has identified a skill, the next step is to *deconstruct* it down into the smallest possible parts. For example, playing golf is a skill that has many sub-components: choosing the correct club, driving off the tee, hitting out of a bunker, putting, et cetera. Once the skill is deconstructed sufficiently, it is much easier to identify which sub-skills appear to be most important. By focusing on the critical sub-skills first, you will make more progress with less effort. Deconstructing a skill also makes it easier to avoid feeling overwhelmed. You do not have to practice all parts of a skill at the same time. Instead, it is more effective to focus on the sub-skills that promise the most dramatic overall returns.

It also allows you to identify the parts of the skill that are not important for beginning practitioners. By eliminating the non-critical sub-skills or

³⁰ Cited in Kauffman, 2013, p. 25

Methodological and Theoretical Issues on Skills Acquisition

techniques early in the process, you will be able to invest more of your time and energy mastering the critical sub-skills first.

5. Obtain Critical Tools

Most skills have prerequisites to practice and performance. What tools, components, and environment you can practice efficiently? How can you obtain the very best tools you can find and afford? Learning tailoring is difficult without sewing machine or learning how to pilot a helicopter without access to one. Taking a moment to identify critical tools before you start practicing saves precious time. By ensuring you have the resources you need before you begin; you maximise your practice time and skills can be acquired easily by Corps members.

6. Eliminate Barriers to Practice

There are many things that can get in the way of practice, which makes it difficult to acquire any skill. These barriers can be anything from significant pre-practice effort; intermittent resource availability; environmental distractions and emotional blocks. Significant pre-practice effort includes misplacing your tools, not acquiring the correct tools before practicing, or skipping setup requirements. Intermittent resource availability is using borrowed equipment or relying on a resource that has limited operating hours. They include television, ringing phones, and incoming e-mail. Emotional blocks comprise of fear, doubt, and embarrassment. Every single one of these elements makes it harder to start practicing, and therefore decreases Corps member acquisition speed. We only have so much willpower at our disposal each day, and it is best to use that willpower wisely. The best way to invest willpower in support of skill acquisition is to use it to remove these soft barriers to practice. By rearranging your environment to make it as easy as possible to start practicing, you will acquire the skill in far less time.³¹

³¹ Kauffman, 2013 p.29

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jamilu Ibrahim Mukhtar

7. Make Dedicated Time for Practice

The time you spend acquiring new skill must come from somewhere. Unfortunately, people tend to acquire new skills and keep doing many of the other activities they enjoy, like watching TV, playing video games, et cetera. Finding time is a myth. No one ever “finds” time for anything, in the sense of miraculously discovering some bank of extra time, like finding a twenty-dollar bill you accidentally left in your coat pocket. If you rely on finding time to do something, it will never be done, you must create time. You have 24 hours to invest each day: 1,440 minutes, no more or less. You will never have more time. If you sleep approximately 8 hours a day, you have 16 hours at your disposal. Some of those hours will be used to take care of yourself and your loved ones. Others will be used for work.³²

Whatever you have left over is the time you have for skill acquisition. If you want to improve your skills as quickly as possible, the larger the dedicated blocks of time you can set aside, the better. The best approach to making time for skill acquisition is to identify low-value uses of time, then choose to eliminate them. As an experiment, Kauffman recommended keeping a simple log of how you spend your time for a few days. All you need is a notebook.

The results of this time log is mysterious: if you make a few tough choices to cut low-value uses of time, you will have much more time for skill acquisition. Thus, Kauffman stated that the more time you have to devote each day, the less total time it will take to acquire new skills. He recommended making time for at least ninety minutes of practice each day by cutting low-value activities as much as possible.

Kauffman also recommend *pre-committing* to completing at least twenty hours of practice. Once you start, you must keep practicing until you hit the twenty-hour mark. If you get stuck, keep pushing: you

³² Kauffman, 2013 p.30

Methodological and Theoretical Issues on Skills Acquisition

cannot stop until you reach your target performance level or invest twenty hours. If you're not willing to invest at least twenty hours up front, choose another skill to acquire. The reason for this is that the early parts of the skill acquisition process usually feel harder than they really are. Instead of giving up when you experience the slightest difficulty, recommitting to twenty hours makes it easier to persist. Think of this approach as an exercise in grit: you're not going to let some silly little issue stop you from doing what you have decided you really want to do. You will either solve the problem; you will be in a better position to decide how to proceed.

8. Create Fast Feedback Loops

"Fast feedback" means getting accurate information about how well you are performing as quickly as possible. The longer it takes to get accurate feedback, the longer it will take to acquire the skill. Take the art of cheese making, for example. The subtle chemical processes that create fine cheeses often take months or years to complete, and there's no way to rush the process without ruining the result. If it takes six months to determine whether or not your cheese is any good, the delay in feedback makes it difficult to acquire the skill quickly. Fast feedback naturally leads to rapid skill acquisition. If feedback arrives immediately, or with a very short delay, it is much easier to connect that information to your actions and make the appropriate adjustments.

The best forms of feedback are near instantaneous. That is why skills like programming can become mildly addictive: you make a change, and a few milliseconds later the computer tells you whether or not it worked. If you don't like the feedback ("my program crashed!"), make a change and try again. There are many potential sources of useful feedback. Coaches are not the only source of fast feedback. Capture devices, like video cameras, can help you watch yourself as you perform. Tools like computer programs, training aides, and other devices can immediately indicate when you make a mistake or

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jamilu Ibrahim Mukhtar

something is amiss. The more sources of fast feedback you integrate into your practice, the faster you'll acquire the skill.

9. Practice by the Clock in Short Bursts.

Our minds are built to learn, to notice patterns, simulate potential courses of action, and figure out what is probably going to happen next. They are not built to accurately estimate time how long something will take, or how much time you have spent doing something. In the early phases of practicing a new skill, it is very easy to overestimate how much time you have spent practicing. When you are not good (and you know it), time seems to crawl, and it feels like you have been practicing for a longer period of time than you actually have.

The solution for this is to practice by the decent countdown timer/clock, set it for twenty minutes. There is only one rule: once you start the timer, you must practice until it goes off. No exceptions. This simple technique will make it easier to complete longer periods of sustained practice, even when you get tired or frustrated. The more periods of sustained practice you complete, the faster your skill acquisition. Set aside time for three to five practice sessions a day, and you will see major progress in a very short period.

10. Emphasize Quantity and Speed

When you begin to acquire a new skill, it is tempting to focus on practicing perfectly, which is a recipe for frustration. Your performance, cannot take you close to perfection immediately. Instead of trying to be perfect, focus on practicing quickly as you can, while maintaining "good enough" form. David Bayles and Ted Orland share a very interesting anecdote on the value of volume:

The ceramics teacher announced on opening day that he was dividing the class into two groups. All those on the left side of the studio, he said, would be graded solely on the quantity of work they produced, all those on the right solely on its quality.

Methodological and Theoretical Issues on Skills Acquisition

His procedure was simple: on the final day of class he would bring in his bathroom scales and weigh the work of the “quantity” group: fifty pounds of pots rated an A, forty pounds a B, and so on. Those being graded on “quality,” however, needed to produce only one pot—albeit a perfect one—to get an A.³³

Well, come grading time a curious fact emerged: the works of highest quality were all produced by the group being graded for quantity. It seems that while the “quantity” group was busily churning out piles of work and learning from their mistakes, the “quality” group had sat theorising about perfection, and in the end had little more to show for their efforts than grandiose theories and a pile of dead clay.

That is not to say that you should ignore good form while practicing. Some skills, particularly skills that require physical actions or motions, entail certain quality of form to perform well. Learners/Corps members should ensure they are practicing using form that is good enough to satisfy their target performance level. Once they are practicing in good form at least 80 to 90 percent of the time, turn up the speed for faster skill acquisition. That’s it: ten simple principles that will ensure you go about practicing your prime skill in the most efficient and effective way possible.³⁴

Many of these principles may strike you as common sense, and that’s okay. Remember: simply knowing these principles is not enough. You must actually use them to reap the rewards³⁵.

³³ Kauffman, 2013, P.32

³⁴ Kaufman, Josh, 2013, p. 32

³⁵ Kaufman, Josh, 2013.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jamilu Ibrahim Mukhtar

Methods and Theories of Skills: Practical Considerations

It is widely agreed in the field of psychology that all brains are capable of improving skills and capabilities with practice. Genetic predispositions exist, but they are very minor compared to the power of focused, intelligent practice. We can improve any skill, provided we are willing to practice. Practicality arising from methodological instructions and theoretical assumption is a similitude of policy implementation informed by policy recommendations. In other words, theoretical explanation of skills acquisition is a policy tool upon which youths (NYSC) are expected to translate into action for their individual development and by implication to contribute to national development. In line with the above assertion, Okorie and Ezeji³⁶ argued that the acquisition of the vocational skills is a means of enhancing the productive power of many nations. On this basis, the Nigerian society should encourage citizens to get equipped and contribute effectively to the development of the country.

The acquisition of such practical skills is important because when efficient and skillful hands are employed in any fields of human endeavours, high productivity is usually achieved. Economically, maximum skills acquisition by VBE students and Corps members will help to enrich the Nigerian society and in this way, tend to make possible sustainable development. Okorie and Ezeji³⁷ observed that a rich nation is one that is capable of meeting the economic, social, moral and political needs of the citizenry. Nigeria as a nation will enjoy sustainable development if VBE students/Corps members in particular all other students in general acquire maximum skills acquisition and competencies in their specialties.³⁸

³⁶ Cited in Udo, Magnus, 2015 p. 28

³⁷ Ibid p. 28

³⁸ Udo, Magnus 2015, 28

Methodological and Theoretical Issues on Skills Acquisition

One important thing about skill acquisition is that the students must be taught to appreciate the fact that they are capable of acquiring new skills. Individuals might believe their skills are fixed- that they are either good or talented/gifted at something or they are not. Dweck(as cited in Kauffman)mention a wide body of research that indicates individuals commonly hold one of two views of how their minds work.³⁹According to Dweck, people with a “fixed” mind-set assume that skills and talents are innate, that they are born with certain abilities that are what they are. If a person with a fixed mind-set is “not good at math,” then extra effort practicing math is a waste. There are people with a “growth” mind-set, on the other extreme, who assume that skills and abilities grow with practice and persistence. If a person with a growth mind-set gets a few math problems wrong, it is not because they are not good in mathematics; it is because they have not practiced enough. With persistence and practice, they believe they will master the technique over time.

Research skills assist graduate students to critically investigate issues and where appropriate, generate and evaluate relevant data, form and test ideas, theories and hypotheses, and successfully navigate their way through the sea of information that characterises the information age. The essence of this is to enable students/Corps members build strong and virile intellectual base and practically connect research frontiers to their own learning both academically and real life situations. Furthermore, politically, practical skills acquisition tends to promote personal and national greatness. At the personal level, Kauffman narrated his success story after adventuring into business skill acquisition, thus:

...why I decided to skip graduate-level business education in favor of teaching myself the principles of modern business practice and starting my own

³⁹ Ibid, p. P. 19

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jamilu Ibrahim Mukhtar

company. By avoiding business school, and spending my time actually building businesses instead, I learned a ton, and saved over \$150,000 in the process. Given what I wanted to accomplish, dedicating time to business skill acquisition on my own was better than business school in every respect.⁴⁰

Okorie and Ezeji (1988) pointed out that the behaviour of an individual in a society or the behaviour of a nation in a community of nations may be influenced by the skills and competencies possessed by that individual or nation. Socially, the acquisition of maximum skills helps a person to provide amusement, happiness, love, affection and enjoyment to other individuals as well as the entire nation at large.

Many of the VBE students have very low interest in the skills and competencies inherent in VBE courses. This has made them to develop poor attitudes towards the skills and competencies inherent in the VBE courses. Because of such negative attitudes, the personal interest and willingness to concentrate and acquire maximum level of skills expected of them are not there. One of such negative attitudes is failure to sit down and make wise use of their time and energy in acquiring maximum skills for self-development and fulfillment. This is because time is a critical matter in everybody's lives. Consequently, the VBE students fail to find time to engage themselves in practical exercises in courses such as in accounting, typewriting, word-processing, and shorthand to mention just but a few. When assignments and home work are given in any of the subjects listed above, it is often discovered that about ninety percent of the VBE students in the class did not find time and/or take time to do it. Such students fail to take their studies seriously as they often come late to the lesson and even when they know that they are terribly late, yet they would be listening to pop music/other music or talking to people with their phones. A careful

⁴⁰Kaufman, Josh, 2013,P.19

Methodological and Theoretical Issues on Skills Acquisition

examination shows that they put more efforts in playing with their mobile phones and in making calls than they do with their studies.⁴¹ In a nutshell, skills acquisition is an important aspect of the Nigerian economy as it can generate job opportunities and enhance national development.

Conclusion

The chapter discussed the methodological and theoretical issues on skills acquisition. In conclusion, skills acquisition in Nigeria cannot contribute to the development of the Nigeria educational and economic systems without deliberate effort at designing methodology and developing theories for understanding the problem as well as models for proper analysis and practices on skills acquisition. Lack of adequate methodological and theoretical literature on skills acquisition was the reason why the chapter emphasised on the nexus between skills acquisition and entrepreneurship. Also, efforts should be geared towards achieving desired results through entrenching procedures for effective teaching and learning, encouraging students/Corps members and motivating their teachers. Finally, it is suggesting further studies in areas related to methodology and theories of skills acquisition, but the focus should be more on the feasibility for developing indigenous theories and methods on skills acquisition in Nigeria.

⁴¹ Udo, Magnus, 2015

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jamilu Ibrahim Mukhtar

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THE NYSC AND SAED

Anas Lawal

2

The Role of NYSC in Human Capacity Development in Nigeria Since 1973

Anas Lawal

Introduction

Over the years, the public and private sectors have come up with new policies in order to address some contemporary challenges. The greatest service a government or organisation can render to humanity is the building of their capacity towards development as society's development rests on this. It is in recognizing this that, the member countries of the United Nations adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 and later in 2015 the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) was introduced. Nigeria is not an exception to this task as the country strives to enhance the development of its human capital.

The Role of NYSC in Human Capacity Development in Nigeria Since 1973

Among the many institutions/agencies of the Nigerian government that are championing the cause of human capacity development is the National Youth Service corps (NYSC). NYSC is spearheading the human capacity development in Nigeria through the training of energetic, dynamic, educated and professional youths annually. It is against this background that this paper tends to critically study the role of the NYSC in developing human capacity in Nigeria, highlights its major challenges and prospects.

Conceptual Clarification

The United Nation Development Program (UNDP) defines human capacity development as the “process through which individuals, organisations and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development and achieve their own objectives.”¹ At another level, the Organisation of Economic Cooperation (OECD) defines capital development as the processes where by people, organisations and societies as a whole release, strengthen and create, adapt and maintain capacity over time.² Capacity building and development involve sound formal education at all levels and the support of non-formal education. The equipping of individuals with skills, training and access to information and the knowledge that would enable them perform effectively, organisational development and management of relations between the sector and others, public and private and the community legal frame work.³

The Contribution of NYSC towards Human Capacity Development

Since its inception in 1973 the NYSC has immensely contributed to human capital development in Nigeria both on the part of the corps

¹ B.S Pollyn, et al “Human Capacity Building and Sustainable Development in Nigeria” *Best International Journal* vol.3, no2, 2016, pp65-70, obtained from www.researchgate.com

² Pollyn, B.S et al “Human Capacity..”

³ Pollyn, B.S et al “Human Capacity..”

THE NYSC AND SAED

Anas Lawal

members and the larger Nigerian society. The positive impact of the NYSC is felt in areas like: education, health care, employment creation and poverty reduction which are the yard stick for measuring human development indicators.

Education

Education is an indispensable tool to human capital/capacity development and is one of the criteria for calculating human development capacity of a nation. Nigeria's literacy ranking contributed to her low performance in human development indicators particularly on vocational and leadership training. Nevertheless, without the NYSC the story would have been worrisome and disturbing as the scheme has become an indispensable player in educating Nigerian youths and adults across the country.

The NYSC has been another "school" after universities and polytechnics. The orientation program is designed in a way to orient and give the youths a new set of wide range educational attainment not obtainable in their various institutions of learning. There are series of lectures on administration, management, ideals, national values, history and culture given at the orientation camp. For example the STEM students – science, technology, engineering and mathematics- are exposed to historical and cultural studies, something relatively new to them, while the perception and horizon of those in the social sciences and humanities are widened. The various lectures and orientations from traditional rulers, administrators, and institutions in a new environment/state is nothing less than new school for the youths. Confessing this, a corps member explained that:

NYSC exposed me to know people of different culture, understand other people belief and way of life and fortunately I socialize with them and we understood each other. Also during my service as a corps member, I learned many things which help me to develop/grow as

The Role of NYSC in Human Capacity Development in Nigeria Since 1973

a person and most importantly I learned and understood to tolerate other people with different cultural traits.⁴

These lectures and sensitisation revolve around character building, leadership, management, planning and national values by various institutions such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), ICPC, Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM), Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN), UNICEF, Red Cross, Servicom, Nigerian Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Department of State Services (DSS), the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development program (SAED), Religious activities by Muslim Coppers Association of Nigerian (MCAN) and the Nigerian Christian Corps Fellowship (NCCF), National Association of Catholic Corps (NACC), security and survival tips, history of the various host communities by traditional rulers etc. All these are geared towards molding the minds of the youths and inculcating in them national values of the Nigerian state which further helps refine their minds.⁵

Apart from physical training, the camp is also an avenue for enhancing socialisation, awareness and national consciousness through the various sports such as football, handball, basketball, volleyball, race, language classes, social activities, the carnival, sports, drama, pageantry, drills, dance and singing competitions. These give the corps members the opportunity to interact and socialise with other Nigerian youths from different family/ethnic and religious backgrounds, helping to create a kind of national consciousness.

⁴Hamza N, 2018 batch “B” Stream one Copper, Posted to Rivers State from Kaduna, interviewed 6, 10, 2020

⁵Obadare, E “Statism, Youth and Civic imagination: A Critical Study of the NYSC Program in Nigeria” p. 18

THE NYSC AND SAED

Anas Lawal

Corps members are subjected to daily military (army) physical training such as morning jogging, drills, martial arts, leadership training principles and techniques of fire fighting and prevention, first aid, road walk, rock climbing, mapping among others. According to the NYSC orientation manual, the various physical activities, drills, martial arts and man-o-war activities are meant to build up sound mind in sound body by providing training in self-defense and produce responsible citizenry.⁶ Most often, these trainings are rigid and stern. The regimentation is so intense that the military will always ensure that the Corps members are obedient and disciplined

The overall impact of the orientation course, especially the interaction with the army helps to transform the corps members into formidable youths by inculcating in them the lofty ideals of leadership administrative skills, endurance, integrity, health, strength, morals, *esprit de corps*, honesty, confidence, dedication, diligence, team work, discipline, patriotism, culture, hard-work, initiative and adaptability, tactical and technical proficiency the spirit of national unity, humility, selfless sacrifice to humanity, respect for national values and national symbols, appreciating the immense sacrifice of the military in defending the territorial integrity of the nation, attracting them to pursuing career in the military, clearing misconception about the military, and reducing cultural and religious barriers which tended to hinder aspiration for a career in the military⁷⁸

Exposing the Nigerian Youths to the practical aspects of leadership and administration is also a credit that the NYSC deserves, from the camp the NYSC divides the corps members into platoons and establish what it calls “leaders in peers” with platoon leaders among the corps

⁶ See the 2018Batch “B” Stream I Orientation/service Guide, p-12

⁷ Samson, O.T et al “A Critical Discourse Analysis of Soldiers-Corps Members conversation on NYSC Camp” KADA Journal of Historical Studies of Liberal Arts, Kaduna March, 2014, p-38-44

⁸ National Youth Service Act, Section 1, Article 3, Cap. 84 2004.

The Role of NYSC in Human Capacity Development in Nigeria Since 1973

members. From the orientation camp the program is designed in a way to harness maximally their various skills and potentials during deployment to the place of primary assignments. For example, a medical student graduate would be posted to the camp clinic to render medical services to colleagues, while the Mass Communications graduates also have the opportunity to practice at the camp Orientation Broadcasting Service (OBS).

During elections the corps members also serve as INEC ad-hoc staff as presiding officers in polling units and voting points as the case may be. This indeed enhanced their practical leadership skills and the capacity for development. Underscoring this point Arubayi observed thus “It is a whole personality development frame work that improves protection, physical, financial, social, inter-personal, emotional, mental and environmental wellbeing”⁹

The nature of posting of corps members based on their fields of study facilitates their capacity building in legal, medical, media, and educational fields through practically carrying out what they studied. This has enhanced their capacity development as the posting letter demands that corps members should be regarded and treated as employees in their respective places of primary assignment in hospitals, clinics, dispensaries, media houses, legal offices, schools etc. Their CDS follows the same pattern as they are carefully assigned to CDS group relevant to their fields in order to enhance their capacity development. For example, those who study law are assigned CDS Legal Aid, CDS group, ICPC EFCC etc. that help the less privilege in the courts; medical students engaged in HIV/AIDS sensitization and other medical related community development services, the history students are assign to Culture and Tourism CDS Group which enhanced their

⁹Arubayi, D.O “Youth Development: Understanding the Contribution of the National Youth Service Corps to Nigerian National Development” p87

THE NYSC AND SAED

Anas Lawal

knowledge. The one year service helps to enhance capacity development.

The founding father of the scheme, former head of state General Yakubu Gowon (retired) reiterated that:

The idea of a service corps for youths is quite unexceptionable... certainly no right thinking and patriotic persons, will query the need for Nigeria to inculcate; as a matter of deliberate public policy the qualities of leadership to her most educated and enlighten youths from among whose rank leaders in all walks of life are recruited¹⁰

Apart from the training of the youths and developing their human capacity development, the NYSC also attains greater height in developing the human capital of the larger population in many other educational aspects.

More than 75% of the corps members are posted to schools as teachers in both rural and urban areas of Nigeria; they serve in both private and public schools from elementary, primary, secondary and tertiary levels. There is hardly any school without a corps member to the extent that they have become an indispensable part of the educational sector in Nigeria. In this regard the NYSC has facilitated education of the Nigerian child immeasurably since its inception as millions of youths who went through the scheme taught millions of students nationwide. In the same manner, the corps members also develop their capacities as education officers and tutors through the teaching career as they are mostly and easily absorbed into the teaching profession after service

¹⁰ Lot, C. "The Imperative of Youth Participation in Nation Building" in *NYSC News: A Journal of NYSC Directorate Headquarters*, 2020, 55

The Role of NYSC in Human Capacity Development in Nigeria Since 1973

without most difficult because of the prerequisite teaching skills acquired simultaneously while serving.¹¹ Thus;

NYSC promotes leadership training and capacity building through voluntary services rendered by every corps members at Community Development Services.¹²

Mass literacy is another area the NYSC combats illiteracy among Nigerian youths and adults. This is organised mostly through Community Development Service. A special programme is designated for this purpose where youths embark on educating adults once every week apart from their primary assignment as part of their community development service. Through this, millions of Nigerians attain basic literacy of reading and writing.

The NYSC model school is another aspect where the Scheme facilitates the education of many communities as there are some NYSC model Primary Schools in the community hosting some orientation camps to enable kids from those communities attend first class school free of charge. Apart from this, there is the creation of mass awareness through the various CDS activities as HIV/AIDS sensitisation, anti-corruption campaign, Road Safety, and other lofty national values. The founding father of the scheme, Gen. Yakubu Gowon embraced this while assessing the contributions of the scheme so far.¹³

In similar vein, as part of its annual Legal Officers Workshop, the NYSC in 2020 organized a work shop with the theme “Building Capacity for optimum Performance” to train legal officers in order to enhance their performance. According the NYSC DG, Brigadier General Shuaibu “The

¹¹ Bashir S, a Bauchi indigene served at Kaduna 2019 Batch “B”, interviewed 5th, Oct 2020. She believes that the scheme helps her in acquiring working experience as teacher in her place of primary assignment.

¹² Hallirulldako, Served in 2017, Taraba state, interviewed 3rd, Oct, 2020.

¹³ Lot, C “The Imperative of Youths participation in Nation Building: The NYSC Experience” in *NYSC News*: p33.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Anas Lawal

Legal Officers' Workshop is an annual event aimed at enhancing staff competence for great productivity"¹⁴

Health Care

In the part of health care, the NYSC has contributed a lot in sensitising the populace through public lectures and mass awareness on the dangers of multiple diseases and health risks. These sensitisation lectures border on hygiene, HIV/AIDs, other communicable diseases such as hepatitis, toilet infection, sexually transmittable diseases and the latest Covid-19.

There are various CDS group contributions especially The Medical CDS Group that organises medical outreach to the host communities and IDPs to treat people of various treatable diseases within their capability. Some other groups also organize Health/hygienic weeks for cleaning and sanitising streets or visiting wards in hospitals, dispensaries or public toilets to combat open defecation which has tremendous health risk. In 2020 the scheme provided free basic health care services to IDPs in Maiduguri with free consultations, drugs, tests, scanning and therapy. Recognizing this, the Borno State Deputy Governor expressed his happiness and satisfaction thus:

Besides the scheme's mandate to promote national unity and integration, the NYSC through community development service facilitates national development services and facilitates national development in all sectors of the economy"¹⁵

Some corps members also provide facilities and equipment through their Individual CDS projects to contribute to the health care and betterment of their host communities. A corps member, Makwin Peter Makut constructed toilets in Sunsuma village in the outskirts of

¹⁴ "NYSC Trains Legal Officers for Enhanced Performance" *NYSC News.....*

¹⁵ Sada, A "NYSC Borno provides Free Medicare at IDP Camp"

The Role of NYSC in Human Capacity Development in Nigeria Since 1973

Damaturu, Yobe State and renovated four other toilets at Gwangie Nwaje Village as his personal CDS in order to combat environmental hazards which could cause infection and the outbreak of other airborne diseases. Both the village head and the representative of the Yobe State commissioner of health expressed profound gratitude to the NYSC in general and the corps member in particular for this gesture.¹⁶ There is also the Health initiative for Rural Dwellers (HIRD) a health outreach programme rolled out by the NYSC in all the states of the Federation where medical outreach is targeted at a rural community for a week long medicare.

Skills Acquisition AND Poverty Eradication

The NYSC also has tremendous contribution to the capacity development of the corps members. From the camp the NYSC sponsor a series of lectures on economics and management to be delivered to the corps members by various organisations of different professional bodies such as the Institute of Chartered Accountants off Nigeria (ICAN), Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM) amongst others. These lectures prepare them to join these professional bodies mostly on discounted rates. Most corps also get to develop entrepreneurial skills through these lectures and the entrepreneurship training in camp. A study of young entrepreneurs in Anambra uncovers that many young entrepreneurs agreed that their mentorship was through the NYSC vocational training.¹⁷

As a way to enhance the vocational and entrepreneurial potentials of corps members, the NYSC subject them to various skill acquisition training to curb the menace of unemployment and underemployment

¹⁶ "Corps member constructs toilet in Yobe state" 49

¹⁷Nwouso, M " Youth Entrepreneurship Among University Graduates in Anambra State" Phd Dissertation, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Walden University, 2019 166

THE NYSC AND SAED

Anas Lawal

in Nigeria,¹⁸ the NYSC's SAED was created by the NYSC Directorate in 2012. The aim was to develop and enhance self-reliance by engaging facilitators to introduce various programs such as education, cosmetology, shoe making, beautification, culture and tourism, photography, food processing and preservation, power and energy, detergents making, ICT, solar and satellite installation, agro allied, hair dressing and barbing, design, tailoring, etc during the Orientation Course programme.

The facilitators also extend this training to corps members willing to further any of these trainings after the orientation course. In many NYSC orientation camps within the ten days of the SAED introductory program, most Corps members proved promising as they even have a fair presentation of what they learn so far. Other past Corps members that make it through the SAED program are also invited to the camp to give inspiring speeches and testimonies to serving corps members. In 2012 Batch "B" more than 45,000 Corps member were trained, according to a report in *Thisday* as of February 2019 more than 971, 207 corps members had been trained and about 7000 thousand of them established one business or the other, some 1600 have become full time entrepreneurs with at least ten employees under them.¹⁹ Muhammad Bello an ex-corps member serving in Kaduna contested and won 10, 000 naira during a camp SAED tailoring completion. He is now a professional tailor and does not bother to seek for government job.²⁰

¹⁸ For poverty, unemployment and underemployment among the Nigerian youths see Akutson, S and Ishaku, J, "The Need for entrepreneurship Education In Our Tertiary Institutions in the 21st Century: An economic and Religious Perspective" in *Kaduna Journal of Historical Society*, vol. 8, 2016, pp351-359.

¹⁹ This Day, 6th February 2019.

²⁰ Muhammad Bello Abdussalam, an ex-copper 2019 batch "B" stream I, interviewed 2, October, 2020.

The Role of NYSC in Human Capacity Development in Nigeria Since 1973

This goes a long way in creating self-reliance and self-employment to thousands of youths especially now that Nigeria is facing a high rate of unemployment and poverty. It also guides them to know some of the intricacies of most Nigerian economic sectors as they are being required to be treated as member of staff in their various places of primary assignment. For example an ex-corps member who is now in to glass and aluminum making business conceded that:

I attended SAED program in aluminum fabrication where I acquired the skills to make aluminum and glass windows and doors. I think the SAED program is indeed very good, thus it enable youth to learn skill acquisition to rely on after their service so as to not just rely on getting white collar job/government job, they can make use of what they acquire and still maintain and depend on it as means of their lively hood.²¹

Another corps member Jacob also shares his experience thus:

NYSC as a scheme has sold to me the interest of entrepreneurship during my service year. Prior to my service, I have always dreamt of a civil service job but today, NYSC has sold me a new idea/mind set through SAED.²²

As the corps members are posted to more distant areas other than their home states to serve in various places and being paid allowances, out of sheer necessity they are introduced to rudiments of financial discipline and management that surely help them to avoid recklessness and wastages. Most of them accepted that it is through the NYSC that they learnt to develop a budget and live within their income. Some corps members also invest their little savings in small scale enterprises.

²¹Hamza Muhammad, an indigene of Kaduna camped at Obubura camp, Cross Rivers, 218 Batch “B” Stream I, interviewed 6th, Oct 2019

²²Jacob John, a Kaduna indigene served at Nasarawa State 2018 batch “B” Stream I.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Anas Lawal

Others save to start up a business after the NYSC. A study by Mike Nwosu on young graduate entrepreneurs in Anambra shows that most of them save their meager NYSC monthly allowances to start up businesses.²³ According to Blessing Bulus, another ex-corps member who is now a promising model, she commented that:

It exposes me to challenges in life and how to manage life even on low budget... during SAED program I keyed into cosmetology and shoe making; it's a very good idea saving one the stress of buying something that he can make himself giving how things are now²⁴

Outreach Programmes

The corps members also make various outreaches in building the capacity of people in their host communities through programs that alleviate poverty and create employment through teaching them basic skills to produce goods of economic value. For instance, a corps member, Chukumeka Chinonye Cynthia, in collaboration with the Kebbi State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development conducted skill training for less privileged women on how to produce liquid soap, Vaseline, beads, perfumes and Izal, all aimed at providing them with skills, capital and source of lively hood²⁵

In similar vein a corps member, Precious Iwuanyawu, constructed and donated a Biogas cooker to three poor families in Katsina's Kukar Gesa community as part of his personal CDS. Precious stressed that "she embarked on the project to alleviate the stress and suffering they were passing through to prepare meals and combat the hazard associated with firewood smoke that poor families depend on to prepare meals."

²³Nwouso, M " Youth Entrepreneurship Among University Graduates in Anambra State" p116

²⁴ Blessing Bulus, a 2018 corps Batch "B" corps member, an indigene of Adamawa that served at Abuja. Interviewed 6th, October, 2020.

²⁵Idris, H.D "Corps Member conducts skills training for the less privileged"
NYSC_NEWS.... P-51

The Role of NYSC in Human Capacity Development in Nigeria Since 1973

Precious also trained some students and members of the community on how to construct Biogas using local materials like cow dung, containers and pipes obtainable in their environment, hence teaching them a skill that can set them free from poverty.²⁶

The NYSC and the SDG

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) is the extended version of the Millennia Development Goal (MDGs) earlier started in 2000 by the United Nations. The SDGs is an adopted international frame work in 2015 by the United Nations' development program that sets to achieve 17 strides targeted to be achieved by 2030. It is adopted by UN member states as a universal call for action to end poverty, promote quality education, good health and social wellbeing, gender equality, provision of clean water and sanitation, combating hunger, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, reduce inequality, promotion of industry, innovation and infrastructure, responsible consumption and production, climate action, protection life below water and life on land, peace Justice and strong institutions, protection of the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.²⁷ In Nigeria, the NYSC, given its dynamic nature and presence in every community, is the most functional Nigerian institution as far as the SDGs is concerned.

The NYSC has been facilitating the implementation of the SDGs by dedicating a special CDS group of corps members in each Nigerian Local Government Area specially trained to achieve that purpose. During the week of the 75th UN General Assembly in 2020, the Nigerian president while setting Nigeria's target for the next decade in fighting poverty, combating illicit financial flows and enduring economic recovery amid Covid-19, recognised the enviable role the NYSC has

²⁶ Alex, O “Corps Member constructs Biogas cooker for families in Katsina” NYSC-News 42

²⁷ www.undp.advocate.org

THE NYSC AND SAED

Anas Lawal

been playing and would continue to play in the implementation of the SDGs programmes in Nigeria. In his own words, the president stresses that:

Our National Assembly has established committees on Sustainable Development Goals. The National Youth Service Corps is also ensuring that Nigerian graduates actively participates in SDGs implementation processes by serving as SDGs champions at the grass root²⁸

The Olowo of Owo, Oba Ajibade shared this view where he acknowledged the contribution of the corps members as thus:

Corps members are doing well in the various sectors of the economy they are posted to. In the health care service, they are complementing in the primary health care while those that are posted to education and healthcare (are also tremulously impacting these sectors)²⁹

The Challenges of NYSC towards Human Development in Nigeria

Sometimes because of the dearth of teachers in many Nigerian primary and secondary institutions, most corps members are required to teach more subjects in schools. This indeed hinders their capability to deliver and educate the younger ones and this affects human capital development.

In some cases, security challenges and issues of accommodation in the places of primary assignment thereby compelling them to be posted out of such communities. They also tend to create a gap in their PPA which negatively affects the performance of the scheme in human capacity development.

²⁸ "SDGs: FG to mobilize NYSC Members to champion implementation at grass roots" *NYSC News 07*

²⁹ Bankole, S"NYSC, Indispensable tool for National development- Ondo monarch" *NYC News.....p41*

The Role of NYSC in Human Capacity Development in Nigeria Since 1973

The rejection and underutilisation of corps members have greatly reduced their morale and negatively affected their commitment to human capacity development. The Owolo of Owo, His imperial majesty Oba Ajibade Gbadegesin Ogunoye lamented thus:

One of the worrisome and unpleasant attitudes of corps employers is the rejection of corps members' services. By doing so, you are indirectly telling them they are not welcome in your community which will definitely dampen their moral”³⁰

Prospects

Corps members should be given the chance to teach especially in their area of specialization, where possible. This will make them to be more functional and will help to develop their capacity. The perennial problems like lack of accommodation and insecurity have served to discourage corps members and they need to be addressed. Additionally, all establishments rejecting corps members for unjust cause should be called to order or sanctioned by government.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the concept of human capacity development, its centrality to nation building and the various roles the NYSC has been playing to the success and achievement of Nigeria economy through education, health care, entrepreneurship development, poverty eradication among others. The chapter also highlighted some of the issues affecting effective performance of the corps members. In spite of these issues, NYSC is the most important contributor to capacity building in Nigeria through the activities of corps members throughout the service year.

³⁰Bankole, S”NYSC, Indispensable tool for National development- Ondo monarch”p41

THE NYSC AND SAED

Anas Lawal

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THE NYSC AND SAED

Rabiatus Ibrahim Abdullahi

3

Institutional Framework and the Philosophy of NYSC Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) Initiative

Rabiatus Ibrahim Abdullahi

Introduction

The Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development Programme, popularly known as the SAED programme, is an innovation deployed by the Federal Government through the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) which is aimed at reducing youth unemployment to the barest minimum in Nigeria. This is because youth unemployment has become a serious obstacle to socio-economic development of this nation, and

Institutional Framework and the Philosophy of NYSC Skills Acquisition...

this, if not tackled could continue to spur social vices among the teeming youth in the country.

In recent times, the scourge of kidnapping, cybercrime, terrorism, armed robbery, prostitution, brain drain, among others has constituted a social problem among the Nigerian youth.¹ The increasing youth unemployment serves to sabotage democratic practice, continuous engagement in social vices, serious threat to economic development and other criminal activities. This argument follows the popular saying that “an idle mind is the devil workshop”, it is most important that any nation facing this problem will be bedevilled with the challenges of achieving societal growth, and sustainable development. This is because development cannot be enhanced in a country bedevilled by social vices and other criminal activities. Thus, it is important for a nation to have productive youths who possess the mindset of innovation, technology and creativity in the society. Therefore, the important roles of entrepreneurship and skills development as a panacea to the problem of high youth unemployment rate, poverty level and slow economic growth rate needs to be acknowledged.

This chapter therefore seeks to investigate the institutional framework and the philosophy of the NYSC Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) initiative. The work is divided into five subsections; section one focuses on conceptual clarification of terms, section two focuses on the Background to the establishment of the NYSC; section three discusses the evolution of SAED; its institutional framework and the motives behind its establishment, section four discusses the impact of the programme on the teeming Nigerian youth, section five examines the challenges and conclusion.

¹ O.A. Adewusi, and B.I. Adisa, “The Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development Programme among Corps Members in Ibadan, Nigeria”, *Zaria Sociological Journal*, 5(1): 2018, 248 – 260.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Rabiatus Ibrahim Abdullahi

Conceptual Clarification

SAED: SAED is Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development. It is an important part of the NYSC orientation activities, formulated by the government to curb the menace of unemployment among the youths. The SAED serves as a means to equip youth with skills that will make them employable, self reliant and also fit to employ others.

Institutional Framework: Institutional framework is the system of laws, regulation, procedures, stakeholders with their roles and norms that shape socio-economic activity and behaviour. It could also mean a set of several legal variables that constitute a key feature of a geographic area and determine the actions of institutions, companies and people in this location.² Institutional frameworks are issues directly relevant to the strategy employed in managing institutions.

Entrepreneurship: Timmons³ define Entrepreneurship as "the process of creating or seizing an opportunity and pursuing it regardless of the resources currently controlled". Drucker⁴ says "entrepreneurship is "risky" mainly because so few of the so-called entrepreneurs know what they are doing." He further proposed that 'entrepreneurship' is a practice. What this means is that entrepreneurship is not a state of being nor is it characterised by making plans that are not acted upon. Entrepreneurship begins with action and creation of new ideas. This idea may or may not become self-sustaining and in fact, may never earn significant revenues. But, when individuals create a new idea, they have entered the entrepreneurship paradigm.

²"Institutional Framework" <http://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/institutional-framework/14798>. accessed 8/3/2021,

³ J.A. Timmons, *New Venture Creation: Entrepreneurship for the 21st Century*. Burr Ridge: Irwin Press,1994).

⁴India Entrepreneurship Report, 2014 by Amway and Indicus Analytics, www.amwayentrepreneurshipreport.com

Institutional Framework and the Philosophy of NYSC Skills Acquisition...

Entrepreneurship, according to Onuoha⁵ is “the practice of starting new organisations or revitalising mature organisations, particularly new businesses generally in response to identified opportunities.” To an economist, an entrepreneur is one who brings resources, labor, materials, and other assets into combinations that make their value greater than before, and also one who introduces changes, innovations, and new order. To a psychologist, such a person is typically driven by certain forces- the need to obtain or attain something, to experiment, an entrepreneur appears as a threat, an aggressive competitor. Whereas to another businessman, the same entrepreneur may be an ally, a source of supply, a customer, or someone who creates wealth for others, as well as finds better ways to utilise resources, reduce waste, and produce jobs, others are dire to get.⁶

Entrepreneurship is the dynamic process of creating in ceremonial wealth. The wealth is created by individuals who assume the major risks in terms of equity, time and/ or career commitment or provide value for some product or services. The product or services may or may not be new but value must somehow be infused by the entrepreneur by receiving and locating necessary skills and resources.⁷ From the above definitions, Entrepreneurship can be summed up as nothing but the process of creating new idea with value, particularly responding to the opportunities available. It involves time, efforts and assumption of risk, with the expectation of receiving the rewards at the end. The reward can take any form; monetary or non-monetary (personal contentment).

Skill Acquisition: Skill Acquisition is the art of learning to do something in order to earn a living and to survive. There are various skills one can venture such as fine art, auto-mechanic, pottery, vulcanising among others. These skills are learnt for the purpose of

⁵G. Onuoha, “Entrepreneurship”, AIST International Journal Vol.10, 20-32.

⁶ K. Vesper, *New Venture Strategies*, “Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1980), pg. 2

⁷ R.C. Ronstadt, *Entrepreneurship*, (Dover, MA: Lord Publishing Co.,1984) pg. 28.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Rabiatus Ibrahim Abdullahi

earning a living. Skill acquisition can also be described as the ability to be trained on a particular task or function to become an expert in it. This has become a norm in the Nigerian society, as a consequence of the menace of unemployment that has constituted a problem to the teeming Nigerian youth of today.

Evolvement of SAED, Motives Behind its Establishment and Its Institutional Framework

Evolution of SAED

The SAED programme was established in 2012 with the sole mandate of contributing to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The programme is formulated with its activities which are done both in the orientation camp and during primary assignment. SAED is administered as a department under the NYSC structure and it is headed by a Director. These are some of the key initiatives instituted under the programme with the aim of ensuring that its objectives below are achieved:

- Sensitise and mobilise young graduatesmassively and generally for skill acquisition every year.
- Facilitate the training and mentoring of young graduates in skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development for self-reliance annually
- Promote public-private partnership for entrepreneurship development and self-reliance amongst Nigerian youths
- Promote documentation and sharing of best practices on youth empowerment in Nigeria
- Support evidence-driven advocacy efforts for favorable policies on youth empowerment in Nigeria
- Sensitisation and mobilisation of corps members for enrollment into the skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development program

Institutional Framework and the Philosophy of NYSC Skills Acquisition...

- Development of a standard curriculum for the in-camp skill acquisition exercise
- Identification of organisations at state level to provide training and mentoring in specific skills sets
- Attachment of the corps members to the various organisations for skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development
- On-going monitoring and supervision of trainee corps members
- Facilitate access to available funding opportunities.⁸

In terms of financing, the SAED programme has been able to secure partnership with public and private bodies that offer different types of funding assistance to Corps members. Some of these financing bodies include: Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Credit Direct Ltd, Bank of Industry, and Bank of Agriculture. In this regards, private institutions such as Credit Direct Ltd, through its Quick Fix Loan System, disbursed N629.016 million to 13,344 Corps Members. Seven (7) Corps members have also received 15 million as business loan disbursed under the Youth Entrepreneurship development Programme of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).⁹

Motives behind its Establishment

The enormous challenges bedeviling youths especially after their graduation and their dedicated service to their nation has become very alarming over the years, the NYSC was established with the mandate: among others, of empowering youths with sustainable skills that can aid them in surmounting the woes of the post-service year. Many Nigerian graduates of tertiary institutions with the hope of securing a meaningful white collar or salary-oriented jobs, (which they could not find) always encounter disappointing situation, depression and

⁸ "SAED" <http://nysclagos.com/saed.php> retrieved 28/09/2017.

⁹ T.T. Akande, "Youth Empowerment and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Nigeria". *The Journal of Nigerian Association of Teachers of Technology*, 7(3), 2011, 63 – 68.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Rabiatus Ibrahim Abdullahi

frustration. Hence the establishments of a SAED programme under the NYSC will help mitigate the effect of the long hunt for jobs and acute unemployment the country has grappled with overtime.

Recognising the need to compliment government's efforts at tackling the unemployment scourge and in line with its own objectives, the NYSC took a bold step of expanding its empowerment programme for Corps members by initiating the SAED programme. The scheme remains a prime government institution with structure and presence to tackle unemployment effectively. It has presence in the 774 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Nigeria and mobilises over 350,000 young graduates annually across the country.¹⁰

The SAED programme targets young graduates of tertiary institutions in Nigeria who have limited chances of getting employed after graduation. The programme focuses on empowering them with entrepreneurial skills and building their capacities in the twelve (12) key areas including; fashion, agriculture, ICT, education, power & energy, automobiles, film & photography, cosmetology, food processing/preservation, agro-allied, and much more that would transform these young graduates into sustainable change agents worldwide. The SAED programme also created a platform that will facilitate youth access to requisite skills and resources necessary for successful entrepreneurship as a means of job creation, improving food security and enhancing national development. The programme envisioned the development of a culture of self-reliance among our youth by equipping them with the necessary skills for sustainable job creation towards national development.¹¹

¹⁰"SAED" <http://nysclagos.com/saed.php> retrieved 28/09/2017.

¹¹"SAED" <http://nysclagos.com/saed.php> retrieved 28/09/2017.

Institutional Framework and the Philosophy of NYSC Skills Acquisition...

Institutional Framework of SAED

As mentioned earlier, the programme is a nationwide initiative targeted at young Nigerian graduates mobilised and deployed during a one-year mandatory service. The programme is designed to be implemented within the framework of the orientation course and the primary assignment period of the service year. The in-camp component of the program focuses largely on creating the entrepreneurial and self-reliant spirit, helping corps members explore various income generation opportunities available with a view to identifying the one that best suits their personality/circumstances and professional training, hands-on training as well as development of business plans. The post-camp component provides the platform for a more rigorous training of interested corps members with a view to equipping them with the necessary technical/vocational skills as well as business competencies needed to start-up businesses; this is carried out by various partner organisations/enterprises with cognate competence and experience in the identified skill areas. Mentoring and linkages with available funding opportunities and access to the market are key features of the post-camp component of the programme. For the purpose of the programme, NYSC collaborates with key players in the public and private sectors as partners, both at national, international and state levels to ensure that the various organisational competencies are appropriately influenced.¹²

Regarding the Institutional framework of SAED, Every organisation has its own unique institutional framework. The NYSC SAED is a programme under the scheme which possesses its own unique features. Even though it is under the NYSC scheme, it runs its affairs independently and aims to deliver on its mandate of job creation for the youths and mitigating the effect of unemployment among the youth

¹²“2019-2024 Strategic framework for the Skill Acquisition and Development Programme (SAED) Programme of the National Youth Service Corps”
www.nyscsaed.com Accessed 14/3/21.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Rabiatu Ibrahim Abdullahi

especially after service year. The SAED program is managed by a department already created within the NYSC at the DHQ level with coordinating units at the state level.¹³The SAED department has three divisions, namely:

- Partnership Division
- Empowerment Division
- Programmes Division

The Partnership Development Division is responsible for building collaboration frameworks across the intervention focus areas and securing competent partners to deliver identified interventions. While the Programme development department is responsible for driving the execution of internal interventions, supporting the execution of partner interventions and monitoring and evaluation of the program activities to track efficiency and impact.

The Programme Development Division is also supported by an expert committee of development partners with proven track record in the public and private sectors to provide technical advisory support to the program at national and state level. This group would provide technical, financial and political support to the programme and serve as a buffer for fine-tuning and driving program strategies. Furthermore, their respective organisational capacities and goodwill would be leveraged for successful implementation of the programme. Some organisations by virtue of their work and help facilitate access to places and opportunities that ordinarily may be beyond the reach of the NYSC.¹⁴

¹³“2019-2024 Strategic framework for the Skill Acquisition and Development Programme (SAED) Programme of the National Youth Service Corps”

www.nyscsaed.com Accessed 14/3/21.

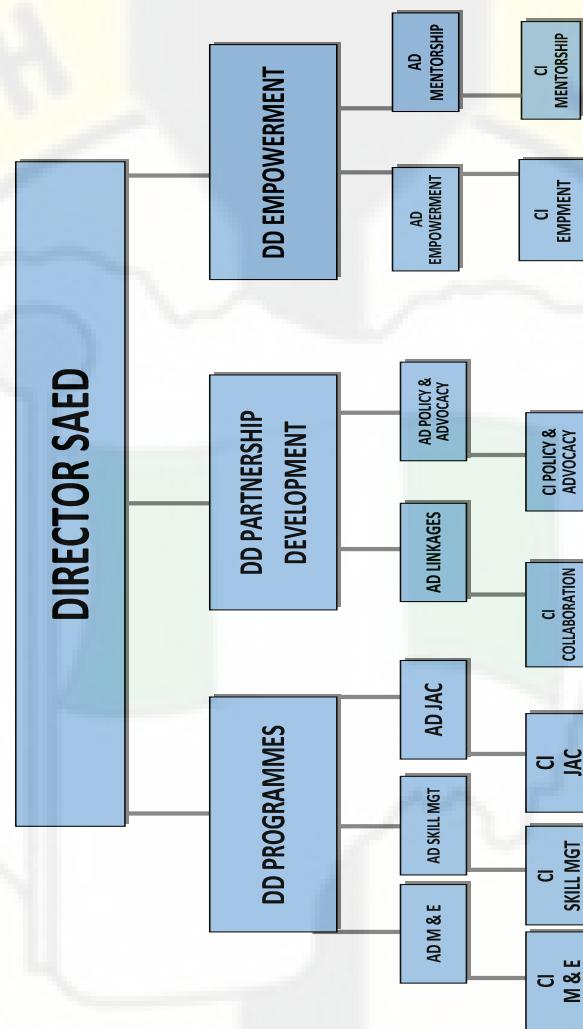
¹⁴“2019-2024 Strategic framework for the Skill Acquisition and Development Programme (SAED) Programme of the National Youth Service Corps”

www.nyscsaed.com Accessed 14/3/21.

Institutional Framework and the Philosophy of NYSC Skills Acquisition...

Below is the Organogram of the National Programme Office and the state programme office. These offices are structured hierarchically from top to bottom and it is the chain that determines how SAED carry out their duties accordingly.

Fig 1: Organogram of the National Programme Office

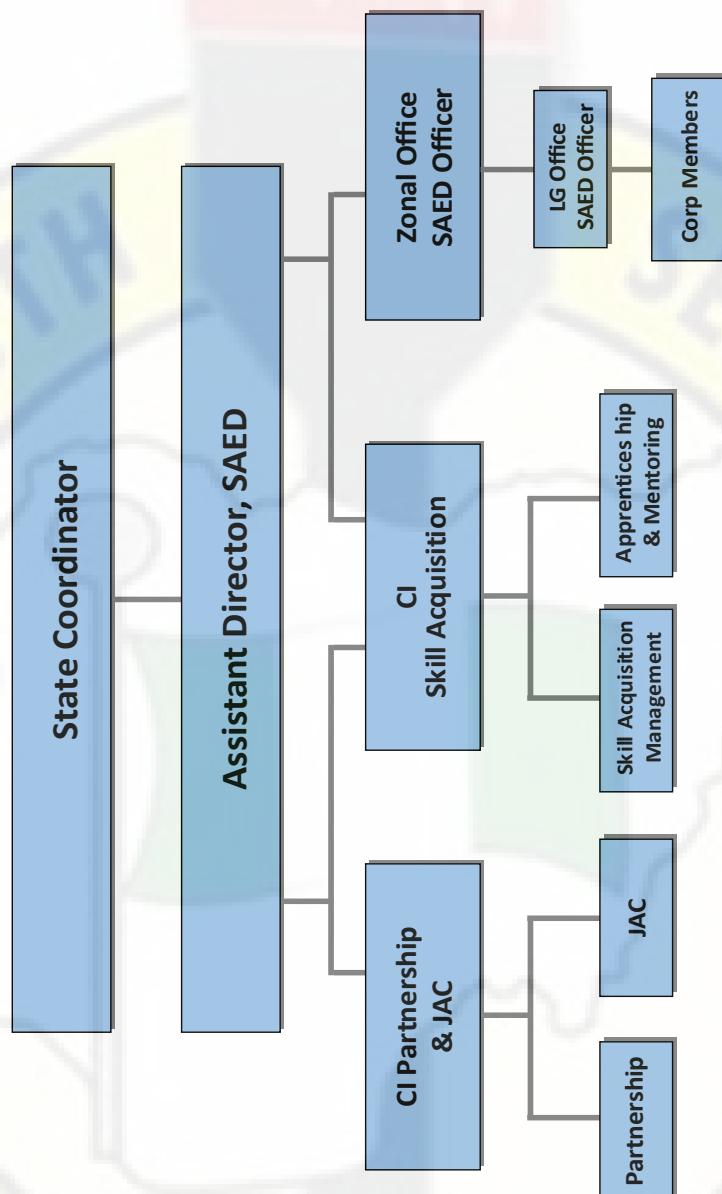


Source: NYSC SAED. www.nyscsaed.com

THE NYSC AND SAED

Rabiatu Ibrahim Abdullahi

Fig 2: Organogram of the State Programme Office



Source: NYSC SAED. www.nyscsaed.com

Institutional Framework and the Philosophy of NYSC Skills Acquisition...

Impact of SAED on the Nigerian Youths

Since the inception of the programme approximately 1,200,000 Corps Members have been sensitised and given empowerment message, while over 774,000 have completed post-camp training. In addition, one of the partners of the scheme, the Bank of Industry (BOI) has trained no fewer than 3,927 Corps Members under the BOI-NYSC Graduate Empowerment Fund. 1,077 of them have applied for loans to the sum of about N4 billion. So far, a total of N540.2million has been disbursed to 325 Corps Members, and they have all established their own business in different aspects of the SAED and have in turn employed an average of four persons to run their business.¹⁵

The program officially commenced in 2012 and has been implemented for 8 years with a reach of over 1.4 million graduates. The programme has created 961 businesses which in turn have an average of 4 employees each, creating a total of 3,844 jobs as at 2019. The programme is currently in all parts of the country (36 states and Federal Capital Territory) due to its partnership with the government at national and state levels. In addition, the programme has 20% of businesses with steadily growing sales and which has broken even from 2016-2019.¹⁶

This demonstrates capacity of the program to be sustained over the years to come as the programme received support from both private and public sectors. In addition, international development partners have also supported the programme with additional funds for training and credits to the young entrepreneurs. This demonstrates and boosts confidence in innovation and its potential for sustainability of the

¹⁵ E. Agu, and D. Ayogu, "Assessing the Prospects and Problems of Entrepreneurship Development in Nigeria", *International Journal of Business and Management Invention*, Vol. 3 No 10, 2015, 208 – 221.

¹⁶ G. Adejumo, "Indigenous Entrepreneurship Development in Nigeria: Characteristics, Problems and Prospects" *Ilorin Journal of Business Administration*, Vol 2, No. 1, 2000, 112-122.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Rabiatus Ibrahim Abdullahi

programme. The scheme also has a work plan to enable effective monitoring and evaluation using key performance indicators such as number of corps members enrolling and completing various skills acquisition and entrepreneurship programs in various states, number of business plans developed, classified by type, number of successful business plans disaggregated by type, number of stakeholder's meetings convened and number/type of stakeholders participating in stakeholders' meetings. Over time the results of this monitoring and evaluation has proven that our concept is implementable and scalable, and thus need for scale up.¹⁷

Challenges of the SAED Programme

Some of the challenges that have constituted an obstacle to the progress and a source of concern for the stakeholders of the programmes include the following:

Inadequate Resource Persons: This has become a major challenge right from the in-camp exercise where by the resource persons are been overburdened with numerous tasks that are beyond their capacities, as a consequence, the beneficiaries tend to be undertrained or get less than the required knowledge which is against the objective of the establishment of the SAED programme.

Difficulty in access to Loan Facilities: The post service engagements of these corps members which is supposed to be fruitful to them by providing loan facilities to embark on the actualisation of skills learnt during service year has become a major challenge. Most of them are not able to access loans from partner agencies, other government institutions and non-governmental organisations that provide these loans early enough or at the right time.

¹⁷ O.A. Adewusi, and B.I. Adisa, "The Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development Programme among Corps Members in Ibadan, Nigeria" *Zaria Sociological Journal*, Vol 5 No. 1 2018, 248 – 260.

Institutional Framework and the Philosophy of NYSC Skills Acquisition...

Lack of follow up with trained beneficiaries: Most times, the already trained beneficiaries tend to abandon the skills learnt during their orientation course as they venture into other fruitless exercises which will not contribute to their progress. There is the need for a follow up on the activities of these corps members in post-camp and even post-service.¹⁸

Discrepancy in Data for Evaluation: Since its inception in 2012, the SAED programme has empowered millions of youths directly and indirectly. However, there is discrepancy in data that are attainable as it affects the assessment of the viability of the scheme. This has implication for policy planning and implementation. The available data are mostly estimated data that do not reflect the reality. For instance, there is a need to identify the specific number of youths that have undergone the training, how the scheme has transformed their life and those that have indirectly benefitted from the programme through them. This way, any gap and challenges will be better identified and efforts channelled towards resolving them. Indeed, there is a need to have well-organized data to measure the impact of this policy and implementation.

Inadequate Data on Funding: Many of the beneficiaries are ill-equipped with the appropriate knowledge, especially on how to access funding from NYSC partner institutions. Even though there have been several partnerships between NYSC, local and international funding bodies, many youths are unable to access these funding facilities because they do not have adequate information about them. This has sometimes deprived the beneficiaries from taking advantage of these loans that were meant to finance their business initiatives.

¹⁸O.A. Adewusi, and B.I. Adisa, "The Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development Programme among Corps Members in Ibadan, Nigeria" Zaria Sociological Journal, Vol 5 No. 1 2018, 248 – 260.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Rabiatus Ibrahim Abdullahi

Inadequate Training Centers: Training centers particularly in remote areas are insufficient to accommodate the corps members during post-camp period. Despite the efforts by the SAED management to provide additional training equipment such as sewing machines, gas cookers, ovens, barbing clippers, dryers, steamers, tool kits of different vocations; for carpentry, automobile, electric, the training centers are still not enough for the youths interested in the programme annually.

Insufficient Training Materials: There are inadequate training materials for those who seek to learn in the post-orientation course training. More so, some trainers tend to hike the prices of training materials and practical tools during the orientation course because they are aware of the regimented nature of the camps. Therefore, corps members are sometimes forced to borrow from home or touch their stipends to pay for tools. Sometimes, tools that cost very little are sold at exorbitant prices by trainers because they understand limitations of Corps members within the orientation camp. This has sometimes deprived willing corps members who wish to take up specific skills to identify less expensive ones, thereby depriving them of those skills they have interest in. Also, trainers in the orientation camps sometimes tend to sell inferior tools that are not durable. Therefore, the corps members have to buy new tools after the orientation camps to pursue their chosen SAED sector.¹⁹

Conclusion

The SAED programme no doubt has built a viable institutional framework that has contributed to its successes overtime. This chapter examines the SAED programme through its structures, and how it has been able to organize several training platforms that have been of great help to the teeming Nigerian Youths. This study has been able to examine the establishment of the NYSC scheme itself and the initiative

¹⁹

Institutional Framework and the Philosophy of NYSC Skills Acquisition...

leading to the evolution of SAED programme in the year 2012. Although the programme despite its huge challenges have been successful in attending to the numerous needs of the unemployed Nigerian youths overtime as most of its beneficiaries have succeeded in establishing themselves especially in the post-service years.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Rabiatus Ibrahim Abdullahi

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NYSC AND SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

4

An Assessment of the Training Modules and Curriculum of SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

Introduction

The National Youth Service Corps was introduced by the military administration of General Yakubu Gowon in 1973. The then military Head of State established the Scheme as part of his "Three Rs" post-civil War policy of Re-construction, Re-habilitation, and Re-integration specifically to unite the country's different regions, in order to promote peace, love and tolerance among the various ethnic groups in the country after a devastating Civil War that threatened the unity of the country and almost dividing the country into two

An Assessment of the Training Modules and Curriculum of SAED

different sovereign States. The Scheme encourages the posting of Nigerian graduates below 30 years of age to a different region or State other than their own and undergo Orientation Course, preparatory to the mandatory one-year National service. After the orientation course, the Corps members are posted to various communities for their primary assignment.

The rate of unemployment among the youths after their service year is very high. At the end of the service year, these graduates join the labour market, searching for jobs that are scarce or non-existent, rendering them unemployed. To tackle the disturbing graduate unemployment, the NYSC introduced the SAED programme in 2012, designed to equip corps members with the requisite entrepreneurial skills for self-employment and job creation. The SAED programme is coordinated by a department in the scheme, headed by a Director on SGL 17. The initiative have been doing well in preparing and equipping young graduates with economic ideas and requisite to which they heavily rely on after post-service year.

A Director was appointed on the 9th March, 202 to head this department and administer's it activities. This initiative has been doing manifesting well in preparing and equipping our young graduates with economic ideas and requisite training to which they heavily rely on after post-service year.¹

It has been evidently proven that the answer to the challenge of unemployment in Nigeria is entrepreneurship. This is because entrepreneurship training enhances creativity in technical and vocational skills and inculcates in the individuals the abilities that are necessary for them to be self-reliant through technical education and

¹ Adamu Tahir, Civil Servant Kaduna, 67 years, Interviewed at Tudun Ilu, Kaduna, 09/02/2021

NYSC AND SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

rigorous training. One among other objectives of entrepreneurship training is to provide students with skills and motivations in order to enhance entrepreneurial endeavor in any enterprise of their choice.²

Economically, entrepreneurship brings together the factors of production; human, land, labour and capital to make available products for public development and consumption. It incorporates the willingness and ability of a person to explore and exploit investment opportunities, establish and manage successful business enterprise.³

Conceptual Clarification

In every literary work, there are certain concepts that need to be explained for a easy comprehension. Some of the terms frequently used in this research include NYSC, SAED, TRAINING, ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT, SENSITIZATION and SKILLS ACQUISITION.

NYSC: National Youth Service Corps is a mandatory one year national service in Nigeria for every Nigerian tertiary institution graduate who is not above thirty (30) years at the time of graduation at accredited tertiary institution within and outside the country.

SAED: Skills Acquisition and Enterpreneurship Development is a program initiated by Government and the NYSC Management in order to inject the ideal of self reliance among the young graduates that are undergoing the mandatory one year national service.

² National Youth Service Corps, "NYSC SAED Description of Programme Activities" Department of Skills Acquisition and Interpreneurship Development, October, 2016, pp 3.

³ Usman I. S. et al. "Students Participation in Enterpreneurship, Skills Acquisition Programmes in Adamawa State Polytechnic Yola, Nigeria", *Biodiversity International Journal*, Vol. 2, Issue 2, Pp 1. 201

An Assessment of the Training Modules and Curriculum of SAED

TRAINING: this implies teaching, or developing in oneself or others, any skills and knowledge or fitness that relate to specific useful competencies. Training has specific goals of improving one's capability, capacity, productivity and performance. It forms the core of apprenticeships and provides the backbone of content at institutes of technology (also known as technical colleges or polytechnics).⁴⁴

ENTREPRENEURSHIP: is the creation or extraction of value. Entrepreneurship is viewed as change, generally entails risk beyond what is normally encountered in starting a business, which may include other values that are simply economic. Entrepreneurship development is the process of adding to the stock of existing small, medium and big enterprises available to a country by creating and promoting many capable potential entrepreneurs who can successfully run innovative enterprises, nurture them to grow and sustain them, with a view to achieving broad socio-economic development goals.

SKILLS ACQUISITION: Acquisition of skills is a type of learning in which repetitive results in enduring changes is associated with an individual's capability to perform a specific task. With enough repetition, performance of the task eventually may become automatic, with little need for conscious oversight.⁵

SENSITIZATION: this is a non-associative learning process in which repeated administration of stimulus results is the associated with progressive amplification of a response. Sensitization often is characterised by an enhancement of response to a whole class of stimuli in addition to the one that is repeated.⁶

⁴ Job Training - Alaska Department of Worker and Workers Development.

⁵ S. Dynamics of Skill Acquisition: A Constraints-led Approach. C. Hampaign, I.L.: Human Kinetics, 2018 Pp8

⁶ Ji, R. R. Kohno, T etal. "Central Sensitization and LTP: Do Pain and Memory Share Similar Mechanisms? Trends in Neurosciences, 2003.

NYSC AND SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

Why the SAED Programme?

According to the population census of 2006, the Nigerian youths mostly graduates account for about 70 percent of Nigeria's population figures, which means that they are very important set of people that should not be taken for granted in the society. Nigeria's youth plays key role in the National Development efforts hence every government administration in Nigeria has to develop a clear policy framework to ensure that the enabling environment is created for them to maximally realize their creative and productive potentials. This is to complement the saying that:

“The future of humanity and of our planet lies in our hands. It lies also in the hands of today's younger generation who will pass the torch to future generations.”⁷

Appropriate strategies to mainstream youth concerns into the national development efforts need to be receiving priority attention in order to properly face up to the challenges thrown up by the unemployment with a clear commitment to human capital development with special emphasis on the vibrant youth.⁸

However, these young people face many challenges; such as high rate of poverty and unemployment, indiscipline, ignorance, inability to access vital information, and essential welfare services, which have made the youth lose hope in themselves. Some high levels of violence, crime and high risk of sexual behaviors of any age group are seen in the youth, leading many to label them as a source of the societal problem rather than its potentials. Reasonable number of

⁷ Federal Ministry of Youth and Sport, “Enhancing Youth Development and Participation in the Context of Sustainable Development”, Edition 2019, pp 5.

⁸ Federal Ministry of Youth and Sport, “Enhancing Youth Development and... 2019, Pp 12

An Assessment of the Training Modules and Curriculum of SAED

them that are fortunate to acquire education are battling with challenges like unemployment, indiscipline, poverty, among others. It became evident that the government has to do something to arrest such an unfortunate situation because leaving the situation unchecked means it will possibly get worse. Historically, various governments in Nigeria have, over the past three decades, evolved policies and programmes such as the creation of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and its skills acquisition programme, National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP), the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), Youth Enterprise With Innovation In Nigeria (YOUWIN), Small and Medium Scale Industries Equity Investment Scheme (SMIEIS), National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS), National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion (NOTAP), Raw Materials and Development Council (RMRDC) amongst others.⁹

Despite the above mentioned entrepreneurship development programmes, different authors, local and international statistically reports that there was never a time in Nigeria's history where youth unemployment is as serious and posing a great threat as now. Efforts to further widen the scope of entrepreneurship development saw the introduction of policies on entrepreneurship education into tertiary institutions by the Federal Government of Nigeria through the National Universities Commission (NUC).¹⁰

In 2006, the Federal Government oversee the inclusion of entrepreneurship education as a compulsory course for students in

⁹ Adedeji Oluwaseun and Isaiah Babatunde, "The Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development Programme among Corps Members in Ibadan, Nigeria". ResearchGate Publications, August, 2018, pp 2.

¹⁰ Adedeji Oluwaseun and Isaiah Babatunde, "The Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development.... Pp 3

NYSC AND SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

all universities. To corroborate this effort, the implementation of the SAED programme into the NYSC Scheme in 2012 by the President Yar'adua led administration was to orientate and introduce the youth to take alternative career options instead of seeking for white collar jobs, which are in limited supply.¹¹ The NYSC SAED program was created in regards to the deliberation of the government and other top officials aimed at addressing the challenges of unemployment. It is also aimed at debunking the view that the Scheme is merely a burden on the shoulders of government. It is equally aimed at instilling the spirit of self-reliance among the Corps members, with a clear intention of addressing Post Service unemployment and achieving the Scheme's objectives. This fact was clearly evident in the statement of the current Director General, when he was asked in an interview about his plan to enable the Scheme become self reliant, he said:

"You see, because we realised that many people see NYSC as a burden, the Management sat down immediately I came on board. We resolved that we must find ways to generate something and bring to the table. That is why we resuscitated our Ventures. We now have NYSC Bread and Table Water Company in Kubwa. Their products are everywhere in Kubwa. So, we want to see how we can replicate same in the states, so that during orientation exercises we can get those items from our production plants, and feed our Corps members in Camps."¹²

The goal of the NYSC Scheme includes the development of youths, especially graduates with sound mind to become result-oriented, major drivers towards the actualization of national cohesion, unity

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Brigadier Shuaibu, DG, "How We are Rebuilding NYSC for Youth Empowerment, Revenue Generation", *Economic Confidential*, May 17, 2020, Pp80 - 81

An Assessment of the Training Modules and Curriculum of SAED

and national coexistence. It is an exercise that nurtures the individual mindset and makes them bring out their best in serving the nation for the purpose of national development and nation building. The national Service develops good attributes among the youth while giving them a reasonable mentality and pride towards their country, which is an impetus towards achieving national integration. However, due to enormous challenges that include under-employment and unemployment confronting Nigeria, a lot of features have been added to the Scheme, which include Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) programmes in 2012. The aim of the programme is to encourage the acquisition of skills for the Nigerian graduate for self-reliance which is its core mandate.¹³ The program has since been used as a mechanism towards addressing the challenges of unemployment in Nigeria.¹⁴ The goals of the Scheme include creating awareness among young graduates who are Corps members for acquisition of basic skill training for entrepreneurship development. The SAED as an important department of the NYSC and headed by a Director and is made up of three (3) divisions namely: Programme, Partnership and Empowerment Divisions.

The department is saddled the responsibilities of:

- Giving orientation and training of over 200,000 Corps members to fully grasp the skills acquisition yearly.

¹³ Deeborm MB. Tambari and Daerego I. Taylor, "The Influence of National Youth Service Corps Entrepreneurship, Skills Acquisition Programmes on Youth Empowerment In Rivers State" *International Journals of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, Volume 7, Issue 6, June 2020, Pp 146 - 147

¹⁴ Oladeji O. Fatoki "The Skills Acquisition Programme and Youth Empowerment in Ondo State of Nigeria: An Empirical Study", *Global Journal of Human Social Science: A Arts & Humanities-Psychology*, Vol. 19, Issue 6, Version 1.0, 2019. Pp 109.

NYSC AND SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

- Assist in training and tutoring of 100,000 young graduates in skills acquisition and entrepreneurship development for self-reliance annually.
- Developing an entrepreneurship partnership aimed towards self-reliance of the youths.
- Providing new ways and methods on how best Nigerian youths' employment and empowerment programmes are implemented.
- Supporting evidence-driven funding programmes to formulate a policy that enhances Nigerian youths' employment and empowerment.
- Organising Orientation training programmes on the importance of Corps members enrolling into Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development programme.
- Developing of a standard curriculum for the in-camp skill acquisition exercise.
- Identification of relevant organizations at state level to provide training and mentorship in specific skills sets.
- Attaching the Corps members to the various organizations for skills acquisition and entrepreneurship development.
- On-going monitoring and supervision of trainee Corps members and Facilitating and fast racking access to available funding opportunities.¹⁵

The sole responsibility of SAED programme is to encourage Nigerians generally, and Nigerian youths in particular, to be highly involved in entrepreneurial activities thereby creating jobs not just for themselves but to employ others in the long run. Other objectives include enhancement of partnership between the

¹⁵ National Youth Service Corps, "NYSC SAED Description of Programme Activities"..... 2016, Pp 05.

An Assessment of the Training Modules and Curriculum of SAED

public and the private sector for the purpose of developing skill-based development for self-reliance among Nigerian youths and graduates. In order to reduce the rate of unemployment among Nigerian graduates roaming about on the street with certificates and qualifications without having a meaningful source of livelihood, the concept of entrepreneurial education (training) was introduced into tertiary institutions as entrepreneurship and vocational training in Nigeria.¹⁶ The SAED program is aimed at impacting positively on the lives of young people who are serving Corps members undergoing the compulsory one-year national service to the father land. The programme was structured mainly for Corps members to participate during the orientation course and throughout their one-year service (post-camp). It is expected that every Corps member learns a skill that is industrially based which can position them to become job creators rather than job hunters and hence reduce the number of unemployed graduates in the country.¹⁷

The department of SAED as mentioned earlier has three divisions. The department focuses its attention mainly on equipping the Corps members on different areas of their interest with specific professional technical/vocational training and skills on how to identify their skills based on their peculiar interests and realities.

The history of entrepreneurship training in the NYSC dates as far back as the commencement of the Scheme. The mandate of the Scheme towards achieving economic empowerment among Corps members is embedded in section 1, Sub-Section 3(d) of the NYSC

¹⁶ Usman IS. Waziri and Abdullahi A. Babayo, "Students Participation in Interpreneurship Skills acquisition Programmes in Adamawa State Polytechnic Yola, Nigeria", *Biodiversity International Journal, MedCrave Research gate, Volume 2, Issue 2, 2018, Pp 181.*

¹⁷ Muhammad Sani Yahaya, Civil Servant, 45years, Interviewed at his residence opposite NYSC Headquarter, Kinsasha Kaduna, 14/02/2021.

NYSC AND SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

Act.¹⁸ This division focuses more on developing the business/enterprise capacities in Corps members who by virtue of their undergraduate training have one way or the other acquired certain level of competencies in specific fields, and those Corps members who have undergone the skills acquisition training and have the full intention to broaden their possibilities of attaining self-reliance. It is at this level of the department that issues like feasibility studies, development of business plans, marketing strategies, product branding, product advertisement, financial management, access to funding opportunities, and legal franchising, among others are been vigorously and thoroughly discussed.¹⁹

Another important component of the above mentioned three divisions is the monitoring and evaluation unit whose sole responsibilities focus on effectiveness, managing and deliver on set project outcomes. The unit specifically provides every framework needed for the measurement of performance against set target, thereby identifying any form of deviation with the clear intention of correcting them as well as providing essential information on implementation for project improvement and decision making. For effectiveness and getting the best out of the M&E unit, a working system has to be outlined for the provision of a running plan to keep the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) as an integral part of the overall project implementation. With this therefore, there has been a standard structure with key positions for effective functions of the Monitor and Evaluation Unit. the structure serves as the starting point for the Monitoring and Evaluation functions. This ensures execution of the responsibilities within the context of project management

¹⁸ National Youth Service Corps, "NYSC SAED Description of Programme Activities"..... 2016, Pp 11.

¹⁹ Adedeji Oluwaseun and Isaiah Babatunde, "The Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship....2018, Pp 3.

An Assessment of the Training Modules and Curriculum of SAED

framework.²⁰ Other key aspects considered under the monitoring and evaluations include:

- Special training on the project for the personnel of the M&E
- Development of a performance framework based on the project strategic plan
- Costed Monitoring and Evaluation work plan
- Development of appropriate tools for data capture and reporting
- Procurement and installation of relevant softwares for data analysis & warehousing, and development of a data use plan, specifically, by providing a mechanism for tracking implementation and documentation of project activities.

The routine key indicators to be measured and evaluated include:

1. Number of Corps members enrolling and completing various skills acquisition and entrepreneurship programs across various states to be captured.
2. Number of business plans developed disaggregated by type
3. Number of successful business plans disaggregated by type
4. Number of stakeholders meetings convened
5. Number and type of stakeholders participating in stakeholders meetings.²¹

The Growth Sectors of the NYSC SAED Program

Capacity Building: This is a strategy that is basically associated with actions to improve organisational and the SAED project effectiveness. It is concerned with organisational capacity of the NYSC SAED Department to fulfill her role as the center piece of co-ordination and drivers of the project. Secondly, they equally focus on building the

²⁰ National Youth Service Corps, "NYSC SAED Description of Programme Activities"..... 2016, Pp 11 - 12.

²¹ National Youth Service Corps, "NYSC SAED Description of Programme Activities".....2016, Pp 11 - 12

NYSC AND SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

capacity of Corps members from employment seekers to employers of labour. The capacity building include sensitization and mobilisation of Corps members for enrolment into the SAED programme under the 12 sectors for training. The 12 different sectors play a vital role in contributing towards economic growth with each of this sectors having sub-sectors that the young graduates serving are expected to be trained, based on their area of interest.²² These sectors are:

1. **Agro -Allied:** This sector has sub-sectors that include fish farming, cow fattening, grass-cutter farming, livestock feed, Poultry Farming, Piggery, Rabbitry, Snails Farming, Beans Cultivation and Honey.
2. **Automobile:** This sector covers Auto Electrical, Spray Painting, Upholstery, Wheel Alignment and Balancing, Engines, and Air Conditioning.
3. **Culture & Tourism:** this sector covers Leather Works, Exterior Decoration, Beads, and Design.
4. **Cosmetology:** The sector comprises of Production of Cosmetics, Soaps, Detergents & Household Products, Hair Styling, and Laundry Services.
5. **Construction:** aluminium and Steel Works, Construction of public Toilet, and Electrical Installation.
6. **Education:** education cover areas such as Training, Day Care Centers, Driving School, Nursery and Primary School.
7. **Environment:** Plastering, Moldings, Ceilings, Screeds, Painting, Interior, Decoration, tiles, and Blocks, and Carpentry.
8. **Film & Photography:** P & P covers fields such as Editing, Location Manager, Photography, Researcher, Runner, Camera and Sign Operation.
9. **Food Processing/Preservation:** Catering, Cakes, Snacks, Wheat & Flour, Beverages & drinks.

²² Brig. Gen S. Ibrahim, "Selected Speeches and Strides of 18th NYSC Director-General" National Youth Service Corps, 2020, Pp 175.

An Assessment of the Training Modules and Curriculum of SAED

10. **Horticulture & Landscaping:** Compost Preparation, Horticulture, Plant Nursery, Orchards, Tree Planting.
11. **Information Communication Technology:** Hardware, Software, Programming, Repairs, Online Business, Business Center, Website, and GSM Repair.
12. **Power & Energy:** Generator Maintenance, Solar Energy Conversion, Inverter, Plumbing, Welding, and Oil and Gas.²³

SAED Training Sensitization

The SAED training and sensitization are conducted annually for Corps members with an approximate coverage of 200,000 Corps members across the 37 NYSC Orientation Camps. The sole objective of the said event is basically to increase awareness, while in the long run, it is to achieve positive behavioural change towards entrepreneurship and skills acquisition by Corps members. The sensitization is in the form of entrepreneurship motivational speech to encourage the development of entrepreneurship skills which usually hold for four (4) days, lasting two (2) to (3) hours each day with specific emphasis on SAED facts that include:²⁴

Overview of Entrepreneurship

Are You the Right Person to Start a Business?

What is business opportunity?

What is a business idea?

Identification of good business ideas

Conducting market research

Presentation of business idea

Generation of personal business idea

Analysis of personal business idea & and choosing the best one

²³ Participant's Workbook, "Starting My Own Business" Department of NYSC Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development, 2016, Pp 44

²⁴ National Youth Service Corps, "NYSC SAED Description of Programme Activities"..... 2016, Pp 17.

NYSC AND SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

Assessment of the environmental impact on planned business Personal
Sources of advice and assistance as an entrepreneur
Writing a bankable business plan
Choosing of a legal form of business: license and permit required
Drafting of marketing strategy and plan
Staffing, legal responsibilities and insurance
Costing of one goods and services (manufacture/retailer)
Financial planning
Required start-up capital
Business simulation game.²⁵

SAED TRAINING

One of the significant factors that determine the success of the SAED initiative is training. It provides the opportunity to enhance one's knowledge, attitudinal change, and acquisition of skills with tremendous improvement. Different categories of personnel are employed and invited annually including motivational speakers, master trainers, entrepreneurship colleges, other skills building training (web club etc.) SAED programme staff/managers, schedule officers/project supervisors all over the state and information technology experts. The service of the above mention experts is utilised during their fresher training across Orientation Camps all over the country to increase knowledge and improve skills at all levels. Each training is packaged for effectiveness and efficiency using relevant resources, in fact relevant resource personnel with outstanding experience are drawn yearly from different Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) as individual consultants and training facilitators. While selecting this trainers, certain criteria are considered before their services are employed, and these features include:

²⁵ National Youth Service Corps, "NYSC SAED Description of Programme Activities"..... 2016, Pp 17.

An Assessment of the Training Modules and Curriculum of SAED

1. Previous experience and exposure in training
2. Previous facilitation skills that could be improved upon
3. Skills in motivation, entrepreneurship and mobilisation events.
4. Involvement in the implementation of SAED programmes
5. Availability for the training
6. Must be interested, committed and share the passion of the project.²⁶

After the complete training session, a final micro training event is organised and conducted to determine the number of trainers available for the programme, and a team of master trainers is created to handle the future training. At this stage, technical assistance is equally sought from NGOs and other relevant individuals as part of the process of mentoring in training.²⁷

SAED Corps Members Training

At first, the Corps members are introduced to entrepreneurship training, those among them that indicate interest towards the programme are selected to participate in a more intensive skills acquisition training that lasts for only 7 days (1 week). At this stage of intensive skills acquisition training, each Corps member selected is expected to individually identify One (1) skills set on their own in their respective area of interest. Migration of Corps members from one skill programme to another is absolutely discouraged, and therefore, not allowed.

During the in-camp orientation programme, a comprehensive curriculum is organised by the NYSC SAED department in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and

²⁶ National Youth Service Corps, “*NYSC SAED Description of Programme Activities*”.....2016, Pp 19.

²⁷ National Youth Service Corps, “*NYSC SAED Description of Programme Activities*”.....2016, Pp 19.

NYSC AND SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

UNFPA among others. The course content of the well articulated curriculum developed by the NYSC SAED Department in partnership with other relevant international organisations and agencies covers the 12 sectors of the skills acquisition and entrepreneurship development programme, and they include; Agro Allied, Automobile, Beautification, Construction, Cosmetology, Culture & Tourism, Education, Environment, Film & Photography, Food Processing/Preservation, Information Communication Technology, and Power & Energy.

The training of Corps members is categorically divided into two different phases, namely In-Camp and Post-Camp Training, and this was confirmed by the Director General of the NYSC Scheme while commenting on the SAED programme he said:

“NYSC has a programme called ‘Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Training. The programme was launched in 2012 and we have trained more than 1.4 million ex-Corps members in this Skills acquisition training. “We have in-camp as well as post-camp training.”²⁸

In-Camp Training: at this stage, the focus of the project is centered on the creation of entrepreneurial skills and the awakening of the spirit of self reliant, by displaying different doors of opportunities for the Corps members to individually identify the most suitable and convenient one for themselves considering their personality, level of professional training, circumstances, capabilities, and environmental factors that frequently come into play while pursuing such goal. Similarly, another area worthy to be mentioned is the special attention given in the area of the development of marketable business plans to enable the Corps members attract

²⁸ Entrepreneurship: “NYSC Trained Over 1.4 Million Corps Members Since 2012 - DG”, *Nigerian Tribune*, February 18, 2020, Pp 93.

An Assessment of the Training Modules and Curriculum of SAED

fund from relevant financial institutions for start up after the completion of their training.²⁹

The Post-Camp Training: The post-camp training exercise is the most rigorous, thorough, and intensive training exercise for Corps members that previously indicated their interest in the various sectors of the SAED. At this stage, Corps members are equipped with technical and vocational skills with various business ideas to guarantee their competency in maintaining the business and withstanding every difficulty or challenges that might arise during their venture experience. The training of Corps members at this stage, is organised and conducted by SAED and NYSC various partner organisations or enterprises both private and public from national to state with records of outstanding performances, cognate competences, and experience in different area of entrepreneurship and skills acquisition. Same organisations offer mentoring and fund linkages as well as easy access to market.³⁰

It is important to note that at this stage, a special training is equally conducted by private and public organisations with unparalleled competence and comparative advantages like the NDE, NBTDI, ILO, SMEDAN, BOI, etc. This training is usually conducted for two weeks and it laps into the post camp curriculum. They train, coach, and mentor Corps members on how to start up and conduct their businesses, writing of business plan, and job creation rather than job seeking.³¹

²⁹ National Youth Service Corps, ‘‘NYSC SAED Description of Programme Activities’’.....2016, Pp 19.

³⁰ National Youth Service Corps, ‘‘NYSC SAED Description of Programme Activities’’.....2016, Pp 19.

³¹ Ibid

NYSC AND SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

The Corps members are absolutely doing well and following their training with keen interest, this is so because, some of the Corps members displayed their skills by making tremendous use of their acquired knowledge through SAED to produce different products needed during circumstances of need. The management of the Scheme through the Director General has nothing but praise to these Corps entrepreneurs for most appreciative innovation and performance when he commented:

"In terms of performance, our Corps members are doing exceptionally well in SAED. Some of them are into fish and snail farming, among others. Some of them are even working in our NYSC farms in Kebbi, (Saminaka) Kwali, and other parts of the country. Yet we need additional farmlands for the NYSC. But we have approached some of our State Governors, sequel to my address to them at one of their meetings of the Governor's Forum. We want to key into the Federal Government's Policy on local content on agric business. This is because we don't want to be a burden on government. Therefore, we must continue to look for ways to internally generate our revenue."³²

While still on the effect of SAED training on Corps members and its relevance. A Federal Road Safety Commander Rotimi Adeleye opined that:

"The Fabrication of machines and production of materials, such as hand sanitizers, face masks, and liquid soap, was enough evidence that the Corps members could take the country out of the economic mess in which it had found itself" "I have been to

³² Rotimi Adeleye, "Adopt NYSC Skills Acquisition Programme, FRSC Advises MDAs" Nigeria Tribune, May 25, 2020. Pp 76.

An Assessment of the Training Modules and Curriculum of SAED

orientation camps severally, and the seriousness with which the managers of the Scheme handle the SAED programme is enough for the government to expand its scope.”³³

It is evident that the SAED programme and training of Corps members has recorded a great success so far among the young graduates since its inception. Statistics shows that 1,132,409 Corps members have been sensitized, trained and impacted by the programme. About 971,272 have so far successfully completed both the in-camp and the post-camp training exercise in different sectors across the country while 12,061 are known to have successfully established different types of enterprises some of the successful beneficiaries include;³⁴

Table 4.1

| NAME | STATE CODE | SECTOR | PRODUCT/ ENTERPRISE | STATE/LOCATION |
|-------------------|--------------|-----------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Alozie C. Donald | JG/11B/885 | Plants | Plants/Greenfield Associates | Umuakuru Itu, Mbaise, Imo State |
| Ipinlaye A. Idowu | BO/11A/0082 | Fish Farming | Fingerlings | Majashan Ajipowu, Ondo State |
| Abu Salifu | FCT/09A/2245 | Cattle Rearing | Cattle | Ayingba-Ejule Jnct. Kogi |
| Ologunro Bolanle | KB/09C/0485 | Poultry Farming | Chickens | Aliero Quarters, K/Kebbi, Kebbi State |

³³ Rotimi Adeleye, “Adopt NYSC Skills Acquisition Programme, FRSC Advises MDAs” *Nigerian Tribune*,....2020 Pp 76.

³⁴ National Youth Service Corps, “40th Year Book: Anniversary Commemorative Edition” 2013, Pp 62 - 64.

NYSC AND SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

| | | | | |
|------------------------|-----|-----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| Christoper A. Esuga | --- | Poultry Farming | Finerlings | Lafia, Nasarawa State |
|------------------------|-----|-----------------|------------|-----------------------|

All said and done, the successful completion of the training is worthless if the trained Corps cannot attract a startup capital to explore the knowledge acquired during the intensive entrepreneurship and skills acquisition training by displaying their skills to drive the economy forward through the business and entrepreneurship world. With this therefore, the NYSC SAED programme is well connected through various partnership and collaborations with private and public organisation/enterprises that are ever ready to invest on the trained Corps members in order to help them explore their wonderful intelligence.³⁵ A great number of the trained Corps members were able to access funding opportunities, some of these organisations that aided the funding are as follows:

Table 4:

| S/N | NAME OF ORGANISATION | NUMBER OF CORPS THAT ACCESS THE LOAN | AMOUNT |
|--------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | Bank of Industry | 1,077 | N540.02 million |
| 2. | Central Bank of Nigeria | 07 | N15 million |
| 3. | Credit Direct | 13,344 | N629.016 million |
| TOTAL | | 14,428 | N1.184 Billion |

Source: Selected speeches Edition

³⁵ Brig. Gen. S. Ibrahim, "Selected Speeches and Strides of 18th NYSC Director-General"Pp 170

An Assessment of the Training Modules and Curriculum of SAED

SAED Curriculum

The SAED curriculum is categorised into four key component topics, with each addressing a topic that is very vital to the success of the programme. These four components cover the learning objectives of the programme. They are;

1. Entrepreneurship Sensitisation and Motivation

Entrepreneurship development is the process of adding to the stock of existing small, medium and big enterprises available to a country by creating and promoting many capable potential entrepreneurs who can successfully run innovative enterprises, nurture them to grow and sustain them, with a view to achieving broad socio-economic development goals. Given the generally held view that entrepreneurship development is the key to poverty eradication, employment generation, and rapid economic development.³⁶

The entrepreneurship Sensitization and motivation is a session that covers 3-hours with particular attention to sensitizing Corps members to the reality of life outside service, indicating workforce statistics that says; about 10% of the Nigerian workforce has a wage or salary job, 38% work in agricultural sector, while the other 52% are either self-employed, own small businesses or are unemployed.³⁷

At this stage, Corps members are constantly reminded that they stand a better chance of becoming economically active as entrepreneurs or becoming self-employed in various kind of businesses than having an opportunity to secure a job. They are reminded or motivated to identify business opportunities rather than exclusively focusing their attention on acquiring a white collar job.

³⁶ Participant's Workbook, "Starting My Own Business" Department of NYSC Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development, 2016, Pp 45.

³⁷ Ibid

NYSC AND SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

The section further explores businesses and enlightens the Corps members on who is truly an entrepreneur.³⁸

2. Entrepreneurship Development

This is usually a 6-hours session that introduces Corps members to some of the fundamental skills that serves as foundation that every entrepreneur need to smoothly run his business. These skills ranges from personal qualities, such as taking responsibility, leadership, ethics and management skills that include communication and time management. The topic always conclude with a review of how Corps members can match their acquired skills to various community needs in order to generate prospective business ideas and an assessment of demand as a feasibility test for business ideas. Finally after conclusion, the Corps members are introduced to the 12 different potential business sectors that are critically assess and explore during the skills acquisition training.³⁹

3. Skills Acquisition in a Business Sector

Skills Acquisition as a topic deals with a more deeper approach in exploring business skills, and is taught in a more practical manner using one of the twelve business sectors as context. Although, there is no specific time allocated to this topic, this is as a result of the fact that it is highly recognised as one of the most important aspect of the SAED that is been taught practically with its handbook and materials been used for self-study during the Corps members service year. The use of one of the twelve business sectors as context is not restrict the future ambition of Corps members who might have an interest in other sectors of the business, but rather, it is a mere recognition within resource constraint of the orientation camp, a limited number of options are possible.

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Participant's Workbook, "Starting My Own Business" Department of NYSC Skills Acquisition... 2016, pp 46

An Assessment of the Training Modules and Curriculum of SAED

The first unit of this topic introduces the chosen business sectors and critically assess its potential market. Other units under this topic covers the material resources required for operations, cost estimation and pricing, rules, regulation and guidelines of business, management of the workforce, mobilisation of financial and human resources, and finally compilation of business plan. Towards the end of the orientation camp. Time is usually dedicated to an exhibition which give the Corps members the opportunity to display their products, businesses, and then practice their marketing presentation and exploring of their selling skills.⁴⁰

4. Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

As part of the SAED curriculum, ICT in business is used as a self-study topic with the clear intention of introducing the Corps members to digital marketing and digital branding. There is no specific time allocated to this topic, but its resources and materials are always made available to Corps members to study in the camp or any time convenient to them.⁴¹ The introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to the NYSC SAED Training and curriculum is as a result of the fact that ICT has considerably transformed lives in the 21st century, and youths are at the forefront of the ICT revolution in Nigeria as in other parts of the world. From electronic media such as Television, communication media such as the mobile phone, to the computer-based devices (both hardware and software), ICT provides great opportunities for productive engagement of the youth in terms of fueling creativity

⁴⁰ Participant's Workbook, "Starting My Own Business" Department of NYSC Skills Acquisition... 2016, pp 46

⁴¹ Adedeji O. Adewusi and Isaiah B. Adisa, "The Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development Programme among Corps Members in Ibadan" Research Gate, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/32752365> August, 2018, Pp 12.

NYSC AND SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

and enhancing efficiency and productivity, creation of new jobs, and enhancement of standards of living and personal fulfillment.⁴²

The national licensing of GSM operators in Nigeria in 2000, for example, has opened up opportunities for engagement and economic advancement of millions of youths in Nigeria in various realms as staff in the telephone companies, distributors and marketers phone sets, mobile phone repairers, and sellers of phone recharge card, among others.⁴³ In fact, the use of ICT in mobilisation process has for long been used when the NYSC Scheme started the computerize data collection in mobilisation process during the 2014 Batch C service year. The year saw the use of biometric capture for monthly clearance, various reports on Corps data including automated printing of the certificate of national service and Exemption Certificates, and the use of computerized communication equipment in the distress Center established in February 2012, for the safety of the Corps members. While commenting on the development, Brig. Gen. Shuaibu stated that:

“In view of the strategic importance of the facility and the desire of the Scheme to meet current challenges, we have transformed it (Distress Center) to an Information Center with operational lines. Just last month, we got additional toll-free line from

⁴² Abiodun Egbetokun, “The Design and Impact of Apprenticeship-Based Entrepreneurship Intervention for Promoting Youth Empowerment in Nigeria” Thesis, National Center for Technology Management Ile-Ife, Nigeria, August, 2018, Pp 82.

⁴³ Federal Ministry of Youth and Sport, “Enhancing Youth Development and Participation in the Context of Sustainable Development”, Edition 2019, pp 601.

An Assessment of the Training Modules and Curriculum of SAED

9mobile to further strengthen the operation of the center.”⁴⁴

The expansion in the computer and computing field in Nigeria has also witnessed the engagement of the youth in the ICT sector in the various domains, including sales, repairs, software engineering, development and use of apps, internet-based marketing and internet-based service delivery. ICT has the potential to power business innovation centres and improve the rate of doing businesses, improve educational activities and expand opportunities for learning, and generally improve the efficiency and productivity of industries all of which have significant positive implications for the youth. Thus, ICT is a key pillar in advancing youth development agenda and is central to improving the youth employment rate and well-being in Nigeria.⁴⁵ Already, the SAED program has a strong focus on empowering youth with ICT skills and prepare them for global competition as part of the laudable ICT vision, and Nigeria has incorporated computer education as one of the subjects to be offered at various levels of education. Despite the advancement so far witnessed in the ICT sector, there are yet huge untapped opportunities in Nigeria as the country currently ranks low in the Networked Readiness Index (or Technology Readiness index), which ranks countries in terms of performance in leveraging information and communications technologies to boost competitiveness, innovation and well-being. The index, published by the World Economic Forum, ranked Nigeria in the 90th position in 2008 and in 119th position out of 139 countries in the year 2016. This ranking shows that Nigeria needs to considerably intensify efforts towards ensuring that her youth and the

⁴⁴ Skills Acquisition: “NYSC Trains 700,000 Corps Members: disburses N540m to 325 Corps Entrepreneurs” Economic Confidential, May 17, 2020, Pp 72.

⁴⁵ Federal Ministry of Youth and Sport, “Enhancing Youth Development and Participation in the Context of Sustainable Development”, Edition 2019, pp 37.

NYSC AND SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

population at large benefit maximally from the opportunities offered in economic and development terms which is one of the focus of the NYSC SAED program to prepare the young graduates in order to tap this potentials and transform the image of the country in the field of ICT.⁴⁶

Conclusion

The NYSC Scheme has proved to be one of the most promising organisations that has greatly impacted positively on the lives of the Nigerian Youth since its inception in 1973. The creation of SAED programme under the National Youth Service Corps has proved to be an outstanding step towards tackling unemployment which is one of the major challenges confronting not just the youth, or Nigeria but the entire continent in general. The creation of this Scheme has impacted greatly on the lives of the young graduates who serve the country one year mandatory service through the Scheme. The NYSC in collaboration with both public, and private organisations or enterprises most especially the International Labour Organisation was able to organise a comprehensive training and curriculum modules for the training of graduates on Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development with the clear intention of preparing the youth to be self reliant, rather than job seekers

The youth through this curriculum and training both in-camp and post-camp are rigorously educated to be business owners, and they are offered the opportunity to attract start up fund after successful completion of their training by different governmental and non-governmental organisations. The paper has elaborately discussed the different phases of the training and how fund is disbursed including those that benefited as a source of reference.

⁴⁶ Federal Ministry of Youth and Sport, "Enhancing Youth Development and... 2019.
Pp 54

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Abubakar Yusuf Umar

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National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the War against Poverty (WAP)...

5

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the War Against Poverty (WAP) Agro-Entrepreneurs' Empowerment Programme in Nigeria, 2009-2020

Ozinna Tochukwu Ntukogu

Introduction

All over the world, poverty is one of the most disturbing challenges facing states with serious socio-economic and political implications. In developing economies like African states, poverty remains the major bane stifling growth and development in the continent. This is because, poverty is not unconnected to issues of insecurity, corruption, illiteracy, high mortality rate, high incidence of diseases, prostitution, high rate of violent and non-violent crimes, weak democratic institutions and even

THE NYSC AND SAED

Ozinna T. Ntukogu

issues of insurgency and terrorism, *etcetera*. For this reason, different states, including international organisations have continued to confront issues of poverty through various means and strategies. In fact, this was why 189 heads of state and governments, during the Millennium Summit of the United Nations (UN) in September 2000, declared to free their people from wretchedness, extreme poverty and their underlying causes. This declaration produced eight target goals known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set to be met by 2015.¹

Among the goals listed, poverty and hunger eradication made up number one goal. It could be argued that poverty and hunger eradication feature as the number one goal of the MDGs because of the strategic impact they have on development planning and implementation processes. Hence, the UN recognises that poverty and hunger eradication is the foundation upon which other development goals can be built. Since then, different programmes were launched through governmental and non-governmental institutions so as to ensure that these would be achieved by 2015. However, despite the huge successes and achievements recorded by the MDGs, it became obvious that the MDGs were coming to expiration by 2015 and the achievements were still below expectation. In 2012, member states of the UN met again and changed the declaration from Millennium Development Goals to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with poverty eradication still as number one goal.²

Consequently, since the advent of the New Millennium, just like in other developing countries, Nigeria has rolled out different strategies and poverty alleviation schemes in her quest for development. Some of these schemes include National Development Plans, Indigenisation, Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), Small and Medium

¹ S. Bell and K. Newitt, *Decent Work and Poverty Eradication: Literature Review and Two-Country Study*, (London: Ergon Associates Limited, 2010), 2.

² "SDGF: Sustainable Development Goals Fund", Retrieved from www.sdfund.org/mdgs-sdgs, Accessed on March 13, 2021.

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the War against Poverty (WAP)...

Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDAN), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Farm Settlement Scheme (FSS), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution, Better Life Programme (BLP), Poverty Eradication Programme (PEP), Farming Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YOUWIN), N-Power, Trader Money, Backward Integration, *etcetera.*³ Unfortunately, these empowerment programmes could not curb youth unemployment because, they were lacking in scale and scope. Most of these initiatives were theoretical and not youth specific but youth parasitic because people have embraced the culture of receiving rather than engaging in productive activities. For these reasons, these programmes had little impact considering the enormity of unemployed graduates and youths in the country which continues to go higher.⁴

Still in search for solution, one of the schemes through which Nigeria has combated poverty in the country is the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). Being that youth unemployment is a major factor responsible for high rate of poverty in Nigeria is youth unemployment, the NYSC has been charged along with other duties, to empower the

³ R. A Bello *et al.*, "Poverty Alleviation Programmes and Economic Development in Nigeria: A Comparative Assessment of Asa and Ilorin West Local Government Areas of Kwara State, Nigeria", in *African Research Review*, Vol. 3 (4), July 2009, 283-297, and N. C. Ozioko, "The Millennium Development Goal 1 and its Implementation in Nsukka and its Environs, 2005-2015: An Appraisal", An Unpublished MA Thesis Submitted to the Department of History and War Studies, Nigerian Defence Academy Postgraduate School, Kaduna, September 2020, 2.

⁴ A. W. Ikaka, Director, NYSC South-East Area Office, "The Imperatives of Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development to Graduating Students", A Paper Delivered during the Summit of the Department of Entrepreneurship, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, on 5th September, 2019, in *NYSC NEWS: A Journal of NYSC Directorate Headquarters*, (Abuja: NYSC National Directorate Headquarters, 2020), 122.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Ozinna T. Ntukogu

youths of Nigeria so as to alleviate poverty in the country. One of the major ways through which the scheme has been empowering the youths is through the NYSC War Against Poverty (WAP) Programme. This programme is aimed at training serving youth corps members in different agricultural entrepreneurial fields so as to prepare them for integration into the economy, the labour market and the entrepreneurial world. By so doing, the programme also creates employment not only for the beneficiaries of the scheme but also, the teeming youths that would be employed by the trained agricultural entrepreneurs, all aimed at reducing unemployment, poverty and hunger in Nigeria in particular.

While employing both quantitative and qualitative methods of historical research, this chapter therefore examines the WAP programme with a view to establishing the extent to which the programme has succeeded and, or failed in its war against poverty in Nigeria. With both primary and secondary data, the chapter finds that through this programme, the NYSC has empowered many Nigerian youths and has immensely contributed to poverty alleviation in Nigeria particularly, and as well, has contributed to the UN MDGs Goals 1 and 3 and SDGs Goals 1, 2 and 5 in general. However, the chapter argues that despite the successes of this programme, there are shortcomings and challenges bedevilling the programme and limiting its potentials in the fight against poverty in Nigeria.

An Overview of the NYSC War Against Poverty (WAP) Programme

Established in 1973 by the Federal Government of Nigeria to foster national unity, the NYSC deploys graduates of tertiary institutions to different parts of the country to participate in a compulsory one-year national service. With this, the scheme does not only foster national unity, but has been helpful in creating entry level jobs for the Nigerian youths especially young graduates. To buttress this, the Director-General (DG) of NYSC, Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim says thus,

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the War against Poverty (WAP)...

"with over 350,000 graduate youths being mobilised annually, NYSC remains the most critical influencer of Nigerian youths as agents of unity, peace and development".⁵ However, due to increased school enrolment and failure of the government in creating policies that would favour job creation in the country, millions of graduates have remained unemployed several years after graduating from tertiary institutions. In fact, a 2013 report reveals that only 10% out of the millions of graduates are gainfully employed in their desired place of work.⁶ Lack of employment opportunities and the sense of joblessness make the Nigerian youths very frustrated and aggressive, thereby, making them vulnerable and susceptible to crimes, violence, banditry, prostitution, militancy, terrorism, thuggery, *etcetera*.⁷ For this reason, the NYSC has established collaborations with different agencies to solve the problems of unemployment and poverty. Consequently, in a collaboration between the NYSC and MDGs the NYSC/MDGs/WAP programme was birthed.

Initially, when this collaboration started in August, 2006 the NYSC-MDGs project started with two programmes which were MDGs Awareness Creation (MAC) and the Family Life Education (FLE). But when the project expanded in scope and curriculum, FLE, transformed to Family and Community Life Reorientation (FACOR). The programme recruited and trained corps volunteers as Development Knowledge Facilitators (DFKs) whose job was to create public awareness on government policies and programmes relating to the MDGs/NEEDS and Vision 2020 aimed at engendering sustainable development in Nigeria.

⁵ F. Adetunji, "Don Advocates More Funding for NYSC Skill Acquisition Programme", in *NYSC NEWS: A Journal of NYSC Directorate Headquarters*, (Abuja: NYSC National Directorate Headquarters, 2020), 23.

⁶ S. A. Tijani and M. A. Ayinla, "Effect of the NYSC/MDGs/WAP Agro-Enterprise Loan on Beneficiaries Well-Being in South West Nigeria", in *Nigerian Journal of Rural Sociology* Vol. 5, No. 2, March 2015, 55.

⁷ A. W. Ikaka, Director, NYSC South-East Area Office, "The Imperatives of Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development to Graduating Students", ..., 122.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Ozinna T. Ntukogu

With the excellent performance of the MAC and FACOR, the NYSC/M/SDGs War Against Poverty Programme was then launched in 2009.⁸

The War Against Poverty (WAP) is an agro-allied initiative of the NYSC which targets to prepare corps members for the post service period.⁹ The programme kick-started in 2009 and was aimed at addressing the MDG Goal 1 which was committed to eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. When MDGs were then changed to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, the programme continued as NYSC/SDGs WAP.¹⁰ The programme is also aimed at empowering women because majority of the rural poor are women; and so, empowering women and building self-reliance in them would go along a way in ensuring economic family survival. This is in line with the SDGs Goal 5 which aims at empowering women to achieve gender equality. In the same vein, the programme is designed to be a tool for the reduction of incidences of deadly diseases such as HIV/AIDS. Since poverty is connected to the prevalence of such diseases, the programme is aimed at raising the standard of living of youths through employment creation and thereby, reducing the incidences of such diseases.¹¹

⁸ "War Against Poverty (WAP)", in *National Youth Service Corps Year Book: 45th Anniversary Commemorative Edition*, (Abuja: NYSC National Directorate Headquarters, 2018), 38.

⁹ S. Ibrahim, "Life Without White Collar: Imperatives for Vocational and Entrepreneurial Education – The NYSC Perspective", A Paper Presented by Brigadier General S Ibrahim, Director-General, National Youth Service Corps at the 11th Convocation Ceremony of Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State, November 28, 2019, in *NYSC NEWS: A Journal of NYSC Directorate Headquarters*, (Abuja: NYSC National Directorate Headquarters, 2019), 95.

¹⁰ S. Ibrahim, "Life Without White Collar: Imperatives for Vocational and Entrepreneurial Education – The NYSC Perspective", ..., 96.

¹¹ "The NYSC/MDGs War Against Poverty (WAP) Programme", in *National Youth Service Corps Year Book: 40th Anniversary Commemorative Edition*, (Abuja: NYSC National Directorate Headquarters, 2013), 56.

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the War against Poverty (WAP)...

The programme seeks to empower corps members with agro-enterprise skills and interest-free loans to create employment, wealth, boost agricultural productivity for food security and eradicate extreme hunger and poverty. "The goal of the programme is to mobilise and develop in the Nigerian youths, the skills for self-reliance, employment generation and wealth creation using the vanguard of corps entrepreneurs throughout the nooks and crannies of Nigeria."¹² With the consistent efforts by government to diversify the economy of Nigeria largely dependent on crude oil resources, the NYSC scheme embarked on the WAP programme to empower youth corps members with agro-allied skills which will translate into not just eradication of extreme poverty, but will also eradicate hunger by increasing food productivity and ensuring food security, creating wealth and employment, and thereby, stemming insecurity in the country.¹³ This is in line with the observation of the Head of Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) in Oyo state NYSC Secretariat Mrs Atinuke Ojo, who maintained that the current unemployment rate has made it very important for youths to acquire vocational skills so that they can earn a living without stress. In her address she advised corps members to take advantage of the free training provided by the NYSC.¹⁴

Agriculture may have been chosen to be the key sector for this programme because it is not only the largest employer of labour in Nigeria but also, a vital contributor to wealth creation and poverty alleviation. Agriculture also constitutes about 40% of the country's

¹² "The NYSC/MDGs War Against Poverty (WAP) Programme", *NYSC Year Book 2013...*, 56.

¹³ John Oba, "Empowering Corps Members with Agro-Allied Enterprise", *Blueprint*, November 30, 2015, Retrieved from <https://www.blueprint.ng/empowering-corps-members-with-agro-allied-enterprise/>, Accessed on March 11, 2021.

¹⁴ J. Ekeocha, "Corps Members Tasked on Self Discovery through SAED", in *NYSC NEWS: A Journal of NYSC Directorate Headquarters*, (Abuja: NYSC National Directorate Headquarters, 2020), 81.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Ozinna T. Ntukogu

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and has been identified by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) as an area through which the problem of youth unemployment would be addressed in Nigeria. Apart from providing revenue to a large percentage of Nigeria's population, it is the largest non-oil export earner in Nigeria.¹⁵ So, in order to prepare corps members for self-reliance in agriculture business, the WAP programme was then designed to focus its trainings on the agricultural sector. The WAP training was divided into two stages; the first stage was the entrepreneurial development training which acquaints the trainee corps members with the general issues of business. Here, beneficiaries are trained to think and operate as entrepreneurs so as to sustain their agro businesses when they successfully establish them. This training equips the corps members with the requisite business skills that would enable them operate profitably and also transform their businesses into bigger enterprises.¹⁶

The second part is the specific agro enterprise (vocational) training. In this, corps members are trained on seven agricultural fields viz: poultry, banana/plantain sucker multiplication, fishery, animal husbandry, snailry, grass-cutter rearing and bee-keeping.¹⁷

Furthermore, the WAP programme is not only aimed at training corps members to create wealth through employment for themselves and improving food productivity, but also, to employ other members of their host communities.¹⁸ This is why it is stated in the concept plan of the WAP Programme that beneficiaries should engage at least five

¹⁵ S. A. Tijani and M. A. Ayinla, "Effect of the NYSC/MDGs/WAP Agro-Enterprise Loan on Beneficiaries Well-Being in South West Nigeria", ..., 55.

¹⁶ S. Ibrahim, "Life Without White Collar: Imperatives for Vocational and Entrepreneurial Education – The NYSC Perspective", ..., 96.

¹⁷ John Oba, "Empowering Corps Members with Agro-Allied Enterprise", *Blueprint*.

¹⁸ S. Ibrahim, "Life Without White Collar: Imperatives for Vocational and Entrepreneurial Education – The NYSC Perspective", ..., 96.

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the War against Poverty (WAP)...

youths in their enterprise host communities, equip these youths with the required skills to reduce extreme poverty and hunger in those host communities.¹⁹

More so, it has been a matter of concern that the youths have been uninterested in agriculture which has led to increase in crimes across the country. This has been due to lack of access to finance and micro-credit as well as land. Commenting on such challenges of finance, the DG of the NYSC, Brig Gen S Ibrahim said that the NYSC has evolved various programmes including Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) for Corps members but one of the critical needs of the corps entrepreneurs is access to funds to kick-start their businesses.²⁰

In this regard, the NYSC WAP programme has not only been equipping the beneficiaries with the requisite skills in agro-allied businesses, but has also been offering interest-free and low-interest loans to them to start up their respective businesses. For this reason, the programme has been financially supported by the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on MDGs/ SDGs. The programme has also partnered with Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency (SMEDAN) and National Biotechnology Development Agency (NABDA) who have brought their technical support to ensure the success of the agro-allied enterprises by corps members.²¹

This is why the scheme has gone into other collaborations with financial institutions like Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and Bank of Industry (BOI) to grant soft loans to successful corps members of the

¹⁹ Former DG NYSC, Brig Gen JB Olawunmi, in John Oba, "Empowering Corps Members with Agro-Allied Enterprise", *Blueprint*.

²⁰ F. Adetunji, "NYSC Foundation Empowers Corps Entrepreneurs with N4.25m Loan", in *NYSC NEWS: A Journal of NYSC Directorate Headquarters*, (Abuja: NYSC National Directorate Headquarters, 2019), 27.

²¹ S. Ibrahim, "Life Without White Collar: Imperatives for Vocational and Entrepreneurial Education – The NYSC Perspective", ..., 96.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Ozinna T. Ntukogu

programme. This led to the launching of the NYSC/BOI Graduate Entrepreneurship Fund which was reported to have set aside two billion naira in 2015 to finance 1000 business proposals of corps members whose capacities have been built in agro-allied businesses.²² Similarly, the scheme collaborates with the Bank of Agriculture (BOA) to finance the business interest of the successful corps members by granting loans to them. The categories of loans made available to the corps members by the BOA include micro-loans, Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) loans and large loans. Some of the provisions of the BOA are also very beneficial to the scheme because they need youths that have gone through enterprise training which the NYSC WAP programme gives to corps members. An example of such provisions is their Youth Agric Business Revolution of Nigeria (YARN) which is open to youths between the ages of 18-35 years. In this provision, youths can access up to one-million-naira loan without collateral; and it can be accessed by both individuals and cooperative societies.²³ It is also in this spirit of collaboration that the current DG NYSC, Brig Gen S Ibrahim visited the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) boss, Sir Joseph Ari in Jos, Plateau State, who promised to set up a technical committee to reinvigorate their partnership on the empowerment of corps members for self-employment.²⁴

Also, the coordinators of entrepreneurial and empowerment programmes of the NYSC have not only collaborated with financial institutions to fund their programmes, they have also inaugurated some financial foundations to help in the financing of NYSC empowerment programmes such as the WAP. One of such foundations is the NYSC Foundation which was inaugurated in 1999 to provide for

²²John Oba, "Empowering Corps Members with Agro-Allied Enterprise", *Blueprint*.

²³John Oba, "Empowering Corps Members with Agro-Allied Enterprise", *Blueprint*.

²⁴ Y. Tanimu, "NYSC, ITF Move to Strengthen Partnership", in *NYSC NEWS: A Journal of NYSC Directorate Headquarters*, (Abuja: NYSC National Directorate Headquarters, 2020), 32.

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the War against Poverty (WAP)...

the welfare of corps members by offering loans to beneficiaries of empowerment programmes as an avenue for transforming their creative ideas into wealth.²⁵

Below are the specific objectives of the NYSC WAP Programme: To

- (i) Sensitise all corps members on entrepreneurial skill acquisition for self-reliance, employment generation and wealth creation.
- (ii) Train corps members annually in the following areas of specialised skills *viz*: Snailry, Bee Keeping, Fish Farming, Animal Husbandry, Grass-cutter Farming, Plantain/Banana Sucker Multiplication and Poultry Farming.
- (iii) Carryout the requisite entrepreneurial skill training for the corps members.
- (iv) Empower trained corps members with sums ranging from N150,000 to N250,000 to establish agro enterprises in which they were trained in their host communities. This has been increased from N250,000 to N300,000 in 2012. This loan is interest free.
- (v) Each empowered corps entrepreneur is to train and mentor 5 community youths from communities where they establish and also use the platforms of their enterprise to develop the enterprises' host communities.
- (vi) Promote women empowerment by ensuring that not less than 35% of community youth trainees at all levels are women.²⁶

²⁵ F. Adetunji, "NYSC Foundation Empowers Corps Entrepreneurs with N4.25m Loan", ..., 27.

²⁶ "The NYSC/MDGs War Against Poverty (WAP) Programme", *NYSC Year Book 2013*, ..., 56-57.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Ozinna T. Ntukogu

Achievements and Successes of the NYSC WAP Programme

Since the inception of the NYSC WAP programme in 2009, the scheme has recorded many successes in its activities. Records show that since 2009, thousands of corps members have been trained under this programme and have also accessed the scheme's loans to start up their agro-enterprises.²⁷ Through its trainings in agro-allied business, the scheme has also produced outstanding Nigerian youths who have made differences at the international and national stages. As disclosed by the Acting Secretary of the SDGs in 2015, two of the scheme's beneficiaries were among the 40 young Africans that won the 2015 Mandela African Fellowship. Similarly, between 2012 and 2014, six of the scheme's beneficiaries also emerged as innovative Youth Entrepreneurs in the Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YOUWIN) Awards.²⁸

Also, as many as thousands of beneficiaries under this programme have established their businesses successfully and have continued to employ other youths in the country. Such achievements are what the NYSC boss summarised when he re-iterated that, "we have trained thousands of corps members and most of them are doing very well and are employers of labour and wealth creators today. For you to succeed, you must respect the dignity of labour."²⁹ Some outstanding corps members who have benefitted and established their enterprises in different parts of the country include UkuTrever who established a poultry farm in Makurdi, Benue State; Alozie Donald who established his banana and plantain sucker plantation in Mbaise, Imo State; Ipinlaye Idowu established a fish farm in Akure, Ondo State; Abu Salifu went into animal husbandry in Ayingba-Ejule Junction of Kogi State; Ologunro Bolanle who served in Kebbi State established her poultry farm in

²⁷ John Oba, "Empowering Corps Members with Agro-Allied Enterprise" *Blueprint*.

²⁸ John Oba, "Empowering Corps Members with Agro-Allied Enterprise" *Blueprint*.

²⁹ F. Adetunji, "NYSC DG Hails FG on Youth Empowerment", in *NYSC NEWS: A Journal of NYSC Directorate Headquarters*, (Abuja: NYSC National Directorate Headquarters), OCNODE542020, 90.

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the War against Poverty (WAP)...

Brinin Kebbi of Kebbi State; Haruna Fatawa established his poultry farm in Bauchi; Christopher Esuga established his fish farm in Lafia, Nasarawa State, *etcetera*.³⁰

With such achievements, there is no doubt that the NYSC WAP programme has also brought about improved standard of living of individuals because it ensures that people meet their basic needs.³¹ This is in agreement with the 2019 study in Oyo State which states that such agro-allied programmes have improved the standard of living of graduate youths and have increased their self-esteem and broadened their thinking process.³² Having contributed immensely to the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger in Nigeria, the NYSC DG, Brig Gen S Ibrahim said that the WAP programme has played a leading role in realising the Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 2 in Nigeria.³³

More so, the need to practise the agro-allied skill trainings received by beneficiaries of the NYSC WAP programme facilitated the establishment of many NYSC farms in different parts of the country. These farms not only serve as training ground for corps members who have acquired agro-allied skills in programmes such as the WAP, but also serve as source of revenue generation to the NYSC scheme. This development has informed the establishment of integrated farm settlements in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria by the NYSC. One of such farms is located in Dungulbi Village of Bauchi State for the North-

³⁰ "The NYSC/MDGs War Against Poverty (WAP) Programme", *NYSC Year Book 2013*, ..., 61-66.

³¹ A. W. Ikaka, Director, NYSC South-East Area Office, "The Imperatives of Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development to Graduating Students", ..., 124 - 125

³² O. J Adelekunet al, "Attitude of Graduate Youths Towards Agro-Allied Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development Programme in Oyo State", in *Journal of Agricultural Extension*, Vol. 23 (1), January 2019, 19, Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/jae.V23i1.2>, Accessed on March 4, 2021.

³³ F. Adetunji, "NYSC DG Hails FG on Youth Empowerment", ..., 90.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Ozinna T. Ntukogu

East.³⁴ Others have been established in Kebbi for the North-West; Leleyi, Kwali for the Federal Capital Territory Abuja (FCT); Ezillo, Ebonyi State for the South-East, Iseyin, Oyo State for the South-West and Obubra, Cross River State for the South-South.³⁵ These farms have not only served in feeding corps members during orientation course, they have as well trained youths of their host communities and have contributed immensely to the national economy in the quest to achieve food sufficiency and security in Nigeria.³⁶

Conversely, it is most practicable that most of the agro-allied enterprises are located in semi-urban and rural areas due to availability of land, space and labour for the enterprise; so, the NYSC WAP programme has succeeded in reducing the rate of rural to urban migration or drift which has constituted a social problem in the country over the years. This is because, the programme reduces the pool of unemployed youths who would find themselves trekking and looking for unavailable jobs in the cities by actively and gainfully engaging these youths in the semi-urban and rural areas.³⁷ In consequence, the programme has then attracted some infrastructural development such as security, electricity, water and accessible roads to some of these rural areas where such agro ventures are located. This is why Professor Ibe maintains that programmes such as this serve as vantage springboard which creates conveyor belt system that promotes a successful social cohesion with the rural communities and the nation at

³⁴ F. Adetunji, "DG Inspects NYSC Farm in Bauchi", in *NYSC NEWS: A Journal of NYSC Directorate Headquarters*, (Abuja: NYSC National Directorate Headquarters, 2019), 76.

³⁵ E. Obeni, "NYSC at 47: The Unique Trajectory of Africa's Leading Light in Youth Mobilisation", in *NYSC NEWS: A Journal of NYSC Directorate Headquarters*, (Abuja: NYSC National Directorate Headquarters, 2020), 116.

³⁶ E. Obeni, "NYSC at 47: The Unique Trajectory of Africa's Leading Light in Youth Mobilisation", ..., 116.

³⁷ "The NYSC/MDGs War Against Poverty (WAP) Programme", *NYSC Year Book 2013*, ..., 59.

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the War against Poverty (WAP)...

large.³⁸ In that regard, the NYSC DG, Brig Gen S Ibrahim said that, not only has this programme improved the living standard of the beneficiary corps members, but has also improved the living standard of the host communities where the enterprises are located.³⁹

The above success has been demonstrated in some states like Ogun State where in the spirit of WAP, a SAED Village has been established. The SAED Village is a large component of farms constructed to accommodate plantain and cassava plantations, food and cash crops, poultry, fish farms, and beds for vegetable and other leguminous crops. This project has attracted some amenities and even security to this area. In a bid to nurture and sustain the farms, the NYSC State Coordinator, Dr (Mrs) B. A. Faniyi constructed a running water borehole and connected a machine-driven irrigator with hoses to supply water to the farms and improve the humidity of the area. The fish farm has five standard ponds with the potential of churning out fish and fingerlings in commercial quantities. Same is the case with the poultry section and other segments of the farm. On the aspect of security, the location of the farm is directly behind the Orientation Camp of Ogun State. This area was initially a dense forest which had constituted a security threat to the corps members and the NYSC staff in the camp. Hence, the clearing of the hitherto thick forest with bulldozers to establish this farm and the erection of a heavy barbed wire fence around the farm brought back a sense of security within the Ogun NYSC Camp.⁴⁰ If the farms continue to grow, it is obvious that more benefits and successes will be recorded in the area. In fact, one

³⁸ F. Adetunji, "Don Advocates More Funding for NYSC Skill Acquisition Programme", ..., 23.

³⁹ F. Adetunji, "NYSC DG Hails FG on Youth Empowerment", in *NYSC NEWS: A Journal of NYSC Directorate Headquarters*, (Abuja: NYSC National Directorate Headquarters), OCNODE542020, 90.

⁴⁰ E. Emmanuel, "SAED Village as a Worthy Enterprise for Wealthy Creation", *OgunKopa*, 2019 Batch B End of Service Year Magazine, (A Publication of NYSC Ogun State), May 2020, 22.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Ozinna T. Ntukogu

can only imagine the level of development that such an establishment can bring to the Sagamu community of Ogun State and its environs.

Again, a key aspect of the successes recorded by the NYSC WAP programme is on the part of revenue generation for beneficiary individual corps members and their host states. WAP programme has created wealth, raised and strengthened national economy, increased the nation's GDP and per capita income and boosted foreign reserve through foreign exports of agricultural products.⁴¹ Engr. Abdullahi Sule, Governor of Nasarawa State had commended the DG NYSC for creating revenue generating platforms for individuals and states through agricultural programmes such as WAP and the establishment of NYSC agricultural farm settlements in different parts of the country. The governor explained that such agricultural activities are beneficial to his State especially now that his State has been named among the three pilot states for the implementation of the National Livestock Transformation Plan.⁴²

Subsequently, with more collaborations with agriculture-related agencies on the way, more successes are in view for the NYSC WAP programme. Recently, there was a move by the NYSC to partner with the National Centre for Agricultural Mechanization (NCAM). As a government parastatal, the centre is charged with the duty of advancing the course of agriculture in Nigeria through human capacity building in agriculture and the fabrication of farming machines and equipment. The centre has agreed to provide the NYSC with relevant

⁴¹ A. W. Ikaka, Director, NYSC South-East Area Office, "The Imperatives of Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development to Graduating Students", ..., 125.

⁴² Y. Tanimu, "Nasarawa to Partner NYSC on Agriculture", in *NYSC NEWS: A Journal of NYSC Directorate Headquarters*, (Abuja: NYSC National Directorate Headquarters, 2020), 59.

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the War against Poverty (WAP)...

farming equipment and requisite training of both the beneficiary corps members and NYSC farm managers in the field of agriculture.⁴³

The National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA) has also stated that it is ready to collaborate with the NYSC to diversify national economy and ensure food sufficiency. This, the agency said, it would do through training the corps members on the modernised techniques of farming which has good value-chain. The agency said that it had designed a programme called “Back to Farm” which will not only train corps members in a conducive environment with good incentives, but will also provide funds for their businesses through loans. The Executive Secretary of the agency said that the NYSC Farms across the country will be used as training grounds for the trainee corps members.⁴⁴ NALDA also revealed another value-chain programme called the National Young Farmers’ Scheme. This programme is designed by the agency to expose corps members to modern agricultural practices including land preparation, planting, harvesting, marketing and agro-engineering so as to reduce unemployment among youths, achieve national food security and diversify the economy of Nigeria.⁴⁵

A similar partnership is also taking place between the NYSC and the Agricultural and Rural Management Training Institute (ARMTI). Being an institute established to boost agricultural production and guarantee food security in Nigeria, the institute has also accepted to train corps members and NYSC agriculture officers and farm managers in

⁴³ L. Christopher, “National Agric Centre set to Empower Corps Members”, in *NYSC NEWS: A Journal of NYSC Directorate Headquarters*, (Abuja: NYSC National Directorate Headquarters), OCNODE542020, 78.

⁴⁴ F Adetunji, “NALDA to Train Corps Members on Mechanized Farming”, in *NYSC NEWS: A Journal of NYSC Directorate Headquarters*, (Abuja: NYSC National Directorate Headquarters), OCNODE542020, 77.

⁴⁵ F. Adetunji, “NYSC to Partner NALDA on Agriculture”, in *NYSC NEWS: A Journal of NYSC Directorate Headquarters*, (Abuja: NYSC National Directorate Headquarters), OCNODE542020, 52.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Ozinna T. Ntukogu

contemporary best practices in the sphere of agriculture, using the NYSC farms across the country as demonstration farms for practical trainings. This will support the Federal Government's policy of self-sustainability and food security in Nigeria.⁴⁶ The DG NYSC, Brig Gen S Ibrahim has also called for a deepened collaboration between the NYSC and the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) which the institute sees as a step in the right direction that will strengthen food security in Nigeria.⁴⁷ Again, NYSC has gone into partnership with National Cereal Research Institute (NCRI) so as to train more corps members in modern farming and incorporate them in the customised in-house and outside-the-station training for good agricultural practices that will boost agricultural production and enhance the NYSC revenue drive.⁴⁸

With such collaborations, the NYSC has through WAP, sponsored seven (7) corps entrepreneurs to attend the Advanced Entrepreneurial Training at Barry University in Miami, Florida, United States of America (USA). Loans ranging between 1.8 million and 3 million naira were given to the corps entrepreneurs after the training by the National Economic Reconstruction Funds to expand their enterprises and also employ more community members.⁴⁹ From there, the seven corps members established and expanded their enterprises and also empowered many of their host communities' youths. The seven corps members and their NYSC numbers are as follows: Jibrin Suleiman

⁴⁶ L. Christopher, "NYSC to Collaborate with ARMIT on Food Security", in *NYSC NEWS: A Journal of NYSC Directorate Headquarters*, (Abuja: NYSC National Directorate Headquarters), OCNODE542020, 75.

⁴⁷ "Ibrahim Calls for Strengthening of NYSC/IITA Partnership", in *NYSC NEWS: A Journal of NYSC Directorate Headquarters*, (Abuja: NYSC National Directorate Headquarters), OCNODE542020, 78.

⁴⁸ F. Adetunji, "NYSC Rejigs Partnership with NCRI on Agric Training", in *NYSC NEWS: A Journal of NYSC Directorate Headquarters*, (Abuja: NYSC National Directorate Headquarters), OCNODE542020, 79.

⁴⁹ "War Against Poverty (WAP)", *NYSC Year Book 2018*, ..., 38.

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the War against Poverty (WAP)...

Ahmed (KN/09C/033), Attahir Zayyanu Tanko (ANS/09C0025), Abubakar Enupe (GM/09C/594), Ikeagwuonu Chinwendu (RV/09C/0970), Akanmu Folashade (NG/09B/1451), Ademokun Adesanmi (OY/09A/0233), and Fagbohungbe Michael (ANS/09A/0726).⁵⁰

In the same vein,, there are other corps members who have made their mark in the programme by benefitting from the WAP programme and empowering other citizens of Nigeria. Gunn Ewhobor who ventured into grass-cutter farming, poultry and other agro-allied enterprises. He empowered 45 youths in his community and due to his exploits and growing influence, he was elected the General Secretary of Nigeria Poultry Farmers' Association, Bayelsa State Chapter and was conferred with the Bayelsa State NEPAD Award. Ogunmakinde Gbenga Akin who served in Abuja emerged as the best youth entrepreneur in North Central geo-political zone in the Ministry of Finance organised YouWin exercise. Mary Ofojetu went into snailry in Erin-Ile community of Kwara State. She was shortly contracted as a facilitator by FADAMA III due to her impressive activities. Her progress motivated the traditional ruler of the community to set up a snailry farm where some schools and some retired members of the community were trained in snailry with the aim of setting up their own enterprises.

Another beneficiary corps member, Aborisade Adetola who went into snailry in Rivers State where he served also mentored and trained many community members on snail farming. He also launched a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) called "Child and Green Foundation" through which he reached out and trained physically challenged people, orphans and widows in skill acquisition. He later relocated his enterprise to Osogbo in Osun State after his service year. Similarly, Edunjobi Sunday who served in Anambra State also went into snailry.

⁵⁰ "The NYSC/MDGs War Against Poverty (WAP) Programme", *NYSC Year Book* 2013, ..., 60.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Ozinna T. Ntukogu

In Abagana, located in Njikoka LGA of Anambra State, he trained 120 Senior Secondary 3 (SS3) students and over 200 youths in this enterprise but later relocated his own business venture to Ibadan in Oyo State of Nigeria.⁵¹

There are many other success stories that can be cited about NYSC WAP programme, but for the want of space, afore discussed cases suffice. Absolutely, it is established that the programme has recorded some impressive achievements since its inception in 2009, but not without some shortcomings.

Shortcomings and Challenges of the NYSC WAP Programme

There are many shortcomings associated with the implementation of the WAP programme in Nigeria. These challenges have formed very serious limitations to the effectiveness of the WAP programme in Nigeria.

The very first challenge confronting the WAP programme is the general apathy of the youths to go into agriculture. This could be because of its labour intensive nature if practised with crude implements; or its capital intensive nature if it is mechanised. Whatever the reason may be, it has gone a long way in adversely affecting the idea of WAP programme because, the youth come out feeling uninterested in anything agriculture. Some even see it as a dirty job and hence, any gist about it does not interest them. Its consequence on the participation of youths in the WAP programme is evident because, as it is said that personal interest motivates, so, the youths must first of all, have passion for the enterprise before they can enrol. As A. W Ikaka says, this will be solved by re-orientation to emphasise on such skills so that

⁵¹ "The NYSC/MDGs War Against Poverty (WAP) Programme", *NYSC Year Book 2013, ...*, 60-61.

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the War against Poverty (WAP)...

youths can contribute to the growth and development of the economy.⁵²

A factor that has contributed to this problem of apathy among youths is the non-teaching of agriculture-related courses in most faculties of our tertiary institutions except in agriculture related faculties/institutions. What teaching agriculture-related courses in most faculties would have achieved is to whet the interest of Nigerian youths to go into agriculture after school. Some of the corps members who get introduced to the agro-allied programmes end up abandoning it due to their lack of knowledge in the field of agriculture; and so, the training looks so complex to them and ends up boring and scaring them away into other popular fields of SAED like baking, tailoring, bead-making, make-up, leather works, *etcetera*, which are relatively simpler and easier to grasp in outlook. Such a reason was given by some ex corps members who complained that they wanted to acquire the agro-allied training during the SAED sessions in their orientation camps, but the complexity of the trainings discouraged them from continuing.⁵³ What can be done is not just to include mandatory entrepreneurship education in the curricular of tertiary institutions as the DG NYSC Brig Gen S Ibrahim said, but there is need to also incorporate compulsory agricultural education in curricular of all disciplines in tertiary institutions to prepare the youths for the task ahead during their NYSC

⁵² A. W. Ikaka, Director, NYSC South-East Area Office, "The Imperatives of Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development to Graduating Students", ..., 125.

⁵³ Phone Interviews with Ilesanmi Faith, 26+, Postgraduate Student, (served in the South-West, Osun, 2017), IfeomaOkafor, 30+, Medical Practitioner, (Served in the South-West, Ekiti, 2018), ChizikoNtukogu, 32+, Post Graduate Student, (Served in the South-East, Imo, 2017), Mary Ezeigwe, 28+, Medical Practitioner, (Served in the North-West, Sokoto, 2019), Mary Chima, 27+, Lecturer, (Served in the North Central, Benue, 2018) and Chukwurah Bartholomew, 35+, Manager, (Served in the South-South, Cross River, 2012).

THE NYSC AND SAED

Ozinna T. Ntukogu

days and after their service year.⁵⁴This, the DG said would ensure early exposure of youths to embrace self-employment and wealth creation in agriculture instead of hoping to get a white-collar job after school.⁵⁵

Closely related to the issue of curriculum is inadequate training framework curriculum and duration in the WAP programme. Complaints abound that the problem with our tertiary institutions is that the curriculum is too bookish, emphasising more theories than practical; meanwhile, we have failed to realise that there is need to embrace vocational and technical education like that offered by the WAP. But just as Ikaka rightly enthused, “unskilled manpower and theories cannot take us to the moon”.⁵⁶ This is the same problem encountered in the training framework of the WAP programme where more of theories are done at the expense of practical, making the training complex, boring, uninteresting and unattractive to corps members. In addition to that, the duration of the training only lasts for 10 days.⁵⁷ It will only be a matter of pretence if one claims not to know that such a short time is not enough to give training to a prospective agro-entrepreneur who is expected to establish a successful money making venture in agriculture.

Another heinous challenge to the NYSC WAP programme is lack of sensitisation campaigns, inadequate advertisement and poor circulation of information by the programme managers. According to *2013 NYSC Year Book*, it is stated that NYSC/M/SDG project conducts a

⁵⁴ F. Adetunji, “Don Advocates More Funding for NYSC Skill Acquisition Programme”, ..., 23.

⁵⁵ F. Adetunji, “General Ibrahim Advocates Skill Acquisition Training in Schools”, in *NYSC NEWS: A Journal of NYSC Directorate Headquarters*, (Abuja: NYSC National Directorate Headquarters), OCNODE542020, 77.

⁵⁶ A. W. Ikaka, Director, NYSC South-East Area Office, “The Imperatives of Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development to Graduating Students”, ..., 125.

⁵⁷ Awajis, “NYSC Free Loan: What You Need to Know (NYSC WAP Foundation)”, February 27, 2021, Retrieved from <https://awajis.com/nysc-free-loan/>, Accessed on March 13, 2021.

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the War against Poverty (WAP)...

sensitisation programme during orientation courses held in all the NYSC camps across Nigeria, to disseminate relevant information to corps members and then provide answers to all the questions that may arise from corps members about the WAP programme. The document also states that after the seminar, WAP schedule officers in the States/FCT are introduced to corps members for follow-ups after the camp orientation course.⁵⁸

However, it is indeed very surprising that the WAP programme which started earlier before the SAED programme has lesser popularity than the SAED programme among corps members. In fact, many ex-corps members have expressed little or no knowledge about the NYSC WAP programme; they kept referring to the popular SAED programme.⁵⁹

This lack of popularity may have been caused by the wide advertisement of the SAED programme during orientation camp period; a development that has stolen the moment from the WAP programme. Another possible cause of this lack of popularity of WAP programme is the incorporation of agro-allied sector in the SAED programme too. This has blurred the line between activities meant for the WAP programme and those meant for the SAED programme; and since corps members are more aware of the SAED programme, only the rightly informed corps members have had the privilege of knowing about the WAP programme. However, the situation of things suggest that only little has been done and is currently being done by the WAP programme organisers to widely sell the WAP programme to the public

⁵⁸ "The NYSC/MDGs War Against Poverty (WAP) Programme", *NYSC Year Book* 2013, ..., 57.

⁵⁹ Oral Interviews with JamiuDanga, 29+, Lecturer, Interviewed in Kaduna, March 2, 2021, Dr Lawrence Udeagbala, 40+, Lecturer, Interviewed in Kaduna, February 25, 2021, Mohammed Murtala, Lecturer, 29+, Interviewed in Kaduna, March 4, 2021, AdenijiOlawale, 29+, Software Developer, Interviewed in Kaduna, February 21, 2021, Phone Interview with OleredeSikiru, 30+, Private Sector Employee, March 18, 2021, and Phone Interview with Nancy Ozioko, 29+, Private Sector Employee, March 12, 2021.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Ozinna T. Ntukogu

and seek for massive enrolment of corps members on the programme during the orientation camp sessions. A direct consequence of this development is the breeding of lack of interest among corps members who could have benefitted from the programme and from there, empower more youths and develop the nation further.

Lack of Funds has also constituted another major challenge facing the programme. Funding has been found to be a major motivating factor for entrepreneurs. As proven by a research survey, good funding goes a long way in motivating more corps members to participate in entrepreneurial programmes such as WAP.⁶⁰ Apart from the corps members who have regretted poor loan sums as a major challenge, some farm managers of the NYSC farms which have served as training grounds for the WAP programme, have also complained about lack of enough funds to forge ahead. Mallam Zailani Garba who was in charge of the Bauchi NYSC farms complained that the farm needed funding to purchase delivery vehicles and mechanised equipment for the farms so as to boost operations and increase productivity.⁶¹

Speaking on the issue of funds during a lecture in NYSC Stakeholders' meeting at the Scheme's Directorate Headquarters in Abuja, Professor C. Ibe had identified that corps members are the most vibrant, resourceful, educated and knowledgeable group of youths. He also argued that lack of funds has constituted barriers to starting up agro-businesses. He advocated that such barriers must be removed by mobilising more resources for the youths through stakeholders' support, so as to allow youths to initiate ideas that can boost their innate abilities in agro-businesses.⁶² To address this challenge of fund, the DG NYSC, Brig Gen S Ibrahim announced the establishment of a

⁶⁰ O. J Adelekunet al, "Attitude of Graduate Youths Towards Agro-Allied Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development Programme in Oyo State", ..., 19.

⁶¹ F. Adetunji, "DG Inspects NYSC Farm in Bauchi...", p. 76.

⁶² F. Adetunji, "Don Advocates More Funding for NYSC Skill Acquisition Programme", ..., 22.

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the War against Poverty (WAP)...

seventy-five billion naira Nigerian Youth Investment Fund (NYIF), the Presidential Youth Empowerment Scheme (P-YES), and the National Young Farmers' Scheme (NYFS) as additions to the NYSC's funding Schemes resulting from collaborations with other agencies to solve the problem of insufficiency of funds.⁶³ Hopefully, this may end up solving the pressing problem of funds for the progress the programme.

Subsequently, even the loans offered by the WAP programme and other financial institutions collaborating with the scheme to finance the business interest of the successful corps members are most times, far from satisfying the business needs of the youths.⁶⁴

Also, the loans given by the collaborating bodies require rigorous processes for them to be accessed. The BOA loan for instance, can only be accessed without collateral if it is below 250,000 naira, thus made the terms a bit rigid and the process quite rigorous such that in 2015, Mrs Adesua Kagho who was representing the bank's DG, said: "Because we know that the risk is high on this loan and there are no collaterals, because it is not just giving out forms that matters or having ideas, there are a lot of works involved in making the project succeed." It is also important to state that this particular loan offered by the BOA is not interest free but varies between single digit interest rates and 12%. Corps members applying for this loan are also expected to present very strong guarantors.⁶⁵

Relating to the issue of the loans of the NYSC WAP programme is the diversion of the funds meant for the programme to other businesses. This has continued to stifle the successes of the programme as such mostly end up lavishing the funds on other non-agro-related businesses. In Tijani's and Ayinla's research, it was found that even

⁶³ F. Adetunji, "NYSC DG Hails FG on Youth Empowerment", ..., 90.

⁶⁴ S. A. Tijani and M. A. Ayinla, "Effect of the NYSC/MDGs/WAP Agro-Enterprise Loan on Beneficiaries Well-Being in South West Nigeria", ..., 58.

⁶⁵ John Oba, "Empowering Corps Members with Agro-Allied Enterprise", *Blueprint*.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Ozinna T. Ntukogu

though majority of the corps members went into agro-businesses with the loans, some of the beneficiaries of the loans diverted the funds into other businesses that are not agro-based. Such actions deprive beneficiaries who would have invested the loan in agriculture from getting the loan.⁶⁶This problem is caused by lack of monitoring and supervision among the WAP officials who are supposed to keep tabs with the activities of the beneficiaries.⁶⁷ Speaking on this problem in an interview with NYSC Director, Press and Public Relations, Mrs Adeyemi Adenike, the NYSC DG, Brig Gen S Ibrahim has said the scheme would tackle the problem by instituting a better monitoring mechanism to monitor the beneficiaries of the loans offered by the financial institutions.⁶⁸ He also said in another interview with *Economic Confidential*, that monitoring and knowing how loans are invested and managed is very crucial to the sustenance of the system because the loans are revolving loans.⁶⁹

Furthermore, lack of accurate statistics is also another major challenge confronting the progress of the WAP programme since they give a summary of what have been done and what needs to be done for improvement.

Finally, instability and insecurity in the country have posed serious challenges in all spheres of the country. It would amount to overstressing the obvious to state that, NYSC WAP programme has not

⁶⁶ S. A. Tijani and M. A. Ayinla, “Effect of the NYSC/MDGs/WAP Agro-Enterprise Loan on Beneficiaries Well-Being in South West Nigeria”, ..., 58.

⁶⁷ Awajis, “NYSC Free Loan: What You Need to Know (NYSC WAP Foundation)”, and S. A. Tijani and M. A. Ayinla, “Effect of the NYSC/MDGs/WAP Agro-Enterprise Loan on Beneficiaries Well-Being in South West Nigeria”, ..., 58.

⁶⁸ “I Want to Bequeath a Technology driven NYSC”, An Interview with Brigadier General S Ibrahim on the 10th of May 2020, in *NYSC NEWS: A Journal of NYSC Directorate Headquarters*, (Abuja: NYSC National Directorate Headquarters), 2020, 70.

⁶⁹ “NYSC: Rebranding for Revenue Generation, Youth Empowerment – Brig Shuaibu, DG”, *Economic Confidential*, Vol 13, No. 154, July 2020, 17.

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the War against Poverty (WAP)...

been left out in this issue. The fear of the unknown has discouraged a lot of Nigerian youths from going into entrepreneurship in Nigeria. It has not been quickly forgotten that many Nigerians lost their property and enterprises in the crisis of the Niger Delta militancy, the Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East of Nigeria, the many ethno-religious crisis that have bedevilled the country, banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery and other heinous crimes that have rocked the country. Considering all these hiccups, most youths have been discouraged from enrolling for the WAP programme, establishing a business venture amidst the unstable and insecure situation the country finds itself in.

Conclusion

The NYSC WAP programme is an MSDGs initiative which, in line with the MDGs goals 1 and 3 and SDGs Goals 1, 2 and 5, seeks to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger and empower women through agriculture. Since the commencement of the WAP programme in 2009, the programme has recorded considerable successes in achieving its goals and objectives by empowering many corps members in agro-allied businesses. These Corps members have in turn, empowered many youths in different communities.

Funding which has been identified as one of the biggest challenges of the programme can also be tackled by not only more collaborations with corporate bodies but also, by securing a legislation that will establish a trust fund like Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) where a certain percentage of the profit made by these corporate bodies as well as federal, state and local governments are channelled into the funding of such empowerment programmes of the NYSC such as WAP. There should be an establishment of a strong data base for information and a robust monitoring system to keep all WAP beneficiaries in check. Despite these challenges, there is no doubt that the dearth of famers in this present generation portends a serious danger for the future of our nation; but with the yearly creation of

THE NYSC AND SAED

Ozinna T. Ntukogu

many new generation farmers with focus and support by the WAP programme, the food security and the overall development of Nigeria may not have an entirely bleak future. There is no gain saying that the , WAP programme has been successful as an empowerment programme.

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the War against Poverty (WAP)...

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THE NYSC AND SAED

Ozinna T. Ntukogu

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National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the War against Poverty (WAP)...

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THE NYSC AND SAED

H. Sirajo and Moh'd L. Murtala

6

Loans and Credit Facilities for Socio-Economic Development: An Overview of the CBN Youth Entrepreneurship Development Program (YEDP) and Boi Graduate Entrepreneurship Fund (GEF) in Partnership with NYSC

HaliruSirajo
and
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Introduction

Youths are considered crucial, if not the backbone of national economic prosperity and growth. The enormous potentials in the energy of

Loans and Credit Facilities for Socio-Economic Development:

youths, if properly harnessed and utilized by the government through sustainable empowerments could lead to meaningful economic advancement. This can in turn reduces significantly the teeming population of unemployed youths which has been a huge contributing factor to the stagnation of economic advancement of most developing nations. In Nigeria, unemployment is one of the major constraints of youth's positive contribution to national development. The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), through the Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) program, has attracted various organizations at both national and international levels, the Private Sector, and Donor Agencies to partner in its drive for a robust youth entrepreneurship development. Some of these partners include the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), the Bank of Industry (BOI), United Nation Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Bank of Agriculture (BOA), International Labour Organisation (ILO), Credit Direct Ltd, and many Commercials Banks and other credit facility institutions. The Scheme's youth empowerment programs, targeting graduates with robust business ideas require fund partnership. This is to enhance the spread of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), improving youth's access to finance, as well as reducing the burden of unemployment on the Federal Government, thereby facilitating the growth of the economy. This paper, therefore, is an assessment of the role of the Youth Entrepreneurship Development Program (YEDP) by the CBN, and NYSC-BOI Graduates Entrepreneurship Fund (GEF) in partnership with NYSC as a catalyst in mitigating unemployment among Nigerian youths.

THE NYSC AND SAED

H. Sirajo and Moh'd L. Murtala

Conceptual Clarification

Youth Entrepreneurship Development Program (YEDP). This is an initiative of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) as part of its effort to deepen credit delivery to stimulate the challenge of unemployment and promote entrepreneurial spirit among Nigerian youths.¹ The program is aimed at harnessing the entrepreneurship spirit of the teeming youth, by providing timely and affordable financial support to implement their business ideas. Target beneficiaries are members of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), not more than five years post-NYSC graduates, those who possess a verifiable tertiary institution certificate and artisans with First School Leaving Certificate or a technical certificate or accredited proficiency certificate from the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), whichever is applicable.

Graduates Entrepreneurship Fund (GEF). The Graduate Entrepreneurship Fund scheme is the Bank of Industry's first youth program, in partnership with the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), specifically targeted at youths undergoing the mandatory 1-year national service.² Specifically, the program as a funding opportunity apparatus for business ideas developed by youth corps members targeted those that undergo the SAED entrepreneurship training program and had developed a promising business plan. The programme aims to divert the mindset of the Nigerian youths to entrepreneurship and self-reliance as a means of employment, encouraging them to develop the habit of becoming their bosses, and equally contributing to the growth of the national economy.

¹ Youth Entrepreneurship Development Guidelines, Development Finance Department, Central Bank of Nigeria CBN Abuja, 2016 February,<https://www.cbn.gov.ng/Devfin/yedp.asp>,p2

²Bank of Industry "Graduate Entrepreneurship Fund"
<https://www.boi.ng/graduate-entrepreneurship-fund/>

Loans and Credit Facilities for Socio-Economic Development:

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). There is no universally accepted definition of SME, several efforts have been put in place to streamline the SME definition as its application varies from one country to another. Worthy of note, among the attempt to define SMEs was in the collection of the Financial Access in 2010. The most common definitions used by regulators are based on the number of employees, sales/and or loan size. Among the three variables or indices, the most common is the number of employee criteria. According to Oyah Ardict, sixty-eight countries provided information on the SME definition criteria used by the financial regulator. Fifty of them use the number of employee criteria, and 29 out of this fifty also use the other two criteria. A total of 41 regulators use the maximum sales value criteria, and 15 use maximum loan value criteria to define an SME.³ The numbers of employees and sales values, therefore, are probably the most accurate parameters to define SME. In Nigeria, after realizing the enormous economic contribution of the SME sector, a regulatory body was established to foster the enhancement of the sector. In 2003, the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria was established by the SMEDAN Act of 2003 to promote the development of the SME sector of the Nigeria Economy. Among the mandate of the SMEDAN was reaching out or facilitating the access of micro, small and medium entrepreneurs and investors to all resources required for their development. Thus, the partnership with NYSC under the SAED program, SMEDAN is ensuring the provision of the necessary capital for promising business ideas of the youth corps members in its quest to establish a structured and efficient micro, small and medium enterprises sector for sustainable economic development.

³ O.P Ardic, N. Mylenko and V. saltine "Small and Medium Enterprises: A Cross-Country Analysis with a New Data Set", in Policy Research Working Paper 5538", The World Bank Financial and Private Sector Development Consultative Group to Assist the Poor, World Bank, 2011, p8.

THE NYSC AND SAED

H. Sirajo and Moh'd L. Murtala

NYSC and Youth Development in Nigeria

The youths all over the world constitute a greater percentage of the population of nations. According to the United Nations, the world is home to the largest generation of young people in history, 1.8 billion. Close to 90 percent of them live in developing countries.⁴ In Nigeria, the youth constitutes 60 to 70 percent of the population. It is in them lies the future, when founding fathers of NYSC, in their quest of avenues of building a united, strong, and indivisible political entity, their searchlight beamed on available human and material resources, precisely the educated youths population, which would be harnessed for the implementation of the policy of reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation to rebuild the war-torn Nigeria.⁵ Looking at the dynamism of the youth to the society, it is not far from the truth to say that the decision to inculcate in the Nigerian youth the spirit of self-reliance, selfless service, patriotism, and discipline for capacity building was timely and efficient. Disorienting the mind of the youths on ethnic and religious differences, inter-ethnic hostilities, mistrust, and political upheavals was also part of the initiative. To further give credence to the significance of youth participatory roles as a catalyst for advancement, Hamza and Tyav captures it more holistically as thus;

Efficient youth engagement contributes immensely to socio-economic advancement. Youth can constructively participate in the developmental processes of their communities given the right opportunity, skill, training, and encouragement. In spite of the odds against them, Nigerian youths have demonstrated innovativeness, character, and willpower that define developmental trajectory. They have shown that they are an important

⁴ M Hamza and TT Tyav, "Leadership and Youth Development in Nigeria" in AO Ahmed, N Madiche and BJ Audu, (eds.), Leadership, Entrepreneurship & Development in Nigeria, Festschrift in honour of Prof Azubuike Sonny Nwankwo, (Kaduna: Nigerian Defence Academy Publishers, 2020)p142.

⁵ See also in National Youth Service Corps Year Book: 2013 Edition, p23

Loans and Credit Facilities for Socio-Economic Development:

cog of the developmental matrix of the Nigerian society and as critical stakeholders; they are at the center of the reconstruction of the Nigerian story.⁶

Consequently, there is a dynamic body of literature on youth development, but basically, three aspects of youth development are identified by scholars which are within the context of this study. (a) natural (which is more of physical growth, traditional self-awareness of the environment and the use of other parts of the body, the most basic human activities, etc); (b) Principle (which emphasizes the agency of institutions, organizations, and individuals for the capacity growth of youths especially in the community level); and (c) Practice (the practical application of the principles acquired to foster and enhance the growth and the effectiveness of the natural growth).⁷ The NYSC scheme falls within the practice and principle category. As noted earlier, it is in the interest of the scheme, to pursue the economic empowerment of the Corps Members via skill acquisition training for self-development. This is as a result of the changing nature or circumstance in the ability of the government to employ the increasing number of graduates in the MDAs.

Therefore, the need to train the youths in entrepreneurship skills for self-reliance became more necessary than it is before. Further to this, it is captured in the objectives as spelt out in section I, subsection 3(d) of the NYSC Act, "to enable Nigerian youth to acquire the spirit of self-reliance, by encouraging them to develop skills for self-employment".⁸

⁶M Hamza and TT Tyav, "Leadership and Youth Development in Nigeria" ..p143

⁷D.O Arubayi, "Youth Development: Understanding the Contribution of the National Youth Service Corps to Nigerian National Development" (unpublished Phd thesis, School of Environmental Education and Developmental Studies, Faculty of Humanities, University of Manchester, 2015), p84.

⁸S. Ibrahim, "Life Without White Collar: Imperatives for Vocational and Entrepreneurial Education: The NYSC Perspective" (A Paper Presented at the 11th Convocation Ceremony of Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun), 28th Nov,

THE NYSC AND SAED

H. Sirajo and Moh'd L. Murtala

In the realization of this, the NYSC has over the years, initiated programs aimed at addressing youth unemployment in the country. Notable among these programmes are the Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) and the War Against Poverty (WAP), which are geared toward empowering the corps members for self-employment and wealth creation.⁹

Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED)

The SAED program was established in 2012 as part of the Federal Government's commitment to contribute to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as tackling youth unemployment.¹⁰This program involves the training of the corps members both in-camp and post-camp in various businesses and vocational entrepreneurial skills. Since its inception, the SAED program has attracted so many collaborations from different agencies, national and international, non-governmental, private sectors, and many others. All are committed efforts to see the actualization of the objectives of the SAED, which among others are to equip the Nigerian graduates with the basic entrepreneurship skills for self-sustenance. As part of the commitment to ensuring that the objectives of the SAED program are achieved, the following key activities are implemented;

- i. sensitization and mobilization of Corps Members for enrollment into the skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development program;
- ii. entrepreneurship and hands-on training in and out of the camp;
- iii. identification of organizations at the state level to provide training and mentoring in specific skills sets;

2019 in Selected Speeches and Strides of the 18th NYSC Director-General, Brig. Gen S. Ibrahim, May 2020. P176

⁹National Youth Service Corps Year Book: NYSC 40TH Anniversary Edition, 2013,p32

¹⁰National Youth Service Corps: 2016 Annual Report of the NYSC Scheme,p29

Loans and Credit Facilities for Socio-Economic Development:

- iv. attachments of the corps members to the various organizations for skills acquisition and entrepreneurship development;
- v. business plan/feasibility report development and collation;
- vi. monitoring and supervision of trainee Corps Members; and
- vii. facilitation of access to available funding opportunities.¹¹

SAED has recorded tremendous successes over the years of its establishment. Among these achievements of the program to date, no fewer than one million, one hundred and thirty-two thousand, four hundred and nine (1,132,409) corps members have been sensitized and reached with SAED messages, while over 764,677 have completed post-camp training.¹² In addition to this, the Bank of Industry, one of the partners of the scheme, has trained over 3,927 corps members under the BOI-NYSC Graduate Entrepreneurship Fund. Among this number, 1,077 of them have applied for loans in the sum of about N4 billion. As of now, a total of N540.2 million has been disbursed to 325 corps members, and they have established their businesses in different parts of the country.¹³ A statistic was given by the NYSC, which shows that each of the direct beneficiaries of the SAED, in turn, employs an average of four persons to run the business for them. Equally, corps members are being trained in nothing less than 12 skills; namely, Agro-Allied, Automobile, Construction, Food Preservation and Processing, Culture and Tourism, Cosmetology, ICT, Environment, Beatification, Education, Film and Photography, and Power and Energy.

¹¹National Youth Service Corps Year Book: NYSC 40TH Anniversary Edition, 2013,p29

¹² S. Ibrahim, "Life Without White Collar: Imperatives for Vocational and Entrepreneurial Education: The NYSC Perspective" ..p180

¹³Bank of Industry "Graduate Entrepreneurship Fund"
[https://www.boi.ng/graduate-entrepreneurship-fund/.](https://www.boi.ng/graduate-entrepreneurship-fund/)

THE NYSC AND SAED

H. Sirajo and Moh'd L. Murtala

"Entrepreneurial education without start-up capital to set up the business is as good as not doing anything."¹⁴ Of all the identified efforts in training the corps members in various entrepreneurial skills, one important aspect worthy of note is in the area of securing capital for start-up. Securing credit facilities is a major challenge for most SMEs. This has been a major constraint to so many youth's business ideas and dreams. It may interest you to also note that, among the key success factors of entrepreneurship education as noted by Ibrahim, is the effective development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, in which collaboration is built with multiple stakeholders that work to create entrepreneurial ventures. This is an emphasis on the importance of collaborative efforts between stakeholders in meeting up with the youth sustainable development projects. In the NYSC for example, two categories of collaboration are identified, namely;

- a) the training partners who participate during the in-camp and post-camp training on the different skill sets and entrepreneurship development and
- b) secondly, the development partners which are various organizations at both national and international levels, international donor agencies, and private sector. This category of partners collaborated with the NYSC in the SAED program in to provide infrastructure, manpower, and empowerment of corps members with start-up capital.¹⁵

The NYSC scheme in its quest to meet the needs towards meeting the national and global challenges in the area of youth development, has had of formal and informal engagements, collaborating with an inexhaustible list of donor agencies from international, national, regional, and local levels. Some of these agencies facilitate access to

¹⁴S. Ibrahim, "Life Without White Collar: Imperatives for Vocational and Entrepreneurial Education: The NYSC Perspective" ..p179

Loans and Credit Facilities for Socio-Economic Development:

available funding opportunities for trained corps members in the capital, especially in actualizing the entrepreneurial skills acquired under the SAED program. These collaborations have yielded great achievements of the SAED programme as contained in the table below;

Table 6.1

| S/N | NAME OF ORGANISATION | NUMBER THAT RECEIVED LOANS | AMOUNT |
|--------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | Bank of Industry | 1077 | N540.02million |
| 2 | Credit Direct Ltd | 13,344 | N629.016 million |
| 3 | Central Bank of Nigeria | 07 | N15 million |
| TOTAL | | 14,428 | N1.184Billion |

Source: S. Ibrahim, "Life Without White Collar: Imperatives for Vocational and Entrepreneurial Education: The NYSC Perspective" (A Paper Presented at the 11th Convocation Ceremony of Tai Solar in University of Education, Ijagun), 28th Nov 2019. P180

The focus of this paper is an overview of the collaboration between NYSC and CBN, under Youth Entrepreneurship Development Program (YEDP), and NYSC-BOI Graduate Entrepreneurship Fund (GEF) respectively.

Youth Entrepreneurship Development Program (YEDP)

Over the years, the Central Bank of Nigeria CBN has continued to make known its intention to add more impetus to the collaborative entrepreneurship training program with the NYSC.¹⁶ This is in line with the Scheme's aim of promoting the spirit of self-reliance and entrepreneurship among Nigerian youth. There are various initiatives

¹⁶National Youth Service Corps Year Book: NYSC 40TH Anniversary Edition, 2013,p34

THE NYSC AND SAED

H. Sirajo and Moh'd L. Murtala

of the same sort organized by the CBN in collaboration with NYSC before the introduction of the YEDP. Notable among is the CBN-NYSC-NDE Collaborative Entrepreneurship Training-Venture Prize Competition. This program commenced in 2008 with the training of 600 corps members. It was an effort to encourage corps members in business plan development in a form of competition which may eventually win funding grants. As at 2013, five editions of the program have been held successfully, with the last edition holding at Ebonyi, Edo, Osun, Niger, and FCT.¹⁷ The central idea of the program was agreed in principle from the outset that the CBN takes responsibility for funding the feeding of the 600 corps members and provision of resource persons from the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), while the NYSC defrays the transportation cost of corps members to the various training centers.¹⁸ Corps members benefited greatly from the training, and it has contributed in no small way to the realization of the SAED mandate of raising a crop of young entrepreneurs and wealth creators rather than job seekers.

The YEDP program was launched on the 15th of March 2016 under the development finance unit of the CBN. Among the aims was to enhance the deployment of the ingenuity and resourcefulness of Nigerian youths for maximum economic development.¹⁹ At the same time, the program was projected to provide a sustainable mechanism to stimulate employment, contribute to non-oil Gross Domestic product (GDP) and address the challenge of youth restiveness. This was a giant step taken by the CBN towards complimenting, as well as supporting the entrepreneurship skill acquisition training of the youth corps members

¹⁷National Youth Service Corps, "NYSC SAED Description of Programme Activities" Department of Skills Acquisition and Interpreneurship Development, October, 2016, p3.

¹⁸National Youth Service Corps: 2016 Annual Report of the NYSC Scheme,p31

¹⁹ Opportunity for Africans, Bank of Industry Graduate Entrepreneurship Fund for NYSC Youth Corps Members, 2018 <https://www.opportunitiesforafricans.com/boi-gef-programme-2018-for-national-youth-service-corps-nysc-members/>

Loans and Credit Facilities for Socio-Economic Development:

under the SAED program. Although, the program was originally designed for serving corps members and non-NYSC (but not more than five years post-NYSC), those with proficiency certificate from the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), artisans with First School Leaving Certificate or a technical certificate or accredited also benefit. The set objectives of the program are as follows;

- i. harness the entrepreneurship skills and innovative capacities of youth;
- ii. improve access to finance for youth entrepreneurs using a well-structured business model;
- iii. stimulate the flow of finance to start-up enterprises;
- iv. encourage job creation;
- v. increase the contribution of the non-oil sector to the GDP; and
- vi. promote diversification of the economy.²⁰

YEDP Guideline

To access the YEDP funding, the guideline for the program indicates the eligibility, eligible activities, loan tenor, types of facilities, modalities of the program, repayment schedule among others, as shall be enumerated. The eligible activities as highlighted in the comprehensive guideline of the YEDP, it will cover start-up and expansion project for young graduates and non-graduates in the following sub-sectors;

1. Eligible Activities

Activities to be covered are startup and expansion projects for young graduates and non-graduates in the following sub-sectors:

- i. Agricultural Value Chain (fish farming, poultry, snail farming, etc.).
- ii. Cottage Industry.
- iii. Mining and Solid minerals.
- iv. Creative Industry (Tourism, Arts and Crafts).

²⁰National Youth Service Corps: 2016 Annual Report of the NYSC Scheme,p33

THE NYSC AND SAED

H. Sirajo and Moh'd L. Murtala

- v. Information and Communications Technology(ICT).
- vi. Any other activity that may be determined by the CBN from time to time.²¹

2. Type of Facilities

- i. Term loan
- ii. Working capital²²

3. Loan Tenor

- i. Loans shall have a maximum tenor of 36 months depending on the complexity of the project. The tenor of each project shall be determined in relation to its cash flow.
- ii. Working capital facility of 12 months with a maximum rollover of 12 months subject to approval.
- iii. The programme allows for a moratorium of 3 months in the loan repayment schedule and qualified projects for moratorium shall be determined on case by case basis.

4. Modalities of the Programme

- i. Loan Amount shall be ₦3 million maximum for a single obligor and ₦10 million for group projects jointly owned by 3-5 qualified beneficiaries.
- ii. Interest Rate - lending banks shall access the fund at 2% from the CBN and on-lend at a maximum rate of 9% per annum, all charges inclusive.
- iii. Funding shall come from the Micro Small and Medium Enterprises Development Fund (MSMEDF).

²¹ CBN stated further that trading activities are not permitted under this program, priority will, however be given to entrepreneurial activities with high potentials for job creation.

²² CBN specifies that this facility shall not be used for the refinancing of projects.

Loans and Credit Facilities for Socio-Economic Development:

- iv. NYSC Discharge Certificate shall be the collateral from beneficiaries.
- v. Verified certificates of tertiary institutions shall be taken as additional collateral for graduate beneficiaries.
- vi. Artisans will use their School Leaving Certificate or Technical Certificate or approved Proficiency Certificate from National Board for Technical Education (NBTE).
- vii. Third party guarantors will also be provided as additional collateral.
- viii. Lending bank shall obtain at least one credit report on promoter(s) for all projects.
- ix. Cost of training for beneficiaries will be shared between the CBN and the lending bank in a ratio of 50:50 or any other agreed ratio.
- x. Risk sharing on startups will beat 50:50 between the CBN and the lending bank as an incentive to banks to support startups and youth entrepreneurs.
- xi. Disbursement shall be in tranches and attached to project/equipment financing to minimize fund diversion by beneficiaries.
- xii. All movable collaterals used to secure the loan shall be registered on the National Collateral Registry (NCR) by the lending bank.
- xiii. Within two weeks of repayment of loan, the lending bank shall discharge all registered movable collaterals on the National Collateral Registry and notify the customer accordingly.

Repayment

Repayments shall be amortized and monthly principal and interest repayments shall be remitted by the lending bank to the CBN.

THE NYSC AND SAED

H. Sirajo and Moh'd L. Murtala

5. Eligibility Criteria for Participation in the Programme

Intended Beneficiaries

- i. A 50:50 shared between members of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and Non-NYSC members (not more than 5 years post-NYSC).
- ii. Artisans

Borrower

A borrower shall meet the following criteria to be eligible:

- iii. Be between 18 and 34 years of age.
- iv. Be a NYSC member or non-NYSC member (but not more than 5 years post-NYSC).
- v. Possess a verifiable tertiary institution certificate.
- vi. Artisans shall possess School Leaving Certificate or Technical Certificate or approved Proficiency Certificate from NBTE (whichever is applicable).

6. The Mechanism for the Programme

- i. Programme is an equal opportunity intervention in all respects - geo-political zone, gender, (dis)ability, etc.
- ii. Applicants will be pre-qualified by the lending bank using an on-line portal.
- iii. Pre-qualified applicants will undergo training before they can access the facility. Training will be handled by the CBN Entrepreneurship Development Centers (EDCs).
- iv. Pre-qualified applicants will submit their business proposal(s) to the lending bank for appraisal.
- v. Successful applicants will submit their loan applications in prescribed format to the lending bank.
- vi. Lending banks shall receive, process, approve and forward requests for the facility from successful applicants to the CBN.
- vii. The pre-qualification and appraisal process by the lending

Loans and Credit Facilities for Socio-Economic Development:

bank shall not exceed 15 days from the day of on-line submission of intent by prospective beneficiaries.

viii. Each request must be accompanied by the following documents:

- (a) Business plan which should state expressly, the financing plan, economic benefits, etc.
- (b) Statement of Affairs for startups and companies with less than 3years of existence (If applicable).
- (c) Copies of duly executed offer documents between the bank and the loan applicants.
- (d) Certificate of Incorporation or registration of Business Name.
- (e) Brief on directors/partners.
- (f) At least one credit report of the promoter/entrepreneur.
- (g) Proposed schedule of fund disbursement and repayment.
- (h) Evidence of third party guarantee acceptable to the lending bank.

ix. Within 5 working days of the receipt of the banks' requests, the CBN shall inform the banks of the status of their request.

x. Upon disbursement of the Fund by CBN, the lending bank shall within 5 working days disburse the approved limit according to the proposed disbursement schedule.

7. Verification/ Monitoring of Projects

- i. The CBN reserves the right to reject an application from any lending bank that does not meet the requirements of the Guidelines.
- ii. Projects shall be monitored by the Monitoring Team comprising of the CBN, NYSC, and the lending bank.

THE NYSC AND SAED

H. Sirajo and Moh'd L. Murtala

8. Management of the Programme

The Development Finance Department of the Central Bank of Nigeria shall be responsible for the management of the Programme.

9. Responsibilities of Stakeholders

For effective implementation of the programme, the responsibilities of the stakeholders shall include:

Central Bank of Nigeria(CBN)

The Central Bank of Nigeria shall:

- i. Articulate clear Guidelines for the implementation of the programme.
- ii. Determine the limits in accordance with the provisions of the MSMEDF Guidelines.
- iii. Provide logistic support for the training of pre-qualified applicants in collaboration with others take holders.
- iv. Approve and disburse loan requests from lending banks in favour of successful beneficiaries.
- v. Carry out verification and monitoring of projects financed.
- vi. Conduct impact evaluation in conjunction with the Monitoring Team and other relevant take holders.
- vii. Generate periodic reports on its performance.
- viii. Sensitize stakeholders and the public on the activities of the Scheme.
- ix. Facilitate review meeting of Stake holders.
- x. Review the Guidelines as may be necessary from time to time.

Loans and Credit Facilities for Socio-Economic Development:

Participating Financial Institutions (PFIs)

The PFIs shall:

- i. Develop a portal to facilitate on-line registration by prospective applicants for pre-qualification.
- ii. Facilitate a link between the portal and the website of the NYSC for authentication of the details of NYSC members.
- iii. Pre-qualify, appraise and screen business proposals of applicants as part of their due diligence.
- iv. Forward such approved requests to CBN for verification and approval.
- v. Carry out all relevant due diligence in the administration of the facility.
- vi. Obtain at least one credit report on promoter(s) for all projects.
- vii. Verify all certificates used as collateral for the facility.
- viii. Cost of training for pre-qualified applicants will be shared between the CBN and the lending bank at 50:50 or any other agreed ratio.
- ix. Grant credit **ONLY** to activities covered under these Guidelines at a maximum interest rate of 9% per annum all charges inclusive.
- x. Register all movable assets accepted or financed as collaterals for the loan with the National Collateral Registry(NCR).
- xi. Monitor the projects during the loan period.
- xii. Render periodic returns as may be specified by the CBN from time to time.
- xiii. Shall within 2 weeks of repayment, discharge all movable collaterals used to securitize the loan on the National Collateral Registry and notify the customer accordingly.
- xiv. Comply with the Guidelines of the Programme.

THE NYSC AND SAED

H. Sirajo and Moh'd L. Murtala

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC)

The NYSC shall:

- xv. Authenticate the details of corps members using its on-line link with the lending bank.
- xvi. Provide lien on the discharge certificates of corps members who will benefit from the programme.
- xvii. Provide logistic support, that is, venue and accommodation for the training of applicants.

Borrower

The borrower shall:

- i. Register for pre-qualification with the lending bank using the on-line portal for the Programme
- ii. Submit business proposal and other documentation requirements.
- iii. Adhere strictly to the terms and conditions of the Facility.
- iv. Utilize the funds for the purpose for which it was granted.
- v. Make the project and records available for inspection/ verification and monitoring by the CBN and Monitoring Team.
- vi. Comply with the Guidelines.
- vii. Cover their transportation cost for the training programme.

10. Discontinuation of a Credit Facility

- i. Whenever a loan is repaid or the facility is otherwise discontinued, the lending bank shall return the fund to the CBN.
- ii. The lending bank shall discharge the movable collaterals from the National Collateral Registry.

Loans and Credit Facilities for Socio-Economic Development:

11. Infractions

The following, among others, shall constitute infractions of these Guidelines:

- i. Delay in disbursement to beneficiaries
- ii. Delay in remittance of monthly repayments.

Note:

- (a) For items (i) and (ii) above, penalty shall be Monetary Policy Rate (MPR) plus 2 per cent of the amount outstanding.
- (b) In cases of three (3) monthly defaults by the beneficiary, the lending bank shall be liable to pay back 50% of the amount outstanding within two (2) weeks, failing which the CBN shall debit the lending bank.
- (c) Wherever a case of negligence is established against the lending bank, the CBN shall be at liberty to debit the bank with the remaining 50% of the out standing amount.
- (d) Recoveries shall be shared in the ratio 50:50 by the CBN and the lending bank.

12. Amendments

These Guidelines shall be subject to review from time to time as may be deemed necessary by the CBN.

Within eight months of the establishment of the YEDP program, a total of 1032 serving and ex-corps members have been trained under the program in seven centers.²³On the 20th of October 2016, CBN had occasioned the presentation of cheques to 310 corps members. The program as noted earlier was introduced in 2016 as a springboard for the empowerment of corps members and other youths for self-

²³ National Youth Service Year Book: 2018 Edition, p62

THE NYSC AND SAED

H. Sirajo and Moh'd L. Murtala

employment and wealth creation. In 2019 also, the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Godwin Emefiele promised the Director-General of the NYSC of the apex bank's commitment and willingness to provide further opportunities for self-employment for corps members through its skill acquisition training. The CBN Governor explained that upon completion of training, beneficiaries would get the cumulative value which represents a loan that would be repaid within seven years with a two-year moratorium. He noted that the loan was conceived out of the need to reduce the unemployment rate in the country. He further enjoined the corps members to attend the bank's entrepreneurship training centers, "to acquire skills in various vocational areas for economic survival at the end of their national service instead of waiting for white-collar jobs."²⁴ Furthermore, the CBN Governor assured the NYSC DG that the CBN National Microfinance Bank would also support interested corps members in business financing. Unlike the YEDP program, Graduate Entrepreneurship Fund GEF solely targeted young Nigerian graduates who are serving under the NYSC with capital for a start-up as well as the expansion of existing ones.

Graduate Entrepreneurship Fund GEF

Bank of Industry has been among the strategic partners of the NYSC in training young Nigerian youths during the youth service year especially in the aspect of entrepreneurship skill for self-employment. The novel scheme, Graduate Entrepreneurship Fund was a joint initiative of the BOI and the NYSC which provides a loan of up to a 2.0million at a 0% interest rate to encourage and support enterprises developed by serving youth corps members. It was established in 2015 as the first youth-driven program by the BOI. Although there are other programs of the same idea introduced by the BOI, an example of which is the

²⁴ "Unemployment: CBN Promises 7year Loans for Corpers", Economic Confidential, 21 June, 2019, in Media Assessment: Shuaibu Ibrahim's Silent Revolution in NYSC, Vol 1, 2020. p73.

Loans and Credit Facilities for Socio-Economic Development:

Youth Entrepreneurship Support Program (P-Yes Program). The aim is to change the job-seeking mindset of Nigerian youths to entrepreneurship for self-reliance and self-employment, by encouraging them to develop skills while contributing to the accelerated growth of the national economy.²⁵

Objectives of GEF

The Graduate Entrepreneurship Fund (GEF) is a product with the following objectives:

- To encourage graduates of tertiary institutions currently undergoing the compulsory one-year NYSC programme, to venture into business and become employers of labour rather than job-seekers.
- To address the entrepreneurship capacity gap of the young NYSC members.
- To deepen financial inclusion by de-risking the NYSC members and making them eligible for small business loans to be provided by BOI.
- Ensure sustainability of the business of the young graduates through effective monitoring of the corps members by the NYSC Directorate and BOI.

Components of the GEF Programme

The GEF Programme comprises the following:

1. Capacity building Process through the following:
 - i. Selection/screening of the NYSC members that will participate in the capacity building process through questionnaire to be administered on BOI online portal.
 - ii. 4 days intensive training on generating a business idea (value proposition), how to run a profitable business

²⁵Bank of Industry Youth Entrepreneurship Support Program (P-YES)
<https://www.boi.ng/yes/,p2>

THE NYSC AND SAED

H. Sirajo and Moh'd L. Murtala

(Business Model), and basic financial record keeping. This will be done in collaboration with the NYSC Directorate and shall be facilitated by BOI's partner Entrepreneurship Development Centers/Institutions in the 36 states of the federation, including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

2. Financial support for those with bankable business ideas within BOI's SME clusters.

Table 2

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| RATIONALE | The scheme is a special fund to encourage young Nigerian graduates of tertiary institutions who are currently serving under the NYSC programme to start up new businesses as well as expansion of existing ones. |
| TARGET MARKET/ CRITERIA | This product will be available to serving NYSC members that have successfully passed through the following stages: i. Screening process ii. Attended the capacity building programme developed specifically for the prospects under GEF iii. Submitted a bankable business plans in respect of any of the Bank's identified 40 SME clusters listed in Appendix I. (Any subsequent addition to the Bank's identified cluster shall also be included) |
| PROJECTED IMPACT | The fund shall be deployed to support the establishment and/or expansion of an estimated 1,000 enterprises promoted by |

Loans and Credit Facilities for Socio-Economic Development:

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| | NYSC members across the country. The scheme is expected to create a minimum of 5,000 direct jobs and 25,000 indirect jobs annually, totaling 30,000 jobs. |
| PROGRAM LIMIT | ₦2.0 billion in the first year. |
| OBLIGOR LIMIT | Up to ₦2 million |
| PRICING | Interest Rate: Nil (0%), effective from 1 st May, 2017. |
| TENOR | 3 – 5 years. |
| MORATORIUM | Six months from date of Loan Disbursement. |
| SECURITY | Security for the facility will be combination of: 1. Specific charge over the equipment (present and future). 2. Lien on the NYSC discharge certificate 3. Undertaking by the NYSC Directorate not to release the discharge certificate until the loan is liquidated. 4. One (1) external guarantor acceptable to BOI who must belong to any of the following categories: 1. Senior Civil Servant (Level 7 and above). 2. Bankers (not below the level of banking Officer) and must have been confirmed by current employer. 3. Professionals i.e. Medical Doctors, Lawyers, Accountants, Engineers, etc. |

THE NYSC AND SAED

H. Sirajo and Moh'd L. Murtala

| | | |
|-------------------|---|---|
| | <p>4. Senior Staff of reputable quoted Companies, International Oil Companies, Telecommunications Companies (GSM providers).</p> <p>5. Elected public servants/ administrators.</p> <p>6. Reputable entrepreneurs with ongoing entities and registered business names.</p> <p>7. Clergy men.</p> <p>The guarantees must be supported with a Notarized Statement of Net worth acceptable to BOI.</p> | |
| FUNDING STRUCTURE | <p>Purchase of assets for business: Machinery and equipment.</p> <p>Working Capital: purchase of raw materials, operational cost, leases/ rentals of premises, renovation, insurance of assets and utility bill (for first three months of operation).</p> | <p>Up to 100% of the investment need and or</p> <p>Up to 50% of the working capital need.</p> |

Loans and Credit Facilities for Socio-Economic Development:

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| DISBURSEMENT | <p><u>Term Loan:</u> 50% advance payment to equipment suppliers and payment of the balance only after satisfactory delivery and installation of the equipment. RMD to issue a letter of undertaking for the payment of the balance. However, full cash payment can be made in advance where items of equipment are to be bought from the likes of Cash n Carry, Shoprite, Jumia etc.</p> <p><u>Working Capital:</u> 50% of loan amount, to be disbursed after successful installation and testing of the equipment.</p> |
|---------------------|---|

Source: Bank of Industry “Graduate Entrepreneurship Fund”
<https://www.boi.ng/graduate-entrepreneurship-fund/>

Conclusion

It is now evident from the foregoing, therefore, that the NYSC in collaboration with CBN and BOI has tremendously contributed to the actualization of a plethora of business ideas developed by the youth corps members who undertook the skill acquisition training under the SAED program through the provision of the required funding for take-up as well as the expansion of existing ones. As noted in the paper, business ideas plus skill acquisition training are not enough to kick-start a business without adequate funding as capital. For this reason, as extensively enumerated in the paper, the Central Bank of Nigeria and the Bank of Industry deemed it necessary to intervene with funding opportunities, with the introduction of the novel Youth Entrepreneurship Development Program and the Graduate Entrepreneurship Fund respectively. That in turn, has instilled the spirit of entrepreneurship in the youth and have equally stimulated

THE NYSC AND SAED

H. Sirajo and Moh'd L. Murtala

employment. Consequently, a plethora of serving youth corps members including ex-corps members had successfully accessed the fund and since established their businesses.

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NYSC Skills Acquisition Programmes and Igbo Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

7

The Role of Private Enterprises in the SAED Programme

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

Introduction

Globally, youths constitute the largest and most productive demography. They account for one of every six people.¹ In Nigeria, youths make the most productive age group compared to other age brackets, they constitute about 70% of the population. However, youth

¹ UN Department of Economic and social affairs. "Youth Population trends and Sustainable Development"
<https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/YouthPOP.pdf>

THE NYSC AND SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

unemployment is a major challenge to the country, it is estimated that about 35% of youths are currently unemployed in Nigeria.

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). It was established in 1973 as part of the post-Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) programmes to heal the wounds and unite Nigerians. The target of NYSC is young graduates who are fresh from tertiary institutions, to harness their youthfulness for national integration, unity and national development.

Since its inception, the NYSC has achieved a lot in the areas of integration, education, health delivery , mobility of labour geared towards national development. The increasing rate of youth unemployment led to the establishment of the Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Programme (SAED) in 2012. SAED is aimed at equipping youths with the necessary skills to pursue successful entrepreneurial endeavours as well as skills that will make them compete well in the labour market. SAED has successfully built partnership with government and private bodies to further the success of the programme through training and funding. With specific reference to private enterprises, there have been huge successes recorded in the partnership. Private enterprises have contributed immensely both during in-camp and post-camp training by donating materials and other manpower needs for the successful execution of the entrepreneurship and Skills acquisition training.

The focus of this chapter is to assess the role of private enterprises that partner with the NYSC SAED Programme and their contributions towards the success of the SAED initiative. The chapter after a conceptual clarification will give an overview of the SAED programme, addressing its objectives, the department structure and the 12 skill sets that every Corps member is expected to pick from and train during the period of service year.

NYSC Skills Acquisition Programmes and Igbo Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

Definition of Terms

SAED: Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development is a programme of the National Youth Service Corps established in 2012 to tackle and reduce the rate of unemployment among the Nigerian graduates through training to specialize in business development and to acquire various skills across 12 different growth sectors of the economy in order to become employers of labour rather than job seekers.²

Private Enterprises: Private Sector or enterprises are the businesses that are owned by a private groups or an individual. Different types of businesses under private enterprises are a Partnership, Sole Proprietorship, Cooperative, and Company.²

Partnership: Partnership is an arrangement where parties, agree to cooperate to advance their mutual interests. The partners in a partnership may be individuals, businesses, interest-based organisations, schools, governments or combinations.³

An Overview of the SAED Programme

The NYSC SAED program was created to address the challenges of unemployment, is by instilling the spirit of self-reliance among Corps members. The aim of the programme is to encourage the acquisition of skills by the Nigerian graduate for self-reliance which is one of its core mandates.⁴ The program has since been used as a mechanism

² Padgett, John F. et al. "Organizational Invention and Elite Transformation: The Birth of Partnership Systems in Renaissance Florence" *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 111, No. 5, 2006, Pp 1463=1568

³ <https://Byjus.com/commerce/concepts-private-public-enterprises/>

⁴ Deeborm MB. Tambari and Daerego I. Taylor, "The Influence of National Youth Service Corps Entrepreneurship, Skills Acquisition Programmes on Youth Empowerment In Rivers State" *International Journals of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, Volume 7, Issue 6, June 2020, Pp 146 - 147

THE NYSC AND SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

towards addressing the challenges of unemployment in Nigeria.⁵ The goals of the programme include creating awareness among young graduates who are Corps members for acquisition of basic skills training for entrepreneurship development. The SAED as an important department of the NYSC is headed by a Director and is made up of three divisions namely: Partnership, Empowerment and Programme.

These Three departments are saddle with the responsibilities of:

- Giving orientation and training to over 200,000 Corps members to fully grasp the skills acquisition yearly.
- Assist in training and tutoring of 100,000 young graduates in skills acquisition and entrepreneurship development for self-reliance annually.
- Developing an entrepreneurship partnership aiming towards self-reliance of the youths between the private and the public sector as well.
- Providing new ways and methods on how best Nigerian youths' employment and empowerment are done.
- Supporting evidence-driven funding programmes to formulate policies that enhances Nigerian youths' employment and empowerment.
- Organising orientational training programmes on the importance of Corps members enroling into skills acquisition and entrepreneurship development program.
- Identification of relevant organizations at state level to provide training and mentoring in specific skills sets.
- Attaching the Corps members to the various organizations for skills acquisition and entrepreneurship development.

⁵ National Youth Service Corps, "NYSC SAED Description of Programme Activities"..... 2016, Pp 05.

NYSC Skills Acquisition Programmes and Igbo Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

- On-going monitoring and supervision of trainee Corps members and Facilitating and fastracking access to available funding opportunities.⁶

The primary aim of SAED programme is to encourage Nigerians generally, and Nigerian youths particularly, to embrace entrepreneurship activities in order to create jobs not just for themselves but to employ the service of others in the long run. Thr NYSC has entered into partnership with the public and the private sector for the purposes of training and funding corps members for skills and entrepreneurship development. The programme is structured to start during the orientation course and continue through the period of the primary assignment. It is expected that each Corps member learns a skill that can position them to become job creators rather than job hunters and hence reduce the number of unemployed youth in the country.⁷

The SAED has two main components and the monitoring and valuation division as follows:

(a) Skills Acquisition Division: this division focus its attention mainly on equipping the Corps members in different areas of their interest with specific professional, technical/vocational training and skills on how to identify their skills set based on their peculiar interests and realities.

(b) Entrepreneurship Development Division: This division focuses more on developing the business/enterprise capacities in Corps members who by virtue of their undergraduate training have one way or the other acquired certain level of competencies in specific fields,

⁶ National Youth Service Corps, "NYSC SAED Description of Programme Activities"..... 2016, Pp 05.

⁷ Muhammad Sani Yahaya, Civil Servant, 45years, Interviewed at his residence opposite NYSC Headquarter, Kinsasha Kaduna, 14/02/2021.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

and those Corps members who have undergone the skills acquisition training and have the full intention to broaden their possibilities of attaining self-reliability. It is at this level and this department that issues like feasibility studies, development of business plans, marketing strategies, product branding, product advertisement, financial management, access to funding opportunities, and legal franchising, among others is being vigorously and thoroughly discussed.⁸

(c) Monitoring & Evaluation: Another important component of the above mentioned two divisions is the monitoring and evaluation unit whose sole responsibilities focuses on effectiveness, managing and delivering on set project outcomes. They specifically provide every framework needed for the measurement of performance against set target, thereby identifying any form of deviation with the clear intention of correcting them as well as providing essential information on implementation for project improvement and decision making. For effectiveness and getting the best out of the M&E unit, a working system has been outlined for the provision of a running plan to keep the M&E as an integral part of the overall project implementation. With this therefore, there has been a standard structure with key positions for effective functions of the M&E. The structure serves as the starting point for the Monitoring and Evaluation to execute their responsibilities within the context of project management framework.⁹ Other key aspect considered under the monitoring and evaluation include:

- Special training on the project for the personnel of the M&E
- Development of a performance framework based on the project strategic plan
- Costed Monitoring and Evaluation workplan

⁸ Adedeji Oluwaseun and Isaiah Babatunde, "The Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship....2018, Pp 3.

⁹ National Youth Service Corps, "NYSC SAED Description of Programme Activities"..... 2016, Pp 11 - 12.

NYSC Skills Acquisition Programmes and Igbo Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

- Development of an appropriate tools for data capture and reporting
- Procurement and installation of relevant softwares for data analysis & warehousing, and development of a data use plan, specifically, by providing a mechanism for tracking implementation and documentation of project activities. The routine key indicators to be measured and evaluated include:
 1. Number of Corps members enrolling and completing various skills acquisition and entrepreneurship programs across various states to be captured.
 2. Number of business plans developed disaggregated by type
 3. Number of successful business plans diagggregated by type
 4. number of stakeholders meetings convened
 5. Number and type of stakeholders participating in stakeholders meetings¹⁰

SAED 12 Skill Sets

The SAED Programme has 12 different skill sets that the Corps members are expected to identify with, as follows:

1. **Agro-Allied:** This sector has sub-sectors that include fish farming, cow fattening, grass-cutter farming, livestock feed, Poultry Farming, Piggery, Rabbitery, Snails Farming, Beans Cultivation and Honey.
2. **Automobile:** This sector covers Auto Electrical, Spray Painting, Upholstery, Wheel Alinement and Balancing, Engines, and Air Conditioning.

¹⁰ National Youth Service Corps, "NYSC SAED Description of Programme Activities"..... 2016, Pp 11 - 12

THE NYSC AND SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

3. **Culture & Tourism:** This sector equally covers Leather works, Exterior Decoration, Beads, and Design.
4. **Cosmetology:** The sector comprises of Production of Cosmetics, Soaps, Detergents & Household Products, Hair Styling, and Laundry Services.
5. **Construction:** aluminium and Steel Works, Construction of public Toilet, and Electrical Installation
6. **Education:** education cover areas such as Training, Day Care Centers, Driving School, Nursery and Primary School.
7. **Environment:** Plastering, Moldings, Ceilings, Screeds, Painting, Interior, Decoration, tiles, and Blocks, and Carpentry.
8. **Film & Photography:** P & P covers fields such as Editing, Location Manager, Photography, Researcher, Runner, Camera and Sign Operation.
9. **Food Processing/Preservation:** Catering, Cakes, Snacks, Wheat & Flour, Beverages & drinks.
10. **Horticulture & Landscaping:** Compost Preparation, Horticulture, Plant Nursery, Orchards, Tree Planting.
11. **Information and Communication Technology:** Hardware, Software, Programming, Repairs, Online Business, Business Center, Website, and GSM Repair.¹¹
12. **Power & Energy:** Generator Maintenance, Solar Energy Conversion, Inverter, Plumbing, Welding, and Oil and Gas.

Private Enterprises and their Contribution to The SAED Programme

The NYSC SAED programme has entered into partnership with various private and public organisations/enterprises both local and international for the success of the SAED programme. These enterprises/organisations have contributed greatly towards the

¹¹ Adedeji Oluwaseun and Isaiah Babatunde, "The Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship....2018, Pp 3.

NYSC Skills Acquisition Programmes and Igbo Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

success of the Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED). Some of these enterprises and their contributions to the success of SAED initiatives are as follows:

International Labour Organisation (ILO)

The International Labour Organisation is a United Nations agency whose mandate is to advance social and economic justice through setting international labour standards. It's an organisation that was founded in October 1919 under the league of nations, and it is the first and oldest specialised agency of the UN. The International Organisation is one of the major donors, and partners of the NYSC SAED Programme. This organization stands out as a major contributors towards the success of SAED Programme in several aspects including training of 40 SAED officials as Master Trainers under the Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB). Other aspect impact for the success of the programme include:

- Developing framework for implementing the SAED Programme on entrepreneurship development.
- Supporting the development of SAED in-camp training curriculum.
- Funding the first debriefing meeting of SAED programme staff from 36 states and FCT and partners in May 2012.
- Sponsoring (9) SAED officials on capacity building programmes in Turin, Morocco, and Zambia since 2013.
- Approving the training of 40 NYSC staff trained as Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) Master Trainer;
- Coordinating talks with ILO partners to leverage financial, material and technical support for the SAED programme; and
- Advocating for entrepreneurship development and youth empowerment in Nigeria.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

The organization further intends to render support in the area of continued capacity building for SAED officials to enable them meet the pressing demands for more services. It equally intend to expand and widen the SIYB training to the 36 states and FCT. According to the Director of the International Labour Organisation:

"ILO is ready to support the Federal Government of Nigeria and its partners on employment creation initiatives", ILO Plans are already underway to implement the ToT workshop. "Training three hundred thousand (300,000) youths annually through the NYSC Scheme will contribute immensely towards creating employment opportunities and sustainable enterprise development in Nigeria".¹²

The International Labour Organisation has composed a well-structured curriculum on How-to-Start-and-Improve-Your-Business-Guide which was used for training of (49) SAED officers on entrepreneurship by multi nationals like General Electric and Cognity Advisory. These officers have in turn trained 600 Corps members on development of a business plan.¹³

Unity Bank Plc

The Unity Bank Plc is a commercial bank in Nigeria and a large service provider with it's headquarters in Lagos Nigeria's commercial capital. They are known to maintain an operation base in Abuja the Federal Capital Territory. They have net worth of US\$2.45billion as of 2012.¹⁴ Unity bank entered into partnership with

¹² *International Labour Organisation*: "The Director-General, Nigeria National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Visit

ILO Country Office Abuja" www.ilo.org/africa/about-about-us/offices/abuja/WCMS_0

¹³ *International Labour Organisation*: "The Director-General, Nigeria National Youth Service Corps

¹⁴ Overview of Unity Bank Plc, <https://Wikipedia.org>. March 05, 2021

NYSC Skills Acquisition Programmes and Igbo Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

the National Youth Service Corps to compliment the SAED programme by funding the development of business plans that can attract start up capital from other financial institutions.¹⁵

In this regard they organise the flagship of business plan competition in 2020 known as “Corprenuership Challenge” featuring twelve Corps members. They have won prizes totalling N4 million naira. The winners of this competition emerged during the final business pitch in the fourth edition of the contest for NYSC 2020 Batch B Corps members who took place simultaneously across four NYSC camps in Lagos, Ogun, Benin, and Abuja. The cash prize included N200,000 business grant for each of the second place runner up, N300,000 business grant for the first runner ups and a star prize of N500,000 for each of the four winners.¹⁶

Some of the winners are Evelyn Esumai, Aisosa Erica, and Ozouka Moses in Abuja camp, while Akomolade Blessing, Okafor Augustine, and Edokpayi Harrison emerged the winners in the Benin Camp. In Lagos, the winners are Moses Bolanle, Iran-Ola Oluwosulu and Zainab Muhammed. The competition has attracted interests from the Corps members, as over 300 applications were received but only forty were shortlisted for the pitching session from where the twelve winners emerged. The contestants business plans ranged from fish production, poultry farming, fashion, piggery, to beverages were all were assessed on originality, marketability, future employability potentials of the product and knowledge of the business. While commenting on the concluded competition, the Group Head, Retail and SME Banking Mr. Olufunwa Akinmade said:

The competition was to encourage more youths with clear entrepreneurial intentions to expand or start profitable ventures... “the grant are not loan and we

¹⁵ Overview of Unity Bank Plc, <https://Wikipedia.org>. March 05, 2021

¹⁶ Overview of Unity Bank Plc, <https://Wikipedia.org>. March 05, 2021

THE NYSC AND SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

want the money to be directed towards profitable ventures.... First, you must learn that making mistakes is part of business. It is important to constantly think about the challenges you will face, put the same energy one has displayed in preparing for this contest in your businesses as you face your post-service year.¹⁷

Access Bank Nigeria Plc

Access Bank Plc is a Nigerian multinational commercial bank, owned by Access Bank Group.¹⁸ It is licensed by the Central Bank of Nigeria, the national bank regulator. It has its headquarters located in Lagos, the most commercial city of Nigeria.

It is one of the major donors and partners of NYSC SAED initiatives that has greatly contributed towards the success of SAED Programme, the management of the bank donated a multi-million naira skill acquisition center to the National Youth Service Corps for training of Corps members in automobile, carpentry, tailoring, hairdressing, metal/mechanical workshop, catering, GSM repair, barbing salon, ICT among others in both Jigawa and Gombe State. The bank is one of the key partners of the NYSC and has continued to contribute their quota towards development and progress of the SAED initiative. The Managing Director of the Bank commended the NYSC scheme for introducing skills acquisition and entrepreneurship development programme for Corps members. The bank has been instrumental in

¹⁷ "NYSC Members Win N4million in Unity Bank Challenge" *This Day Newspaper*, February 11, 2021, Retrieved: www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2021/02/11/nysc-members-win-n4m-in-unity-bank-challenge/

¹⁸ CBN, "list of Financial Institutions: Commercial Banks" Abuja: Central Bank of Nigeria. Retrieved 5th March, 2021 www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Access_bank_plc

NYSC Skills Acquisition Programmes and Igbo Youth Empowerment in Nigeria
urging the private sector to support the NYSC scheme in its quest to
reduce unemployment among the youths.

Bank of Industry (BOI):

The Bank of Industry is the oldest, largest Development Finance Institution (DFI) currently operating in Nigeria. It is owned by the Ministry of finance Incorporated (MOFI) Nigeria with 94.80%, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) with (5.19%), and private shareholders (0.01%). It was founded in 1959 just one year before independence.¹⁹

It is also a partner of NYSC SAED programme and has contributed immensely towards the success of the SAED initiative by providing trained Corps members with start up after successful completion of their training under the SAED programme. So far, over the years in the course of time, the Bank of Industry has successfully disbursed loan amounting to N340.02million to 1,077 Corps members as a start up.²⁰

British America Tobacco Nigeria Foundation (BATNF)

The British America Tobacco Nigeria Foundation (BATNF) was established as an independent charity by British American Tobacco Nigeria in November 2002, with a start-up grant of US\$1million. The establishment of the foundation fulfils a commitment made in the memorandum of understanding between British American Tobacco Nigeria and the Federal Government of Nigeria, to

¹⁹ C BN, "list of Financial Institutions: Commercial Banks" Abuja: Central Bank of Nigeria. Retrieved 5th March, 2021 www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Access_bank_plc

²⁰ Bank of Industry Annual Report & Accounts 2016. Retrieved; www.wikipedia.org/bank-of-industry, 2021.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

provide a means for the company to contribute to Nigeria's socio-economic development.²¹

The British America Tobacco Nigeria Foundation is one among other partners of the National Youth Service Corps SAED programme. They continue to contribute significantly to the success of the SAED initiative by bankrolling a programme on Agro-entrepreneurship training to Corps members. Those successful Corps members that emerged from the screening process undergone training and mentoring in big farm establishments. The winners of this programme are equally empowered with fund, land, and agricultural inputs and services.²²

Schoolville (The New Frontier for Education)

Schoolville is a private enterprise that focuses their attention mainly on educational sector. They are suppliers of educational products, and equally rendered services such as training of personnel. They provide best services at subsidized rates to Corps members. Such services include courses and live training programs in order to equip the Corps with skills about independent sustenance and business management understanding as well.

They train Corps members on field such as computer hardware repair and maintenance. They provide post camp training to Corps members at their training centers during Corps service year.²³

²¹ Core Reporters, "NYSC Partners Private Sectors on Skill Acquisition" Retrieved on www.corereporters.com.ng/nysc-partners-private-sectors-on-skills-acquisition/

²² Brig. Gen. S Ibrahim, "*Selected Speeches and Strides of 18th NYSC Director-General*" National Youth Service Corps, 2020, Pp 175.

²³ Schoolville: Partners with NYSC on SAED, www.schoolville.co./updates/schoolville-partner-with-nysc,

NYSC Skills Acquisition Programmes and Igbo Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

Credit Direct

This is a non collateral financial institution that specialized on issuance of loans to individuals and small scale businesses. They are equally private partners of the NYSC SAED scheme and have contributed by making funds for start-up available for Corps members that have undergo the SAED training both in-camp and post-camp. They have successfully disbursed N629.01Million Naira loan to 13,344 Corps members since their involvement in partnership with the SAED NYSC programme.²⁴

Sealpit Engineering and Consult Services

Sealpit Engineering Network Services has parnered with the NYSC SAED programme in its quest for the realization of its set objectives and as such helping to initiate targeted young Nigerian graduates mobilized and deployed in the one year mandatory service. The SAED program and the SEALPIT Services has an ambitious vision to enable the creation of atleast 20,000 sustainable enterprises annually, and get minimum of 150,000 Corps member to be productively engaged, generating sustainable economic value through employment or entrepreneurship annually.²⁵

The SEALPIT Services partnered with SAED to provide soft skills engineering training, development and more with the hope of helping the nation's future leaders to be responsible for themselves and the nation at large. SEALPIT engineering and consulting services always stress that your success is our success.²⁶

²⁴ Sealpit Engineering and Consulting Services, <https://sealpitservices.com/nysc-saed-partnership/>, retrieved 05 May, 2021.

²⁵ Sealpit engineering

²⁶ Fizcos, Corps Members Creating Wealth..

www.fizcos.com/nyscsaed/nyscsaed.html, Retrieved: 05 May, 2021

THE NYSC AND SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

Fizcos Infotech Solution

Fizcos is an information communication technology private enterprise that partners with NYSC SAED program. They specialize in providing training services to Corps members both in-camp and post-camp. They provide training such as software development and website design, hardware and Networking, finance and Statistical consultancy, Database management, Microsoft office Specialisation, Graphics/Digital Imaging, Geology/Earth Sciences, E-Commerce/Business Skills, Project management, and engineering applications like AutoCAD, 2D, 3D, Civil3D, AutoDesk, 3DMAX, ArchiCAD, Revit, Architectur, PDMS, etc.²⁷

Chinese Government: The Chinese government through its embassy has contributed to the progress of the SAED NYSC programme by sponsoring eight SAED staff to train on different vocational training programmes in China through their embassy in Nigeria.²⁸

Conclusion

The NYSC SAED programme is one of a kind programme that recorded successes since its establishment in 2012. There have been several initiatives like the SAED program yet, none have achieved the success recorded by the program. This is due to the fact that special attention was given to the program by intellectual officials and the fact that there is transparency in the NYSC programme, the SAED has been able to impact the lives of countless graduates that have undergone the training during service year. It is important to point out that the success of the SAED programme cannot be complete without

²⁷ Fizcos, Corps Members Creating Wealth..

www.fizcos.com/nyscsaed/nyscsaed.html, Retrieved: 05 May, 2021

²⁸ Brig. Gen. S Ibrahim, "Selected Speeches and Strides of 18th NYSC Director-General" National Youth Service Corps, 2020

NYSC Skills Acquisition Programmes and Igbo Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

the influence of the organisations or enterprises like the International labour Organisations whose influence continue to be felt in the SAED programme and other enterprises that have partnered the NYSC on SAED in different aspects ranging from training of Corps members, building of skills acquisition and entrepreneurship center, training the SAED trainers and other SAED officials in different countries that include China, training of the Corps members on how to develop a well researched business plan, among others.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

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THE NYSC AND SAED

Abubakar Yusuf Umar

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Former President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan examined some products on Exhibition by Corps Members



Brig Gen S. Ibrahim visited NYSC Farms in Bauchi



Foundation Laying Ceremony of NYSC Skill Acquisitions Centre,
Iyin, Ekiti State.



Proposed NYSC Skill Acquisitions and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED)
Centre, Iyin Ekiti State.



NYSC Water Factory and Bakery Building at Kubwa, FCT Abuja.



NYSC Water Factory and Bakery Building at Kubwa, FCT Abuja.



Harvest from NYSC Farm, Iseyin, Oyo State.



Demonstration Hatchery of the NYSC



NYSC Corps members on SAED tailoring and fashion design.



NYSC SAED Display caps, bags and Beads made by corps members



NYSC Skill Acquisitions Exhibition



NYSC corps members baking



NYSC SAED displaying their products to the public



Bauchi NYSC Farm Store



Foundation Laying Ceremony of NYSC Skill Acquisitions Centre,
Delta State.

Strengthening NYSC and Private Sector Partnership on Skills Acquisition...

8

Strengthening NYSC and Private Sector Partnership on Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development

Jibunor Udoka Victor

Introduction

Skills acquisition entails the manifestation of ideas and knowledge through training which is aimed at developing the spirit of entrepreneurship in an individual needed for meaningful development. Entrepreneurship is viewed as an opportunity for young individuals or group to attain economic empowerment and self development which will enable them to contribute to the socio-economic development of a

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jibunor Udoka Victor

nation.¹These initiatives are aimed at re-engineering the youth's energies and potentials in a bid to reduce unemployment, poverty and criminality amongst youth, therefore making them more productive.

Ogundowolo, opined that the aim of skill acquisition programme is a means of empowering the youth, which prepares and equip them with appropriate skills that are beneficial to their future². Similarly, Chikamnayo, averred that self-employment is harnessed by training and equipping youths with financial support and asset to develop their businesses. He added that, entrepreneurship training is also aimed at empowering people to improve their lives, strengthening their skills, and creating jobs thus promoting peace and security³.

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) was established through decree N° 24 of 22nd May 1973 as a post-civil war strategy to foster unity and peace amongst Nigerians youths. This scheme is viewed as a pioneer youth organization programme in Nigeria. The scheme tends to mobiliseon average about 300,000 graduates annually⁴. As a product of the post-civil war, the scheme is viewed as a strong incentive for nation-building and sustained peace and development. ⁵ The scheme focuses on youth development and national integration by according high priority to programmesdesigned toeducate and train young individuals in various skills to stimulate and inculcate a healthy attitude towards self-employment and sustainability.

¹E.K Ogundowolo "Philosophy of Education and Education for self-reliance". A paper presented at the second departmental conference on philosophy of Education. O.A.U. Ile-Ife. (1998) p.7

²Ogundowolo "Philosophy of education." p.7

³E. Chikamnayo, The role of NEVT programme for improving skill acquisition for youth empowerment in Nigeria. *Okene Vocational Educational Journal* 1(1) 94. (2013). P.67

⁴ S. Edeh "NYSC Mobilizes 300,00 graduates annually," Vanguard News, April 26, 2017. Retrieved from: www.vanguardngr.com/2017/nysc-mobilizes-300000-graduates-annually-dg/, (2017)

⁵ S.Micheal. "Youth service as a strong policy working paper." St Lois: Washington University, Center for development,(2001a).: p. 12

Strengthening NYSC and Private Sector Partnership on Skills Acquisition...

Some of the core objectives of the scheme includes; to inculcate discipline in Nigerian Youths by instilling in them

- a tradition of industry at work, and of patriotic and loyal service to Nigeria in any situation they may find themselves;
- to enable Nigerian youths acquire the spirit of self-reliance by encouraging them to develop skills for self-employment; to develop common ties among the Nigeria youths and promote national unity and integration;
- to contribute to the accelerated growth of the national economy to mention a few. In line with some of these core objectives of the NYSC, entrepreneurship development was introduced by the management of the NYSC through the partnership with the public and private sector to instill in the youths a spirit of self-reliance in a bid to reduce unemployment amongst Nigerian graduates.

History of Entrepreneurship in NYSC

The history of entrepreneurship training in NYSC dates back to the commencement of the scheme. The mandate of the scheme towards youth empowerment is in Section I, sub-section 3(d) of the NYSC Act. The NYSC is a mandatory one-year national service programme for all Nigeria Graduates (Degree and HND graduates) local and international, ages between 18 – 30 years, with the exemption of those above the age limit and those who have served in the military, police force and other security agencies or has been conferred the national honours.⁶ The prospective corps members are mobilised and deployed to states other than their states of origin.

⁶ NYSC “National Youth Service Corps Decree No. 51 of 1993. Abuja: National Youth Service Corps Service,” Nigeria.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jibunor Udoka Victor

The programme begins with the mobilization of eligible youth participants, followed by a three weeks orientation course and then posted for the primary assignment to various public and private organisation in their state of deployment.⁷ During the orientation camp exercise, corps members are meant to undergo physical training, drills, lectures on the people and tradition of the host state, professional lectures for Corps health personnel, lawyers, teachers, social activities, and skills acquisition training among other activities.

Eberly and Gal averred that the expected outcome of youth-targeted programmes like NYSC includes improvement in youth competence; skills (both soft and technical); and social capital development.⁸ Similarly, Raimi and Alao opined that the scheme contributes to the youth's entrepreneurship development through orientation programmes including deployment and utilisation of youth capabilities for national interest and economic development.⁹

The NYSC mobilizes about 300,000 graduates yearly after which they go into the labour market that has no jobs to offer these graduates owing to the high rate of unemployment. The story is so disturbing as Nigeria stands at 33.30% in the fourth quarter of 2020 when compared to 27.10 % in the second quarter of 2020.¹⁰ Okafor opined that youth unemployment tends to sabotage democratic practices as it poses a serious threat owing to its direct correlation to an increase in criminal

⁷ NYSC, 2012

⁸ D.J. Eberly, and R. Gal, "A role for young people in building post-conflict civil society," *International Journal of NOT-for-profit Law*, Vol 9(4), (2007): pp. 73-83

⁹ L. Raimi, and O. Alao, "Evaluation of the economic (cost and benefit) of National Youth Service Corps for sustainable development in Nigeria," *Humanomics*, Vol. 27(4), 270-281

¹⁰ Trading Economics,. Retrieved from:
<https://tradingeconomics.com/nigeria/unemployment-rate2020>

Strengthening NYSC and Private Sector Partnership on Skills Acquisition...

activities¹¹. The NSYC in collaboration with the private sector developed an initiative to tackle the high unemployment rate in the country by establishing the SAED programme that will help graduates become self-reliant and wealth creators rather than depending on white-collar jobs.

NYSC and Private Partnership on SAED

The NYSC has the vision to galvanize the potentials of Nigerian youths to enhance their living standard by eliminating unemployment and promoting national development. In the discharge of its mandate, the NYSC has entered into collaboration with the private sector to attract training and funding for its SAED in Nigeria. In line with this, General Electric (GE) on March 8, 2018, announced its partnership with the NYSC to help empower the Corps members in laudable entrepreneurship skills¹². This partnership will witness thousands of Corps members receive entrepreneurship training tagged Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) based on International Labour Organization's curriculum.

The Managing Director of the company, Mohammed Mijindadi stated that this initiative is one of several ways GE is supporting skills development in Nigeria. He explained that the program works on train the trainer approach, stressing that NYSC personnel and facilitators are trained utilizing an international curriculum bench mark against the standard used globally. This partnership will expose the Corp members to a practical business management training programme aimed at starting and improving small businesses, he added.

¹¹O. Chukwuemeka and J.K. Ani "The National Youth Service Corps Programme and Growing Security Threat In Nigeria". *Africa's Public Service Delivery and Performance Review*, 2(2).(2014) pp: 12-24

¹²GE "Partner NYSC on Youth Empowerment" Vanguard, March 8, 2018. Retrieved From: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/03/ge-partners-nysc-youth-employment>

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jibunor Udoka Victor

Similarly, the Unity Bank, NYSC SAED partnership to promote youth enterprise has seen some Corps members benefitted enormously from this partnership. For instance, a medical Corps member at the Lagos state NYSC orientation camp in Lagos was among 6 corps members in the state and Abuja that won grants for successfully pitching their business idea to Unity Bank Corprenuership Challenge. This partnership between the Unity Bank and the NYSC on SAED is geared at promoting the entrepreneurship spirit of the Nigerian youths. Corprenuership Challenge derived from the word “Corper” and “Entrepreneurship” is an entrepreneurship initiative aimed at encouraging entrepreneurship capabilities of the Corps members during their mandatory one-year national service.¹³

A judge at the business pitch, Abiodun Folawiyo CEO of Shoe Speed Interglobal Service Limited Opined that unemployment is not spiritual or natural disaster but rather a manmade problem that can be resolved by tackling the root cause. He stated that harnessing the entrepreneurship skills of young people is essential in mitigating youth unemployment.

In the same vein, NYSC collaboration with NITDA in the private sector, has offered to trained corps members in digital literacy as a form of empowerment. This partnership further created a subsidized scheme for the acquisition of computers by corps members to enable them start up businesses in the It Sector. Besides, qualified and interested corps members were deployed to schools in support of digital literacy

¹³A. Segun, “Unity Bank, NYSC SAED Partnership to Promote Youth Enterprise,” Business Day, November 25, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://businessday.ng/uncategorized/article/unity-bank-nysc-saed-partnership-to-promote-youth-enterprise/>

Strengthening NYSC and Private Sector Partnership on Skills Acquisition...

education. The partnership is geared towards improving digital literacy amongst the youth and encourages digital job creation¹⁴.

Similarly, The Sealpit Engineering and Consulting Service has a collaboration with the NYSC to assist in entrepreneurship development. The partnership has a primary goal to promote entrepreneurship and self-reliance amongst Corp members. The programme is designed to be implemented during the corps members orientation course period. The SAED programme in synergy with Sealpit service has a target to setup 20,000 sustainable enterprises annually with a minimum of 150,000 corps members to be productively engaged. Sealpit Services has boosted the SAED program in areas of soft skills engineering training, development, and helping future leaders to be more productive¹⁵. The NYSC partnership with the private sector on SAED is very robust and has prospects for expansion

Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development

The Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) is a recent programme deployed by the Federal Government of Nigeria through the NYSC as a pragmatic response to youth unemployment. The programme is directed at young individuals who are corps members undergoing their one-year compulsory national service. The SAED programme's thrust is to see corps member become wealth creator and employers of labour. In March, 2012, the NYSC launched the SAED programme nationwide to orientate the youths about the need to take alternative career paths by developing requisite skills and

¹⁴NITDA, “Nigeria ICT Innovation and Entrepreneurship Vision,”. Retrieved From <http://www.greenenergyinvestment.com.ng/sites/default/files/documents/Nigeria%20!CT%20and%20Entrepreneurship%20Vision.pdf> (2018)

¹⁵SPECS, “SealpitSevice NYSC SAED Partnership”.(2019.) Retrieved from: <https://sealpitservices.com/nysc-saed-partnership>

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jibunor Udoka Victor

resources necessary for successful entrepreneurship instead of continually seeking white collar job which are highly limited¹⁶.

The SAED as a department in NYSC is headed by a Director General and it's made up of three divisions namely Programme, Partnership and Empowerment Division. These divisions are tasked with the following responsibilities; Sensitizing and mobilizing 200,000 young graduates for skill acquisition training annually; Facilitating the training and mentoring of 100,000 young graduates in skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development for self reliance annually; Promote public-private partnership for entrepreneurship development and self-reliance amongst Nigerian youths; Promote documentation and sharing of best practices on youth empowerment in Nigeria; Sensitization and mobilization of corps members for enrolment into the skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development program; Development of a standard curriculum for the in-camp skill acquisition exercise; Identification of organizations at state level to provide training and mentoring in specific skill sets; Attachment of the corps members to the various organizations for skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development; On-going monitoring and supervision of trainee corps members; and Facilitate access to available funding opportunities.

The SAED programme emphasizes twelve vocational skill sets which include Agro-allied sector, Tourism and culture, Construction, Information and Communication Technology, Education sector. This programme is delivered in phases. During the orientation course exercise, corps members are expected to engage in the SAED programme for two weeks. These Corps members are expected to

¹⁶A. Aja-Okorie, and E. Adali "Achieving Youth Empowerment through Repositioning Entrepreneurship Education in Nigerian Universities: Problems and Prospects. *European Scientific Journal*, 3(9):(2013). 2-8.

Strengthening NYSC and Private Sector Partnership on Skills Acquisition...

continue the SAED programme after the three-week orientation course as post-camp training.¹⁷

Achievements of the NYSC-SAED Programme

According to Faloye and Olatunji, the SAED programme stimulates Nigerian youths towards entrepreneurship development. They added that the programme also creates an avenue for the enhancement of the partnership between the public and private sector for skill-based development of Nigerian youths and graduates in order to reduce the unemployment rate.¹⁸ Similarly, the SAED programme supports the Federal Government's effort for economic transformation through entrepreneurship development and encouragement of self reliance amongst the youth. For instance, Utowen pointed out that at the end of the 2012 Batch B orientation course, 45,000 corps members received training on various skill sets under the SAED programme¹⁹. Out of these trainees, 5,404 corps members received agro-allied skill training, 5,509 corps members were trained on food processing and preservation, 8,035 corps members received culture and tourism-related skill training, 5,062 corps members engaged in cosmetology training, 8,119 corps members were trained on Information and communication technology, 2,885 corps members received training on power and energy while 2,672 corps members received environmental management training.

¹⁷O. Adewusi, and B. Adisa "The Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development Programme among Corps Members in Ibadan, Nigeria. Zaria".*Sociological Journal*, 5(1): (2018)248-260

¹⁸D.O. Faloye, and D.O. Olabode, 'Entrepreneurship Education and Self-employment Intentions among Fresh Graduates in Nigeria' *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*,9(12), (2018): 146-158

¹⁹E. Utomwen, 'Tackling NYSC's Security Challenge' Retrieved 1st May, 2014 from <http://www.pmnewsnigeria.com/2012/12/10/tackling-nyscs-security-challenge/>.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jibunor Udoka Victor

In 2015 during an interview with the NYSC Director of SAED, Mrs. Mary Dan Abia, she averred that NYSC was initially established with the focus on unity and national integration. However, it became imperative to address the 7th objective that seeks to inculcate the spirit of self-reliance in young graduates. This is in response to the glaring unemployment rate looming currently²⁰. She pointed out that at the end of 2013, through the SAED programme, 410,000 corps members received training on skills acquisition and entrepreneurship. In 2015 Batch A, she added, 500,000 corps members were exposed to the message of skill acquisition and becoming entrepreneurs.

The scheme went into close collaboration with international and national organizations to assist in setting up the department and bring it up to speed. She stated out that 1600 corps members have CAC registered businesses while pointing out that to some extent the programme has eliminated the fear of corps members finishing service and waiting for jobs. Similarly, Deebom and Dearego, stated that in 2014, about 159,732 corps members successfully completed the NYSC-SAED programme.²¹ These trainees comprises of 69,904 females and 89,828 males. In the same vein, this program has sensitized 971,272 Corp members amongst which 476,879 Corp members completed the training. 7000 Corps members became business owners as a result of this initiative.²²

²⁰Caleb Ayansina, 2015. "We Making 500,000 youth Corps Members Their own Men," Vanguard, august 2, 2015. Retrieved from:
www.vanguardngr.com/2015/08/we-are-making-500000-youth-corps-members-their-own-men-danabia-nysc-chief/

²¹Deebom, MtormaBariTamBari and Daerego, Ilomabo Taylor, "The Influence of National Youth Service Corps Entrepreneurship Skill Acquisition Programmes on Youth Empowerment in Rivers State.". *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*. Vol. 7, issue 6, (2020) pp 146-155.

²²Webmaster. "7000-corps Members establish Thriving Business Through SAED." October 18th, 2017. Dailytrust, <https://dailytrust.com/7000-corps-members-establish-thriving-business-through-saed>

Strengthening NYSC and Private Sector Partnership on Skills Acquisition...

In consolidation of the achievements of SAED programme, in 2018, the NYSC through the Director of SEAD Department, Mr Nuhu Kwaghe who led the NYSC-SAED delegation to the Country Director of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Abuja country office, Mr. Dennis Zulu. Mr. Kwaghe appreciated the effort of ILO in their support to NYSC through the SAED programme. Receiving the delegates, the ILO country Director Mr Zulu, stated that the ILO will continue to support and invest in SAED programme as it is of strategic importance to Nigerian Youths. He opined that the ILO will continue to work with the NYSC through the SAED programme to enhance the capacity of the department in a bid to create a lasting impact on the youths.²³

The NYSC has partnered with several companies and training outfits especially in the private sector across the country to obtain and provide the best quality of service in terms of rates, courses, live training programs developed by sponsors, geared at independent sustenance and business management understanding.²⁴

In line with this, in 2020, the Director of SAED programme, Hilary Nasamu averred that despite the shortcoming of the 2020 edition of SAED programme, participant stakeholder has reiterated their commitment to providing the necessary support for the programme²⁵. He listed some collaboration on the SAED programme to include NYSC-BOI partnership, NYSC-Union Bank partnership, NYSC-BATNF partnership, NYSC-EDC partnership and NYSC-NIRSAL MFB collaboration to mention a few. He added that there is a need for NYSC to begin re-energizing the involvement of the National Directorate of

²³ILO, "NYSC Seeks ILO's Assistance to Consolidate Achievement," International Labour Organization, July 12, 2018. Retrieved from: www.ilo.org/afica/about-us/offices/abuja/WCMS_634393/land--en/index.htm

²⁴NYSC,.The Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) Programme.Retrieved from nysclagos.com/saed.php2017

²⁵Friday, NYSC Lament.2021.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jibunor Udoka Victor

Employment and the Small and Medium Scale Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria.

The participants of SAED contributed significantly to the fight against COVID-19 in Nigeria. For instance, in an interview with the NYSC Kaduna State coordinator, Mallam Isa Wana, he pointed that Corps members of the SAED Department, produced and donated 10,000 face masks to the Kaduna State Government through the office of the Secretary to State Government²⁶. He showed some of the products by the corps members like liquid soaps, hand sanitizers and other disinfectants which were distributed to the various communities in the state, while carrying out COVID-19 sensitization campaign.

Similarly, in an NYSC venture (garment factory) located in Minna, Niger State, the Corps members produced and donated 1000 face masks, to the Niger State Government. In the same vein, NYSC Secretariat in Ogun state donated 300 pieces of 600 ml liquid soap, 636 pieces of 100 ml hand sanitizers and 1126 pieces of face masks²⁷. Another, corps member in Ogun state produced and donated 200 high-quality face masks to the state government²⁸.

Challenges OF NYSC-SAED Programme

Despite the milestone achieved by the NYSC-SAED programme, there have been several challenges which have mitigated the efforts of the department in discharging its functions. These are as follows;

²⁶Wana Isa, (Kaduna NYSC State Coordinator). Jibunor Victor, Kaduna State NYSC Seratariete, March 1, 2021.

²⁷UrielTomori and Isa Gagarawa.“COVID-19: As NYSC Community Engagement Boost Nigeria’s Response.” Economic Confidential, April 30, 2020. <https://economicconfidential.com/2020/04/nysc-community-engagement-boosts-nigeria/>

²⁸Emmanuel Igba. “Government Awards Face Mask Contract to Corps Member.” 2020

Strengthening NYSC and Private Sector Partnership on Skills Acquisition...

SAED Training Duration

The NYSC-SAED programme runs for two weeks during the orientation course after which the corps member is encouraged to continue with the post camp training with the external trainers, regulated by the NYSC. There are arguments that the time duration for these training is not sufficient for the corps members to acquire the necessary skills required to become employers of labour. However, this is not the case, SAED training in-camp was aimed at introducing corps members to skills which they will pursue after camp. For instance, Mrs. Dan Abia, stated that during the training of the corps members, 3 hours daily for the next 10 days is set aside for sensitizing the corps members and changing their mindset from job hunting through the introduction of experts to educate the corps members on the need to become entrepreneurs.

Funding

The issue of funding was a major challenge for the SAED programme, however, there have been strategies put in place to ensure SAED programmes and beneficiaries locate the funding for the start-up of their businesses. For instance, in an interview with vanguard in 2015, the NYSC-SAED Director, Mrs Mary Dan Abia opined that the programme due to inadequate fund is unable to provide monetary support for its trained corps members. However, the problem has been tackled adding that after training the corps members and getting them to draft good business proposals, NYSC then links the trainees up with funding institutions like Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Bank of Industry (BOI) amongst others who can help to fund these ideas.

Way to Mitigate the Challenges of SAED

There are several measures proposed to help mitigate some of the challenges experienced by the SAED programme. They include but not limited to:

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jibunor Udoka Victor

Adequate funding of the SAED programme

It is important to ensure improved funding of the SAED programme to ensure the target of alleviating unemployment is met. Private sector needs to adequately key into the objectives of SAED by providing mentorship and guidance to corps members especially during the service year. Adequate funding of the SAED programme will ensure financial empowerment for corps members that have successfully complete the training programme.

Although, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN); Bank of Industry (BOI) and Bank of Agriculture (BOA) and other private bodies have been helping to provide funding there is need to expand the funding base to ensure that the SAED programme is expanded, efficient and sustainable.

Strengthening the NYSC-Private Sector Partnership

Strengthening the NYSC-Private sector partnership is a vital tool in ensuring the continuity of the SAED programme. The NYSC-SAED can expand its partnership with several private sector organisation to achieve the following:

i. Internship

The internship has been reported in previous studies to develop an individual's professional attitude and strengthen personal character. The internship opportunities will help the corps members gain real-life experience and gain a competitive advantage thereby exposing them to a broad spectrum of opportunities. NYSC-SAED should provide a recommendation to a private organizations for Corp members that have successfully completed the SAED programme after their service year to join them on an internship training for a period of six months, in the field in which they have acquired various skills. This will ensure adequate monitoring of the trained corps members and will also ensure the skill acquired are properly harnessed, thus promoting

Strengthening NYSC and Private Sector Partnership on Skills Acquisition...

the interest of corps members in participating in the SAED programme.

ii. Need Assessment and Impact Evaluation

NYSC and partners must continually conduct need assessment and impact evaluations, which are planning processes often used for the improvement of individuals, education/training. This will also help to identify appropriate interventions and solutions geared at improving the quality of the SAED programme.

Establishment of Adequate Training Facilities

Some training facilities have already been established in Gombe, Abuja, and Lagos, however, there is a need to expand these facilities to other states, considering that they have been very beneficial to corps members. This will ensure that the corps members receive the required training needed to start a sustainable business. It will also help ensure effective communication between the corps members and instructor thus create an avenue for close monitoring of the corps members by the SAED instructors. More so, an adequate training facility will also ensure the corps members acquire real-life experience which will give them competitive advantages when starting up their respective businesses.

Training and Retraining of SAED Instructor

With new technology and innovations discovered daily, retraining and development are essential for employees. As the saying goes “consistency is the mother of mastery”, there is a need to continually train and retrain instructors. This will help ensure that the instructors are remaining current with the modern trend in skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development processes. This will thus provide the SAED programme with invaluable benefit, help to boost the morale of instructors and also achieve the desired result of the programme.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jibunor Udoka Victor

Transparency and Accountability

Transparency refers to the substantive and administrative procedure by which an institution performs its function, whether it is documented, accessible, and open to public scrutiny. Needless to say that corruption of a major problem encountered in all sectors of Nigeria's economy. There is a need for the NYSC management to properly checkmate the activities of the SAED trainers to ensure that corps members are given valuable and impactful training. In addition to that, proper documentation of the SAED activities should be pursued to enable the scheme have available records that will be useful for evaluation and periodic improvement on the program.

Conclusion

The study highlights the importance of the Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development programme in ameliorating and mitigating the high rate of unemployment amongst the youth. The challenges of the SAED programme includes but not limited to poor fund, inadequate training facilities, misappropriation of funds, and duration of training amongst others. The study further sheds light on the need to strengthen NYSC SAED private sector partnership in a bid to encourage the effort already made by the program. Besides, the study also identified Adequate funding, training, and retraining of instructors, provision of adequate training facilities amongst others as the possible way of mitigating the challenges facing the SAED programme.

Strengthening NYSC and Private Sector Partnership on Skills Acquisition...

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Jibunor Udoka Victor

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NYSC Skills Acquisition Programmes and Igbo Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

9

NYSC Skills Acquisition Programmes and Igbo Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

Orji Ifeanyi Boniface

Introduction

Over the past many years there was this notion/assumption in many quarters outside Igboland that the Igbo youths do not go to school because of their penchant for business and entrepreneurship. Though that may sound correct, but gone are those days. Nowadays, Igbo youths, though they may end up in doing business, ensure that they acquire tertiary education and various degrees which contribute to their empowerment before they venture into any line of business of their choice.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Orji Ifeanyi Boniface

Youth empowerment in many countries is geared towards equipping youths with skills that will enable them to be self-employed and contribute to national development. The rate of unemployment among Nigerian youths and graduates is on the increase. High rates of crime and poverty are associated with high level of unemployment.¹ The United Nations identifies youths as individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 while the Federal Government of Nigeria defines the youths as all young people of the ages between 18 and 35 years.² The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) on the other hand identifies the youths as all young people between the ages of 18 and 30 years. By this definition, the youths constitute some two-thirds of the country's population making them the critical mass of the instrument of national development. Some statistics such as the Unemployment Survey Report³ and National Bureau of Statistics observe that, as at 2018 the average Nigerian youth unemployment rate was an appalling 40.8%.⁴

The Youth empowerment programme has a multiplier effect on the national economy including boosting productivity, wealth creation, consumption and tax system. The rate of development in Nigeria depends largely on the productivity and creativity of the youths; since they constitute about 70% of Nigeria's population. Nigeria cannot achieve desired development when the youths are idle and

¹Lawanson O. *High Rate of Unemployment in Nigeria. The Consequence of Human Research Management*. A Paper delivered in EU Society of Help, Rome, Italy. 2007, p.43

²ILO Publication. *Youth Pathway to Decent Work (Defining Youths)*. ILO, Geneva. 2005, p.78

³Unemployment Survey Report. Survey Report. Ministry of Labour and Productivity, Abuja. 2019, pp. 2-8

⁴National Bureau of Statistics. Social Statistics in Nigeria, Abuja; the NBS Publication. 2020

NYSC Skills Acquisition Programmes and Igbo Youth Empowerment in Nigeria unproductive. This is the basis for their productive engagements of youths in skills acquisitions.⁵

However, the Nigerian youths are faced with enormous challenges in their quest for active participation in national development, such issues include improper orientation of youths, weak institutional capacity, lack of social safety nets and disconnection between academic qualification and practical work process. The call, therefore, is to incorporate skills acquisition and programme as a means of empowerment in order to ensure that youths have access to acquiring the necessary skills needed by the economy in the 21st century.⁶ It is on this premise that the NYSC rose up to the challenge by introducing Skill Acquisition and entrepreneurship programmes as a means of addressing the challenge of post-service unemployment as well as a means of wealth creation and empowerment. However, when General Ibrahim Shuaibu emerged as the Director General of NYSC, he moved the frontiers by ensuring that the skill acquisition programme is sustained and expanded in its scope of partnership and operation. This was to ensure youth corps members are adequately trained and empowered before they leave NYSC.

Among the people who benefited immensely from this NYSC programme are the Igbo youths. For instance, in all the NYSC Camps in Igbo land just as it is across the country; there are several skills units which cut across various sectors of the economy ranging from agro-allied, automobile, beautification, construction, cosmetology, culture and tourism, education, environment, films and photography, food

⁵Salami C.G.E. Youth Unemployment in Nigeria: A Time for Creative Intention. *International Journal of Business and Marketing Management*, Vol. 11. No. 7, 72-91 Retrieved from www. Journal Org/AJBM, 2013, p.14

⁶Uzochukwu N. Skill Acquisition Panacea to Nigeria's Rising Unemployment: 16th Annual Public Lecture of the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria (CIPM), Lagos. 2013, p.18

THE NYSC AND SAED

Orji Ifeanyi Boniface

processing/preservation, information and communication technology (ICT) and power and energy. The programme which is targeted at young graduates who are mobilized and deployed to states of the federation other than their states of origin. the yearly mandatory service had provided series of empowerment opportunities for Corps members and members of the host communities; especially the Igbo young graduates who get empowered before launching themselves into various businesses of their choice. The implementation of the programme has been replicated in the states and Local Government Areas by the scheme. The SAED training is designed to start at the orientation camp and continues during the post-camp period.⁷

Since unemployment has become a major problem in Nigeria, and fundamentally, because the Nigeria educational system lacks the capacity and infrastructure to equip the students (youths) with appropriate skills for entrepreneurship, the NYSC having identified this yawning gap considers it necessary to address it. This research therefore, tried to examine whether the NYSC in its own bid to curb this unemployment crisis through its skill acquisition programme has been able to aid the financial independence, job provision drive and the business funding capacity of the Igbo graduates that have undergone training in the various skill acquisition programmes of the scheme

Overview of Various Youth Empowerment Programmes in Nigeria

All over the world, youths have been the target for support and strategies for deciphering the problems of unemployment and economic development. The creation of wealth and employment opportunities will lead to poverty alleviation as well as national development. Youth empowerment scheme has been defined as a capacity-building process that supports vocational training and skills development of the towards ensuring that they becomes more

⁷NYSC News. NYSC Skill Programme a Laudable Initiative. *A Journal of the NYSC*
Directorate Headquarters: NYSC, Abuja. 2018

NYSC Skills Acquisition Programmes and Igbo Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

productive in society.⁸ In a similar vein, youth empowerment is seen as a form of human development intervention that offers an opportunity for a wide range of vocational skills training for the youth population.⁹ Youth empowerment is targeted at the training of young people by empowering them socially and economically. It also refers to specific intervention in the educational pursuit and offer of a wide range of opportunities for initiating behavioral change in the youth population through the guidance and counseling programs aimed at putting them in the proper psychological frame of mind for several expected encounters ahead in life.

In other words, youth empowerment is a process of inculcating into youths the spirit of transformation of ideas. It is a means of exposing the youths into skills or training that will make them productive.¹⁰ It encompasses different ways that youth can be exposed to different trades that may help to engage in sustainable paid and self-employment. Ventures Scholars have held the view that there is a positive relationship between youth empowerment and poverty alleviation on the one hand, and between youth empowerment and national development on the other hand. This is to say that the presence of human development and empowerment of youth corps members as embarked by NYSC can alleviate poverty and create jobs, especially in developing countries like Nigeria.¹¹

⁸Amadi, O. B. & Abdullah, H. "Perception of Capacity Building among Youths Involved in Vocational Skills Development".*Journal of Social and Development Sciences*. Vol. 3 No. 6, 2012, pp. 214-221.

⁹Kuti, Z. The Youth Empowerment Scheme of Hajiya Zainab Kure. 2006. Available: wwwYesngo.org/aboutyes/htm Retrieved on 17th January 2021.

¹⁰Jimba, D. I. Exigencies of Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development in Nigeria.In Agwuama (Eds), the Contemporary Issues and the Challenges of Sustainable Development in the New Millennium: the Nigerian Experience. 2007.

¹¹Hussaini, M. Poverty Alleviation Programs in Nigeria: Issues and challenges. *International Journal of Development Research*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2014, pp. 717-720.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Orji Ifeanyi Boniface

The Nigerian government having realized this, decided to set up various empowerment programmes in the country. The skills acquisition programmes instituted in Nigeria over the years include the following: the Green Revolution Programme which was in response to the programme of Operation Feed the Nation 1976; the School-To-Land Programme and Skills Acquisition Programme of 1978; the Youth Employment and Vocational Skill Development Scheme of (NDE) in 1986; The Small-Scale Industrial and Graduate Farmer's Programme of (NDE) in 1988 and The National Open Apprenticeship Scheme of 1988.¹²Others included Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) which basically deals with capacity acquisition skills, mandatory attachment, productivity improvement, credit delivery, technology development, and entrepreneurship development for self-help and economic growth. These programmes were initiated by the government to enhance employment opportunity FOR the people who are unemployed, towardS enhancing their source of livelihood and raise their standard of living.

Another empowerment scheme was the Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS) which was setup by the Ibrahim Babangida regime to deal with the provision and the development of infrastructural needs most especially in the rural areas where majority of them are farmers and they lack the basic necessities of life. The government supports them in the areas of water supply system for irrigation farming, transport network to ease (rural and urban) movement of farm produce, rural energy and power support to enhance local business in the rural areas, and communication network for local and national development. This helped to reduce urban and rural migration among the unemployed youth moving to the cities for jobs and better living conditions.

¹²Douli, J.C. An Overview of Nigeria Economic Reform.*Central Bank of Nigeria, Economic and Financial Review*, Vol. 42, No. 4. 2012, pp. 870-901

NYSC Skills Acquisition Programmes and Igbo Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

Social Welfare Service Scheme (SOWESS) as the name implies focuses on the provision of basic services such as quality primary/special education, primary healthcare services, establishment and maintenance of recreational centres, public awareness facilities, youth and student hostel development, environmental protection facilities, food security provisions, micro and macro credits delivery, rural telecommunications facilities, provision of mass transit, maintenance of culture, and strengthening the economic power of farmers at the grass root.

On the other hand, Natural Resource Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS) is a scheme that seeks to promote participatory and sustainable development of the agricultural sector which was the major sources of income in the country, solid mineral resources development, harnessing of the conservation of land and space (beaches, reclaimed land, etc.) particularly for the convenient and effective utilisation by small-scale operators and the immediate community.¹³In effect, all these programmes initiated by the Nigerian Government are focused on youth empowerment, rural infrastructure development, provision of social welfare services and natural resource development and conservation of land, which are all geared towards national and economic development with the youth empowerment as its core mandate.

In recent years, in order to achieve the desired goals, different training programmes have been instituted by the Federal and State Governments to imbibe in the youths the culture of creativity and entrepreneurship. A good example is the “Youth Enterprise With Innovation” in Nigeria (YouWIN). The YouWIN Programme is in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of

¹³Ntiwunka, G. U. Level of Awareness of Developmental Projects by the Ministry of Women Affairs among Citizens of Ogun State. *The International Journal of Science and Technology*, Vol. 2, No. 6, 2014, p. 172.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Orji Ifeanyi Boniface

Communication and Technology (CT) and the Ministry of Youth and sports Development. The main objective of the programme is to generate jobs by encouraging and supporting aspiring entrepreneurial youths in Nigeria to develop and execute business ideas that will lead to job creation. This programme provides aspiring youths with a platform to display their business acumen, skills and aspirations to business leaders, investors and mentors in Nigeria.

In 2012, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) set up a N200 billion Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSMEs) Development fund, to provide cheap and long term financial resources for the development of the small and medium businesses in Nigeria.¹⁴ The NYSC Venture Prize Competition was introduced by the CBN to sensitise and create awareness among Nigerian graduate youths. It has awakened entrepreneurship expertise and orientates serving Corps members towards seeking alternative employment opportunities and in particularly self-employment, through provision of funds and making young people employers of labor themselves. Currently, there are various intervention programmes set up by the President Buhari administration and some of them are being coordinated by the Central Bank of Nigeria to positively engage the youths in economic development and national development. Some of the youths that had benefited from all the above mentioned programmes are Igbo youths. It is in consonance with the above that this chapter opts for the dimensions of financial independence; which may be the result of acquired relevant skills for enterprise formation, job provision, through which young people are self-employed over time and directly resolving the unemployment crisis in the country and boosting business funding capacity. It explains that the ingenuity in accessing funding

¹⁴Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).*Statistical Bulletin*. Vol. 15 .Abuja, CBN Publications. 2012.

NYSC Skills Acquisition Programmes and Igbo Youth Empowerment in Nigeria opportunities in order to grow the business overtime is very complimentary to skill acquisition, just as NYSC is doing.

The Community Development Service (CDS)

The NYSC CDS is carried out by corps members alongside the primary assignment during service year. this is a platform for corps members to identify the felt needs of their hosting communities and mobilise the people to provide them. The CDS activities are done either by a group or individual corps member. For this discourse, emphasis will be more on the compulsory group (year round) CDS.

In identifying with the current national objectives, the NYSC CDS has ventured into agriculture, thus several Corps members together who specialize in agriculture and allied disciplines posted within the same locality to work on rotational schedules on the farms. Furthermore, the idea is to engage corps members to undertake a year round CDS in addition to their primary assignment, at least executing one community development project in their host community, in groups. After the consultation with the host community people. Some suggested projects under the Year Round Community Development programmes are as follows:

- i. Mass literacy: Each One Teaches One or Fund the Teaching One.
- ii. Technologies/scientific inventions and fabrications.
- iii. Organising host community to take more interest in indigenous art, drama and music, dances as well as agricultural skills.
- iv. Public health education, immunisation and health care delivery, preventive and curative horticulture, tree planting, and landscaping/environmental beautification.

It is imperative to emphatically state at this juncture that during the current Director General's leadership of NYSC Brig. Gen Ibrahim, has sustained and expanded the youth empowerment and entrepreneurship ventures, some of which include; tailoring, printing,

THE NYSC AND SAED

Orji Ifeanyi Boniface

food processing and preservation of products from cottage industries, using local raw materials and corps manpower resources.

The Youth Skill Acquisition/Empowerment Programme

A skill is seen as the ability to do something well, usually gained through training or experience.¹⁵ Skill Acquisition involves the development of a new skill, practice or a way of doing things usually gained through training or experience. It has been emphasised that for the third world countries especially Nigeria to be economically self-reliant, there is need for diversification of the economy and as well as encourage the youths to embrace self-employment through appropriate favorable policy environment that would facilitate skills acquisition, entrepreneurship and self-reliance.

The importance of Skill Acquisition cannot be over-emphasised because its significance to national development is multi-dimensional. Some areas of benefits are: reduction of hunger and poverty; reduction or elimination of joblessness; reduction of crime through effective engagement of youths.¹⁶ In discussing entrepreneurship Emphasis is always placed on the development of small scale enterprises which will lead to self-employment over and above medium and large scale enterprises. This is because of the small capital requirement of the small scale or micro-enterprises is within the reach of the youths. While reiterating this, Omen opined that:

“with a high population and numerous universities in Nigeria turning out thousands of graduates every year there is no ready market to employ them, we must rely

¹⁵ Encarta Dictionary. *Youth Empowerment*, Microsoft. 2009

¹⁶ Diigbo, G. *The Importance of Skills Acquisition*. A Paper presented at the First National Conference on Human Education and National Development, organized by the Department of Curriculum University of Lagos. 2009

NYSC Skills Acquisition Programmes and Igbo Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

on the principle of self-development; young graduates and non-graduates should, therefore embrace skills".¹⁷

Furthermore, the Nigerian former President Goodluck Jonathan said that one of the economic imperatives of today was the need to adequately equip young graduates with the necessary skills to boost self-reliance which can serve as catalysts to industrial development.¹⁸ It was as a result of his commitment to the above, that NYSC took the initiative to establish to establish the skill acquisition and entrepreneurship programme (SAED) to give leveraging on opportunities to the teeming youths to set up micro industries under the National Enterprise Development Programme (NEDEP).

Skill acquisition is a critical tool for mass job creation in Nigeria because of the challenges posed by unemployment, and no Government acting alone can mitigate the effect. This explains why there was the need for all tiers of Government to pay serious attention to job creation through the establishment of skill acquisition centres which ensures that youths have access to acquiring the critical skill needed by the economy in the 21st century.¹⁹ The measure of skill acquisition is felt by the youth Corps members themselves, in terms of actual benefit they have derived from being part of various forum on skills acquisition programs during their service years.

Youth empowerment is an attitudinal, structural and cultural process whereby young people gain ability, authority and activity to make decision and implement change in their own lives and the lives of other people including adults.²⁰ Youth's empowerment means creating and

¹⁷ Omene. NYSC News 2012.

¹⁸ President Goodluck Jonathan Address. NYSC News 2014.

¹⁹ Wogu C. The Job Creator Newsletter of the National Directorate of Employment. *Wogu Commission Skill Centre* Vol.10, No. 2, 2013.

²⁰ Valrus J. and Fletcher A. Guide to Social Change led by and with Young People. The Free Child Project. 2006. Retrieved online from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/youth empowerment> 15/03/2020.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Orji Ifeanyi Boniface

supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf and on their own terms rather than at the direction of others.²¹

Indeed, youth empowerment could be said to mean, the youths being able to eat when they are hungry, being able to meet their basic needs, have shelter over their heads, ability to speak out on issues of concern to them in the society and not being deprived in any ramification in life and lack of ability to cater for their health needs whenever necessary. Another measure of youth empowerment is the job provision capacity of youths, which is indicated by their drive to work independently and employ other youths to work for them in their businesses. Finally, business funding ability measures the ease of seeking or accessing funds to grow the businesses run by these young people in the country. Such funding bodies include NYSC partners like the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Bank of Industry (BOI) etc.

NYSC and Igbo Youth Empowerment

There is no doubt that the NYSC scheme provides the perfect incubator to prepare the youths for the skill acquisition and entrepreneurial development. Nigeria is ranked as the 30thlargest economy in the world in terms of nominal GDP, and the 23rd-largest in terms of purchasing power parity, with a population of about 190 million people.²²Of the entire Nigerian population, the economically active and working population is between the 15-64 years of age bracket, which stood at 111.1million.²³The population of the youths which is between ages 15-34years who are unemployed stood at roughly 10.96million and the number of those who are underemployed is approximately

²¹Fletcher, A. Guide to Students as Partners in Social Change. The Free Child Project. 2005. Retrieved online from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/youth empowerment> 15/03/2020.

²²National Bureau of Statistics. "Statistics News: Labor Force Statistics". Abuja: The NBS. 2017.

²³National Bureau of Statistics

NYSC Skills Acquisition Programmes and Igbo Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

11.68million. However, the unemployment rate for the youth as at 3rd quarter of 2017 stood at 53.3%. It also indicated that the under employment rate for the youth as at 3rd quarter of 2017 stood at 56.5%.²⁴

It is in recognition of these realities that the NYSC set up the Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) programme as a pragmatic response to the youth unemployment challenge with a mission to create a platform that will facilitate access of young graduates to requisite skills and resources necessary for successful entrepreneurship as a means of enhancing national development. The programme has the ambitious vision of creating at least 20,000 sustainable enterprises annually, and get a minimum of 150,000 corps members to be productively engaged, generating sustainable economic value through employment or entrepreneurship, annually, in these sectors. The data gotten from the NYSC SAED Department indicated that about 5,000 Igbo young graduates had benefited from the programme.²⁵The scheme in partnership with Bank of Industry had provided loans at a lower interest rate for some Igbo young graduates who have viable business proposals, and have the zeal to set up their own businesses to become employers of labour.

Equally, as a strategic response to solving the plague of unemployment challenges in Nigeria, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), General Electric, NYSC and Cognity Advisory entered into a collaboration with the purpose of stimulating the growth of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Nigeria through hands-on entrepreneurship trainings designed by the ILO known as Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB).²⁶ The ILO intervention program (ILO-SIYB) in Nigeria rides on the availability of huge population of youth

²⁴National Bureau of Statistics

²⁵NYSC Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Department (SAED)NYSC National Directorate Headquarters. 2017

²⁶ILO Publication.*Youth Pathway to Decent Work...*

THE NYSC AND SAED

Orji Ifeanyi Boniface

entrepreneurs who are mostly Corps members(including those of Igbo origin) as a means of reaching a sizable number of targeted entrepreneurs for the program. The ILO's SIYB program which is a system of interrelated training packages and supporting materials for small-scale entrepreneurs to start and grow their businesses, had benefited another set of Igbo Corps members who are now doing well in their businesses.²⁷ SIYB aims at increasing the viability of small and medium enterprises through sound management principles suitable for the environment of developing countries. It has also been applauded by both the government and the Igbo beneficiaries who are now dominating the business space with the experience they gained from the programme.²⁸

Albeit, the NYSC enlists at least 250,000 graduates each year, to gain training experience while serving the nation in locations that are new to them. The program has however been helpful to some Igbo entrepreneurs who having recognized the potentials of the Corps members serving in their vicinity, decided to have some of them do their primary assignments in their firms. This had been of great help to the growth and development of those businesses until posting of Corps members outside government establishments was stopped in 2013.²⁹

Meanwhile, with the recent creation of ministry for digital economy by the President Buhari , some Igbo youths are changing the narratives by creating digital platforms from the experience they aquired from the NYSC and are now emerging as Digital Economy Ambassadors (DEAs).³⁰ The experience from the platform had provided networking and funding opportunities; learning resources and specified strategies

²⁷Ogbonna N. Oral Interview, Entrepreneur (NYSC Beneficiary), Lagos, 26 year

²⁸Ogbonna N. Oral Interview, Entrepreneur (NYSC Beneficiary), Lagos, 36 year

²⁹NYSC News. Overview. *A Journal of the NYSC Directorate Headquarters*: NYSC, Abuja. 2020.

³⁰Damilola A. National Youth Service Corps and the future of Nigeria's digital economy. Youth Transforming Africa, 2019

NYSC Skills Acquisition Programmes and Igbo Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

for them to drive digitalization of their businesses and provided digital services for other big businesses that needed their services. For instance, gone are the days when people usually flood the bus terminals operated by Igbo transporters to buy travelling tickets. The buying is now done online from the comfort of your home using digital means.³¹

The majority of corps members are posted by the government to work as teachers in primary and secondary schools scattered all over the country including Igbo land. This had provided a perfect opportunity for the transfer of digital knowledge to their students in Igbo land. Some of these corps teachers had created digital clubs in the schools that they were posted to. Through these clubs, corps members had prepared Igbo young students for the digital economy by using the learning resources available on the DEA platform.

During the service year, corps members are encouraged to embark on individual projects. This had provided opportunities for some of the Igbo corps members to participate in digitally-inclined projects. For instance, One Igbo Cops member during her service year, introduced a program at her workplace known as “Zeb Internship program” (ZIP).³² Through the ZIP, she conducted software training for university interns to enable them stay relevant in the profession of urban planning. corps members are being prepared to learn and develop similar impactful digital projects during the service year.

The NYSC SAED program had impacted greatly in the training of young graduates particularly Igbo youths in ICT, engineering works, agro-allied business among others. The current Director General of NYSC Gen. S. Ibrahim, having seen the need to make more digital skills available and attractive to corps members, has been leading strong

³¹Ugochukwu O. Oral Interview. Transporter, GUO Cele Bus Terminal, Lagos 56 years.

³²Damilola A. National Youth Service Corps and the future of Nigeria’s digital economy. Youth Transforming Africa, 2019

THE NYSC AND SAED

Orji Ifeanyi Boniface

advocacy for partnership with both the public and private sectors to ensure that lots of the Corps members are provided with the opportunities of participating and benefitting from the digital economy. There are a lot of testimonies from young Igbo corps members who had benefited from the various opportunities and have become self-reliant since they finished the national service year.³³The Digital Platform had provided the background of the skills and guide corps members to make informed and relevant choices.

One great thing that the NYSC Scheme has sustained is its partnership with funding both in the public and private sector to enable corps members to access soft loans for various enterprises. Many Igbo Corps members of Igbo extraction have benefitted from this scheme.³⁴This had become a ready-made funding opportunity for Igbo NYSC members to establish businesses that in return are creating employment and directly driving the country's economy forward. The Igbo beneficiaries of this scheme in the Igbo philosophy of "*Onyeaghalanwanneya*" (your brother should not be left out) are providing a regularly updated list of other available funding opportunities and networking for other Igbo NYSC members to set up joint ventures.³⁵

Conclusion

Youth empowerment programs involve different ways through which the youths could be empowered to achieve self-sustained development instead of depending on the government to provide them with job opportunities in the civil service. The NYSC having realised this, had embarked on massive youth development programs in all states of the federation with the skills acquisition and entrepreneurship development programme as key intervening initiative for graduate

³³Eke O. Oral Interview, Entrepreneur (NYSC Beneficiary), Lagos, 33 year

³⁴NYSC News. Overview. *A Journal of the...*

³⁵Egbujulam N. Oral Interview, Entrepreneur Lagos, 35 year

NYSC Skills Acquisition Programmes and Igbo Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

youths empowerment. The Igbo graduates who have soft spot for business and entrepreneurship had taken advantage of the NYSC SAED training to develop themselves and broaden their business horizon and entrepreneurship acumen. It is believed that the exposure the youths (Igbo in particular)had received indifferent vocational skills had enhanced their sustainable income, in addition to the socio-economic development of the country. The Igbo graduates are good example of the success story, made possible because the culture of entrepreneurship inbuilt in them coupled with the creative ideas instilled in them by the NYSC vocational skill acquisition programmes, and has continued to make them more productive and self-reliant members of the society.

However, despite the NYSC interventions so far, it is very imperative for the government to ensure that all her policies and programs are been geared towards human capacity development, and must be properly implemented. In view of the above, public funds meant for any developmental programme must be properly monitored and entirely accounted for by relevant agencies in order to avoid misappropriation of public funds. The NYSC scheme has recorded remarkable success and impact the corps members through the skills acquisition and entrepreneurship programme, evidenced by the number of corps beneficiaries who are now self employed and employers of labour. Government must therefore make efforts to expand it through more business funding windows.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Orji Ifeanyi Boniface

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NYSC Skills Acquisition Programmes and Igbo Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

Appendix 9.1

List of Igbo Ex-Corp members that benefited from NYSC Various Scheme

| S/N | Name | Year | Place | Skill | Business |
|-----|----------------------|------|----------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. | Ugochukwu Onwugbufor | 2011 | Abuja | Skills Acquisition | Software Accessories |
| 2 | Kalu Adaeze | 2015 | Kano | Skills Acquisition | Pastry |
| 3 | Eneh Anastasia | 2011 | Abuja | Entrepreneurship | SME |
| 4 | Ichie Ifunanya | 2016 | Jos | Entrepreneurship | SME |
| 5 | Iroh Ugochi | 2016 | Enugu | Skills Acquisition | Makeup Artist |
| 6 | Nnachi Abraham | 2018 | Calabar | Skills Acquisition | Carpentry |
| 7 | Okonkwo Akachukwu | 2018 | Lagos | Entrepreneurship | Online Blogger |
| 8 | Amarachi Francis | 2017 | Delta | Entrepreneurship | SME |
| 9 | John Nwachukwu | 2019 | Niger | Skills Acquisition | Confessional |
| 10 | Arazu Peter | 2015 | Gombe | Skills Acquisition | Shoe maker |
| 11 | Egwu Azubuike | 2014 | Nasarawa | Entrepreneurship | Horticulturist |
| 12 | Nkwocha Benedict | 2011 | Bayelsa | Entrepreneurship | SME |
| 13 | Chijioke Nkama | 2013 | Benue | Ea-Net Africa | Software designer |
| 14 | Collins Mbachu | 2012 | Abia | Skills Acquisition | Baker |
| 15 | Ebere Imo | 2018 | Kastina | Skills Acquisition | Fish Farmer |
| 16 | Ejimofor Nkechi | 2015 | Rivers | Skills Acquisition | Snail Farmer |

THE NYSC AND SAED

Orji Ifeanyi Boniface

| | | | | | |
|----|--------------------|------|---------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 17 | Chimdi Paul | 2018 | Kaduna | Skills Acquisition | Fish farmer |
| 18 | Chinwe Agnes | 2019 | Lagos | Entrepreneurship | Blogger |
| 19 | Chima Uchechukwu | 2012 | Kano | Skills Acquisition | Confessinary |
| 20 | Okafor Ebuka | 2018 | Bauchi | Ea-Net Africa | Software designer |
| 21 | Ijioma Emmanuel | 2017 | Ekiti | Skills Acquisition | Poultry |
| 22 | Ukatta Eunice | 2018 | Lagos | Skills Acquisition | Poultry |
| 23 | Agbo Evelyn | 2019 | Kano | Entrepreneurship | SME |
| 24 | Udofia Favor | 2017 | Abuja | Ea-Net Africa | Web designer |
| 25 | Nwankwo Jonathan | 2018 | Osun | Entrepreneurship | SME |
| 26 | Asefu Moses | 2018 | Kaduna | Entrepreneurship | Confessinary |
| 27 | Oha Nnnaemeka | 2015 | Zamfara | Skills Acquisition | Shoe maker |
| 28 | Ogazi Faith | 2019 | Oyo | Skills Acquisition | Horticulturist |
| 29 | Queendaline Okeke | 2019 | Abuja | Ea-Net Africa | Software designer |
| 30 | Nwachukwu Roseline | 2018 | Bayelsa | Ea-Net Africa | Software designer |

Source: 2020 Field Research

Skill Acquisitions and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED):

10

Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED): Exploring the Trajectory through Beneficiaries

Jamiu Yusuf Danga

Introduction

Entrepreneurship development is a strategy for youth development in both developed and developing economies. The pervasive nature of unemployment has led to the great emphasis being laid on youth entrepreneurship development in Nigeria. This involves the development of soft and hard skills that can assist them to be self-sufficient and productively contribute to the economy. Since 2012 the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) developed Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) programme as a way of

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jamiu Yusuf Danga

channelling the energy of Nigerian youths to entrepreneurship development. The aim is to introduce Corps members to specific skills from the NYSC Orientation Camp and throughout their service year. These skills once developed, will serve as a launch pad for the development of entrepreneurship endeavor. This will go a long way to reduce the pressure on the labour market, as these youths can be strongly positioned to participate in small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs).

Youth entrepreneurship development as a strategy has been identified as a panacea to national economic development by different scholars.¹ Adebayo observed that youth employment has the potential to significantly contribute to the national economy while reducing social vices such as rape, theft, banditry, and other crimes.² Similarly, Njoku observed that there is a nexus between youth unemployment and social challenges; hence, when there are different policies that are implemented to tackle the issue of unemployment, these social issues naturally fade away.³ Some of these social issues that are associated

¹ J. Torikka, "Entrepreneurial Processes of the Finnish Franchisee Training Program's Graduates". In T. Ehrmann, J. Windsperger, G. Cliquet, & G. Hendrikse (Eds.), *Network Governance*. (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin, 2013). pp. 287–312; Heidelberg.Ucbasaran, D., Westhead, P., Wright, M., & Flores, M. "The nature of entrepreneurial experience, business failure and comparative optimism".

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² A. A. Adebayo, "Youths' unemployment and crime in Nigeria: A nexus and implications for national development." *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, (2013). 350-357.

³A., Njoku, & O.Ihugba, "Unemployment and Nigerian Economic Growth (1985-2009)." International Conference on Teaching, Learning and Change (2011): pp. 1-11. IATEL; Emeh, I. E.-J., Nwanguma, E. O., &Abaroh, J. J, "Engaging Youth Unemployment in Nigeria with Youth Development and Empowerment

Skill Acquisitions and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED):

with youth unemployment include poverty, poor standard of living, poor healthcare, and an increase in the crime rate.⁴ Therefore, empowering youths to develop their entrepreneurship potentials is capable of reducing these social vices while contributing positively to the development of the country.

Conceptual Clarification

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship has been defined in several ways; A common definition is to see the concept as a function of an individual which includes: seeing investment and production opportunities; organizing an enterprise to undertake a new production process; raising capital, hiring labor, arranging for a supply of raw materials, finding a site, and combining these factors of production into a growing concern; introducing new techniques and commodities, discovering new sources of natural resources; and selecting top managers for the day-to-day operation⁵

Youth Empowerment

Empowerment is the process that creates power in individuals over their own lives, society, and communities. According to a study by Adams Robert; empowerment is the capacity and process of individuals, groups, and communities to take control of their circumstances, use power and achieve their own goals individually and collectively. Describes youth empowerment as being used

Programmes; The Lagos State in Focus. "Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business, 4(5), . (2012). 1125-1141.

⁴ O N. D., Oye, I., Inuwa, & M. S. Ahmad, "Unemployment in Nigeria: Implication on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Over the Years." International Journal of Economic Research, 2(1), (2011). 66-71.

⁵ S.H. Henry "The concept of entrepreneurship economic development" Journal of Economic Issues, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Jun., 1968), pp. 228-232

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jamiu Yusuf Danga

interchangeably with youth activism, leadership, civic participation, and -self-efficacy.

Youth empowerment may take many different shapes and forms. According to Pigg, three levels of empowerment are critical to research and practice of empowerment as a process, these include the following:

- Self-empowerment: individuals empower themselves through personal knowledge, attitudes, and behavior.
- Mutual empowerment: individuals empower themselves through interpersonal action.
- Social empowerment: individuals empower themselves through collective social action.⁶

Youth empowerment aims to improve the quality of one's life through actions that allow one's access to resources, transforms consciousness through beliefs, values, and attitudes. It relies on the development of individuals. Youth empowerment is divided into 6 interdependent domains; Four popular types of youth empowerment ;

- Financial youth empowerment; the most popular category. This involves cash offered to youths to start a business.
- Academic youth empowerment; government, public or private organizations support people academically through scholarships.
- Agricultural youth empowerment; a major economic development, organizations empower young people to promote agriculture.
- Skill Acquisition youth empowerment; this involves training on a particular task or function such as photography, cosmetology, bead making, baking, catering, e.t.c.

The challenge of Youth Unemployment in Nigeria

⁶ Cited in Henry "The concept of entrepreneurship" 229

Skill Acquisitions and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED):

Unemployment in Nigeria is a well-known social issue, scholars agree that there is a challenge of youth unemployment in Nigeria as a result of several factors such as corruption in the private and public sphere, underdeveloped or dilapidated manufacturing sector, theoretical nature of education in Nigeria which does not adequately prepare youths for skill demanding professions, lack of essential social services such as good roads, epileptic power supply, and insecurity. These factors have hindered youth employment with tremendous implications for national development and national security. The persistent eruptions of ethno religious crisis, armed banditry, thuggery are also associated with youth unemployment.

Okeke and Eme observed that despite the abundance of resources such as crude oil, arable agricultural land, and other mineral resources, that present an opportunity for Nigeria's economic ascendance, the country remains economically challenged.⁷ They noted that despite series of economic reforms, this trend has not been reversed. Rather issues such as deteriorating capacity; weakened institutions; disparity in salary of private and public officials, neglect of education; and inadequate infrastructure investment, dramatic stock market decline, and banking crisis, and the global economic crisis continue to pressure the economy.

More so, various social programmes aimed at stymieing unemployment since 1999 have either been inadequately implemented or marginally successful. For instance, there have been a plethora of youth development and empowerment programmes aimed at reducing poverty and unemployment. Some of these programmes include the following:

⁷ I. E.-J., Emeh, E. O., Nwanguma, & , J. J. Abaroh "Engaging Youth Unemployment in Nigeria with Youth Development and Empowerment Programmes; The Lagos State in Focus" *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, 4(5), (2012). 1125-1141.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jamiu Yusuf Danga

National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)

National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) is a 2001 program by the Nigerian government aimed at poverty reduction, in particular, reduction of absolute poverty. NAPEP was to coordinate and oversee various other institutions, including ministries, and develop plans and guidelines for them to follow with regards to poverty reduction. NAPEP goals include training youths in vocational trades, supporting internships, supporting micro-credit, create employment in the automobile industry.⁸

The Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Program ('SURE-P')

The Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Program known as 'SURE-P' is a scheme established by the Federal Government of Nigeria during the Jonathan Administration, to re-invest the Federal Government savings from fuel subsidy removal on critical infrastructure projects and social safety net programmes with direct impact on the citizens of Nigeria. SURE-P was established in January 2012 when the Federal Government of Nigeria announced the removal of subsidy on premium Motor Spirit (PMS). Some of the specific aims of the scheme were to; provide employments for unemployed graduates through internship programs; create a database of unemployed youth and reduce social vulnerability among the group in the country through the mechanism of the policy.⁹

N-Power

N-Power is a scheme set up by the President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari on 8th June 2016, to address the issues of youth unemployment and help increase social development. The scheme was created as a component of the National Social Investment Program, to provide a

⁸ <http://www.napep.gov.ng>; Karl Wohlmuth; Reuben AdeoluAlabi; Phillippe Burger. *New growth and poverty alleviation strategies for Africa: B and regional Perspectives*. (LIT: VerlagMünster, 2008) pp. 60–61

⁹

Skill Acquisitions and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED):

structure for large-scale and relevant work skills acquisition and development and to ensure that each participant will learn and practice most of what is necessary to find or create work.

Despite these interventions to ensure employment development and reduce poverty, several issues have been observed as constraining the efforts of these programmes:

- a. **Lack of adequate finance:** although the programmes were designed by the government and implemented by the government, there remains the issue of inadequate allocation and sometimes delayed allocation which hinder the effective implementation of these programmes.
- b. **Favouritism:** a major challenge is that beneficiaries are sometimes picked based on their political affiliation, geographical and ethnic considerations. This means that there is a lack of universal enjoyment of the initiative in Nigeria.
- c. **Lack of private involvement:** the fact that the programmes are driven and financed by the government with the huge financial implications meant these programmes were unsustainable. Private initiatives were not promoted in the implementation of most of these programmes and others before them with consequences on financing and sustainability.
- d. **Lack of continuity:** the nature of these programmes meant that as each political administration left government, successive governments tend to initiate their programmes thereby underfunding or abandoning the programmes they met.

Generally, these programmes did not significantly alter the rate of youth unemployment in Nigeria. Although marginal achievements were made at intervals, youth unemployment remained very high. According to the statistics in figure one, while youth unemployment stood at 9.6 it reduced to 9.02% between 2007 and 2008. Although there was a temporary decline between 2013 and 2015, in unemployment among

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jamiu Yusuf Danga

youths, indeed, the figure showed that youth unemployment has continued to grow in recent times.

Figure 10.1: A Chart showing percentage of Youth unemployment in Nigeria from 1999 to 2020

Nigeria: Youth unemployment rate from 1999 to 2020



Source: H. Fletcher "Statistica"

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/812300/youth-unemployment-rate-in-nigeria/>

An Overview of the NYSC Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) Programme

In 2012, the National Youth Service Corps launched a nationwide initiative, The Skill Acquisition, And Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) programme. The Department is headed by a Director and made up of three divisions namely: Partnership Programmes and Empowerment Divisions. The SAED Programme is an initiative aimed at aiding Corps members to obtain necessary skills that will encourage them to pursue entrepreneurship careers. It also equips them with

Skill Acquisitions and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED):

skills that are relevant to independent sustenance and business management understanding.

The programme's mission is to facilitate access to requisite skills and resources necessary for successful entrepreneurship and it is targeted at Nigerian graduates deployed for the one-year service and implemented during the required camping exercises and throughout the service year. Its 5 core intervention areas are;

- Sensitization.
- Training and Advisory.
- Access to finance.
- Policy influencing, and
- Access to non-financial enterprise development.

The program places emphasis on 12 vocational skill sets such as; Culture and Tourism, Film and Photography, Environment, Power and Energy, Education, Agro-Allied, Automobile, Construction, Cosmetology, Information and Communication Technology, Food Processing and Preservation, Horticulture and Landscaping. Some of the more specific objectives of the scheme include the following:

Aim and Objectives of SAED

- i. Sensitize and mobilize 200, 000 young graduates for skill acquisition annually.
- ii. Facilitate the training and mentoring of 100, 000 young graduates in skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development for self-reliance annually.
- iii. Promote public-private partnership for entrepreneurship development and self-reliance amongst Nigerian youths.
- iv. Promote documentation and sharing of best practices on youth empowerment in Nigeria.
- v. Support evidence-driven advocacy efforts for favorable policies on youth empowerment in Nigeria. Sensitization and mobilization of Corps members for enrollment into the Skill

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jamiu Yusuf Danga

Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development program. Development of a standard curriculum for the in-camp skill acquisition exercise.

- vi. Identification of organizations at the state level to provide training and mentoring in specific skill sets.
- vii. Attachment of the Corps members to the various organizations for skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development.
- viii. On-going monitoring and supervision of trainee Corps members.
- ix. Facilitate access to available funding opportunities¹⁰

To achieve these aims of the scheme, there are certain strategies evolved by the NYSC to reach its goals, these are to begin from training Corps members from Camp. The in-camp training aims at giving Corps members an extensive orientation of the various entrepreneurial opportunities and options available to be explored. They are given practical guides through experts in different fields, who provide basic information about various endeavours. After this, there is the camp follow up which is where the main training of Corps members is carried out. At this stage, there is a genuine interest that has been developed and skills development and acquisition is achieved at this stage.

Exploring the Trajectory of SAED through Beneficiaries

Following the experience of youths who have benefitted from the SAED programme, it may be discerned that many youths have been allowed to pursue their passion, which goes beyond their main academic pursuit. For instance, some of the respondents who have benefitted from the SAED programme and transformed their passion to portfolio, shared their experience in various interviews across the sectors SAED

¹⁰NYSC: Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Department
<https://www.nysc.gov.ng/saed.html>

Skill Acquisitions and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED):

covers. The idea is to shed light on the SAED programme by focusing on how it has equipped beneficiaries with soft and hard skills.

SAED has assisted in the development of two types of skills for youths; these are soft and hard skills. Soft skill is a measure of communication and interpersonal relation elements of an individual; it includes the attitudes and approaches applicants take to their work, such as the ability to collaborate on team projects.¹¹ This type of skill not only helps the people at the entry-level but also at the senior level of management as these interpersonal skills are essential from bottom to top. Some examples of communications, critical and decision-making, interpersonal, negotiation, problem-solving, self-confidence, self-management, teamwork, and worth ethics, contrasts greatly with hard skills.¹²

According to Kennedy, hard skills are used as a basis for the development of educational curriculum, future profiling of jobs, and the technical functions that the industry desire most.¹³ An aspect of SAED that is very important to the scheme is equipping graduates with soft skills, this is to give them an edge in a very competitive labour market. In this regard, Andrew Angbah and Hakeem Abdul have similar experiences. Hakeem quipped that he learned the art of writing

¹¹ G. Singh & S. Singh, "Malaysian Graduates' Employability Skills." *UNITAR e-Journal* 4.1, (2008): pp: 15-45. Available online at: http://repository.um.edu.my/66328/1/UNITAR%20E-JOURNAL_Gurvinder%20%26%20Sharan; J. Pritchard, *The importance of Soft Skills in Entry-Level Employment and Postsecondary Success: Perspectives from Employers and Community Colleges*. (Seattle, WA: Seattle Jobs Initiative, 2013).; F.F. Patactsil & C.L. Tablatin Exploring the Importance of Soft Skills and Hard Skills as Perceived by IT Internship Students and Industry: A Gap Analysis. *Journal of Technology and Science Education* 7(3) (2017): 247-368 <https://doi.org/10.3926/jotse.271>;

¹² R.A., Noe, J.R., Hollenbeck, & B. Gerhart, *Fundamental of Human Resource Management*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2015)

¹³ Kennedy, J. "Hard Skills, Soft Skills Important to Career Success." (2016). Available online at: <http://www.chicago tribune.com/classified/sns-201512021000--tms--careersntp--h-bb20151209-20151209- column.html>

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jamiu Yusuf Danga

curriculum vitae as a skill during the NYSC orientation course. According to him, he developed this soft skill as a way of being ahead of his peers in the very competitive job industry. More so, this skill soon proved pivotal to his entrepreneurial development, Hakeem shared his experience thus:

My SAED programme was on writing Curriculum Vitae (CV). After learning during the orientation programme, I decided to advertise myself among corps members, they were very responsive. And I will charge them one thousand naira for every CV I wrote. So I decided to go online and advertise. It was from there I saved and bought printers and scanners. I decided to open an ICT immediately after my service year, I currently have 20 computers in my shop and other ICT gadgets. I carry out computer training, motivational speaking, and CV writing both online and offline to many people.¹⁴

The tendency to focus on paper qualification as a precondition for life success has led to many graduates developing anxiety about what the future holds for them. For instance, many humanities graduate tend to wonder what their earned academic certificate hold for them especially in Nigeria. This is because of the difficulty in securing jobs whether in the civil service or the private sector. Indeed, several respondents expressed this fear as they observed many of the humanities graduate they know are either working in low-paid teaching jobs or still walking around with their Curriculum Vitae (CV) as applicants. Nevertheless, SAED has been able to give youths who pass through the NYSC Orientation Camps a sense of (re)direction and purpose. Andrew Angbah who nurtured such worries as a graduate of philosophy took the advantage of SAED by upgrading his soft skills; he enrolled for the

¹⁴ Oral Interview with Hakeem Abdul 33+ Cybercafe Manager in Lokoja on 23, February 2021

Skill Acquisitions and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED):

National Institute of Management (NIM) certification programme while in the Orientation Camp and this proved to be a very important career-changing decision. According to Andrew:

I studied Philosophy and Religion in school, as a graduate, I was very clueless about what opportunities are out there for me, so that was the mindset I took to camp, at the Kebbi State Orientation camp, I simply flowed with the tide. One day, my friend asked me to join him that he wants to go and collect a form for the National Institute of Management (NIM). I tried to discourage him that what is a humanity graduate doing with a management course? He said it is just to use it to add and make him marketable, he advised I did the same. So we bought the form together and after the camp, we went for training and orientation. I did not attach much value to the certificate until two years later when I went for an interview as a manager of a hotel, although I didn't have any practical experience, I passed the test and was among the finalist, in the face to face interview with the proprietor, he asked me why I am qualified, I explained how I am an inducted member of the institute of management and how this can help me bring good management that is profitable to his course. The man was impressed and I was hired immediately, he later revealed to me that he liked that I am a certified manager as that will help market his hotel to his clients. I have been advising any corps member I come across to ensure that he/she participates in the SAED programme vigorously, because I am a practical beneficiary.¹⁵

¹⁵Interview with Andrew Angba 32+ Hotel Manager, in Zuba Abuja on February 15th 2021

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jamiu Yusuf Danga

Hakeem and Angbah's experiences show the importance of developing soft skills as a strategy for obtaining a competitive edge. SAED, therefore, complements academic institutions by producing avenues for the development of soft skills. This is also the case with hard skills, although the SAED scheme is not comparable to the curriculum of educational institutions, yet the strong technical linkage it has with different collaborators has proven to be technically and vocationally educative. This has led to the development of hard skills that have become a major avenue of entrepreneurial development. In this regard, skills such as fish farming, fashion designing, and cosmetic production have been developed by Corps members in Orientation and post Orientation periods. Therefore, many youths who have been trained have embarked on series of businesses that have earned them a living.

A major area that has been a lucrative business venture is the fashion industry, the sub-industry includes fashion designing, cosmetology, and make-up industry. There is a high demand for make-up artists especially during birthdays, weddings, and other events. This has led to the make-up industry soaring high among entrepreneurs. Maryam Onozasi particularly shared her passion for make-up and fashion generally. She noted that her conservative Muslim background had prevented her from actively pursuing her passion for fashion, as her parents would not permit it.¹⁶ More so, as a student of Al-Hikmah University where strict Islamic tenets were mixed with academics, Maryam said she felt very restrained. This is because her idea of fashion does not negate the Islamic practices as upheld by her parents and her school. A turning point was when she attended the NYSC Orientation Course in Nasarawa state. She revealed that:

“...when I went to the Orientation Camp in Keffi, Nassarawa State, they introduced us to SAED, I quickly joined the make-up class. During my camp days, I will

¹⁶Interview with Maryam Aliyu, 24+ cosmetologist, Interviewed in Mararaba, Nasarawa State Jan 23rd 2021

Skill Acquisitions and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED):

go and practice on some of my friends' faces. The instructor told me that I was naturally gifted in make-up. Although, my mother did not support me initially when I told her about what I was learning. During my service year, I continued learning make-up, it was during my sister's wedding ceremony after a make-up artist came to demand N50,000 for two days and I objected and said I will do it for N20,000. Although I didn't get the money, I showed my talent I ended up doing the make-up of the entire family. After the wedding, my mother told me to open a make-up saloon and that she will support me in any way she can after my service. So far, I have six people learning make-up under me, I have traveled to four states to do make-up for people doing one occasion or the other.¹⁷

An interesting aspect of Maryam's account is the way her entrepreneurial success led to acceptance from her parents. It is, therefore, a huge credit to SAED that by equipping Corps members with skills, parents who previously held the view that only by studying specific academic courses make their wards successful will understand that gaining practical skills is as valuable as the paper qualification from their schools. A similar account of how youths are taking advantage of the boom in the fashion industry was shared by Aliyu Bilkisu:

I learned coconut oil and soap making. During that time, I was very passionate because I wanted to learn how to cleanse my face which had lots of acne. I learned natural skincare and I have since been putting it into practice. I sell my coconut oil as far as Portharcourt because I advertise it on social media.

¹⁷ Interview with Maryam Aliyu, 24+ cosmetologist, Interviewed in Mararaba, Nasarawa State Jan 23rd 2021

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jamiu Yusuf Danga

Although transportation cost from Ilorin is high, I still make lots of gains.¹⁸

The boom in the cosmetic and fashion industry in which many Nigerians seek to be beautiful while using natural products has inspired entrepreneurs like Bilkisu. This is especially because many imported cosmetic products with their associated chemical have been identified as destructive to the skin of users. Shalom et al observed that people who relied on foreign skincare products for beauty enhancement tend to face challenges caused by damages to their skin as a result.¹⁹ They aver that natural quality products produced by Nigerian businesses can be a safe remedy. Natural organic products are proving to be effective and safe alternatives, and this had led to huge demands for organic products. SAED has been equipping youths with the requisite skills to either produce the major ingredients or even skincare products, thereby enhancing their entrepreneurial capacity.

Fashion designing has equally witnessed a boom, many Nigerians have become drawn to the wearing of local fabrics that are well-tailored and embroidered. This has drawn fashion enthusiasts from Nigeria and beyond to participate in the industry. Although this aspect of entrepreneurship is an age-long one, the recent trend is to have very quality tailored clothes for different occasions as well as casual wear. This is not lost on the stakeholders of the SAED scheme, several fashion designing experts have been collaborating with NYSC to train enthusiastic Corps members to learn a different aspect of tailoring from the scratch. This has created a wealth of fashion designers who have excelled in their endeavours, Kalu Ome shared his experience in this regard:

¹⁸ Interview with Bilkis Ibrahim 30+ Cosmetologist, in Kwara, 13th March 2021

¹⁹ S.N. Chineduet *et al* "Skincare Product Usage: Implications on Health and Wellbeing of Africans" *Journal of Applied Sciences* 13(3) (2013): pp: 430-436

Skill Acquisitions and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED):

Although I did not initially have an interest in the SAED programme I opted for, I joined because they made it mandatory in camp to belong to one SAED programme. I decided to join fashion designing, from my initial bicycle allowance, I bought rubber-rubber material and I used it to learn how to cut and sew clothes. I did not know how to even fix needs, and most times girls usually laugh at me, however, I became determined to prove them wrong, every opportunity I had, I will go and practice. Before 2 weeks, I became the best I was now one of the trainers. During my service year, I located a fashion designing school and joined after showing them my SAED certificate. To God be the glory, I am very successful in my fashion designing. I hope to open a fashion school soon. But right now, I am the CEO of a very profitable venture in Enugu. SAED is good because I am not sure any government body can pay me the amount of money I get monthly from my business. I charge as much as twenty thousand naira to sew quality clothes, and my clients are very prominent people.²⁰

Another related industry is the creative industry, and specifically photography, this industry has taken the country by storm. Though several hand phones have very good cameras with quality pixels, it is not comparable to the pictures taken from the lens of cameras such as Nikkon and Canon. A trending verb is to go for a photoshoot. This statement reflects the nature of the photography industry in which patrons take photos for all kinds of events such as weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, and other celebrations. Previously, the photographic

²⁰Interview with KaluOme 31+ Fashion Designer at Anambra state, 16th February 2021

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jamiu Yusuf Danga

studies used to be few and in between, however, the social media space has sent photography to the fore. In this vein, SAED has been equipping youths with the necessary skills to take advantage of this industry. For instance, during orientation course, several photographers from different studios are invited to introduce Corps members to basic skills in photography such as editing, photo shooting, and documentary. This has fascinated many youths who have gone ahead to take photography as a career. Peter Usman shared his experience as a Corps member:

My experience of SAED is that it is a great scheme. I had a passion for photography, in fact in school, my friends called me Picassa I liked playing with the video editing application, so, during my orientation, I caught up with a photographer during the SAED session, and I showed him my small skills, he was impressed and advised that I should get a camera that he will take me as an apprentice. I worked with him for six months after getting my first Nikkon Camera. I can confidently say I am a boss of my own right now. I have about 10 staff working under me and I have at least three apprentices and other partners I work with.²¹

Any assessment of SAED without its contribution to the agricultural sectors will be incomplete. SAED has contributed immensely to the agricultural sector in Nigeria by training agropreneurs. This is not surprising, Nigeria has a large population that supports huge demand for agricultural products. Oluwatobiet al, observed that fish is an important source of protein consumed by Nigerians.²² They observed that it accounts for 50% of Nigerians total protein intake. Yet, the

²¹ Interview with Peter Usman, 30+ Photographer in Utako Market, Abuja, 10th February 2021

²² A.A. Oluwatobiet al “Possible Aquaculture Development in Nigeria: Evidence for Commercial Prospects” *Journal of Agricultural Science and Technology* B 7 (2017): pp. 194-205

Skill Acquisitions and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED):

importation of fish accounts for the main supply of fish. Local production is not sufficient, even though figures are estimated at 700,000 metric tons of production. This means there is a need to equip youths to go into fish production; as the Nigerian population rises, so will the demand for fish rise. SAED has been positioning youths to identify their potential area of entrepreneurship. This has led to identifying fish production as a very viable area of skill development. Justin specializes in fish production and barbecue preparation in and around Garki and Wuse. According to him;

I breed fish during the day and sell barbecue fish at night. I have a passion for cooking and in my house; my Mum and I are the main cooks. Therefore, when I went to Orientation Camp, I decided to learn fish farming. During my service year, I was able to secure a space for my humble fish farm. Whenever my fish are mature, I normally sell them to different gardens in Abuja. However, a friend of mine suggested that since I can cook, why don't I also sell barbecue. I took his advice and went to a catering school for 3 months. I was able to get a discount because I had my SAED ID card. I was lucky to secure a small space in Kwalika garden in Area 3, Abuja. Indeed, I now have several branches and people working for me. I have a training contract with the Brekete family where I train people on fish farming and barbecue making. All these would not have been possible without learning fish farming through SAED.²³

Justin's experience is an instance of how SAED has over the years facilitated entrepreneurial development in the agricultural sector through its skill development training. Furthermore, it has entered into

²³Interview with Justin B. 34+ Fish Farmer, at Emerald Garden, Garki Abuja, 19th February 2021

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jamiu Yusuf Danga

various collaborations with organisations such as the Bank of Industry (BOI). This collaboration is an indication of the seriousness attached to the agricultural sector.

Towards a Critical Assessment of SAED

Although the interviews are not exhaustive, it is a clear indication of the major impact of the SAED scheme on youth empowerment, skill and entrepreneurship development. Respondents have shown the diverse sectors that the programme has been able to touch. From the respondents, the specific sectors that were represented include the following:

- a. Cosmetology
- b. Agriculture
- c. ICT
- d. Photography
- e. fashion designing
- f. Management services

These sectors are not just skill-based, they are equally private-sector driven. They are also creative industries with huge growth potential. Fish farming and agriculture, for instance, remain an expanding sector that has remained viable. It is expected that as Nigeria's population grows, individuals with interest in agriculture will take advantage of high demand.

Fashion designing is another sector that has grown tremendously. There is a dimension to this growth, beautiful attires with fresh textile designs are being sown daily by the young and old. There is a very trendy way that clothes are being sewn that has attracted many Nigerians to appreciate fashion designers. These new waves of design are driving the fashion industry in a way never seen before. SAED has therefore been an avenue for connecting the next fashion designers with their goals.

Skill Acquisitions and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED):

An interesting aspect of the SAED scheme is the service area. Although the scheme tends to appear like a hands-on approach and skill-focused, non-concrete aspects of youth development are also being taken into consideration.²⁴ In this regard, certifications and capacity building through institutes such as the Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM), Chartered Institute of Loan and Risk management (CILRM), Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN), and other reputable professional bodies have been providing service and management focused capacity building training through the scheme.²⁵ This has bridged the gap that may have been left in the conventional higher institutions, thereby equipping graduates with practical knowledge and skills about management in the service sector.

Comparatively, SAED is different from other youth empowerment initiatives such as the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Subsidy Reinvestment Programme (SURE- P), and even NPower in several regards. First, it is driven by the passion of participants who can see themselves in their chosen skills of entrepreneurship. This allows them the opportunity to be connected with what they do while ensuring they pick areas according to their ability and interest. This was a major component that was lacking in previous empowerment initiatives.

Second, SAED is private sector driven. Although the NYSC serves as the pivot of the programme, it is the private sector that has the major stake, as organisations are the major drivers, trainers, and partners of the initiative. More so, the Corps members are trained not as dependents of government but as private individuals who are expected to establish

²⁴NYSC: Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Department
<https://www.nysc.gov.ng/saed.html>

²⁵J. Pritchard, *The importance of Soft Skills in Entry-Level Employment and Postsecondary Success: Perspectives from Employers and Community Colleges*. (Seattle, WA: Seattle Jobs Initiative, 2013).

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jamiu Yusuf Danga

private enterprises that are profitable and valuable to the Nigerian society.

Third, SAED pursues different funding initiatives on behalf of serving Corps members and post-service youths. This funding initiative may be in form of soft loans or grants for them to have an avenue to start their SMEs. This means, there is no need to pay youths as other schemes tend to do. Finally, the encompassing nature of the programme, which does not allow for discrimination on any basis, and there is no quota arrangement for any region of the country. Rather, what is obtainable is that SAED is structured to cover all the Corps members and youth of Nigeria from divergent backgrounds and experience.

Despite the humble achievement of the scheme, some teething issues constrain effective actualization of the aims of the scheme. Some of these challenges include the lack of adequate awareness of funding opportunities; lack of training equipment which is sometimes very expensive or difficult to own by trainers; location of post-camp trainers which could be far away from that of the training during the entire service year.²⁶ Nonetheless, Government institutions and partners should conduct a needs assessment and gap assessment for a better understanding of how to address these key challenges of access to microfinance, technology, and mentoring that undermines the program.

Conclusion

The critical importance of soft and hard skills in the highly competitive labour market has driven the interventions of SAED. It is not surprising that beneficiaries have utilized the avenue provided by SAED to establish entrepreneurship lifelines for themselves, thereby making them creators of jobs. Yet, some issues were not highlighted in this

²⁶NYSC: Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Department
<https://www.nysc.gov.ng/saed.html>

Skill Acquisitions and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED):

paper, and they need further probing. These issues include microfinance and grants for capital, sharing information that can lead to capacity enhancement, and the need to create a database for accurate data collection and utilization. It can therefore be concluded that since 2012, SAED has led to the drastic development of entrepreneurial spirit and skill among youths who have gone ahead to make a living for themselves.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Jamiu Yusuf Danga

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The Role of National Youth Service Corps Scheme in the Development...

11

The Role of National Youth Service Corps Scheme in the Development of Human Capacity in Nigeria

Onuorah Onyeka Leo

Introduction

Over the years, different programmes have been initiated to tackle an exacting situation in Nigeria and other parts of the world. Such programmes could be an attempt to curb insecurity, improve food production, plummeting unemployment, among others. Besides, these initiated programmes were aimed towards a given set of people in the society such as the educated youth and an example of such programme is the National Youth Service Corps scheme. The National Youth Service Corps commonly referred to as “NYSC” is a scheme by the Nigerian

THE NYSC AND SAED

Onuorah Onyeka Leo

Government to engage Nigerian graduates of tertiary institutions in national development.

Based on the foregoing, it becomes essential that no country of the world neglects the necessary development of the skills, knowledge base, education, competencies, and the strategic alignment of its human resources, communities, businesses, and other institutions to national development without determined endeavor to effective human capacity building and development which are paramount for overall sustainable development. According to Isola and Alani, Humans and their capacity identification and development remains the centre of the creation of goods and services, advancement in science and technology, economics, agriculture, military; and above all value creation in all spheres of human endeavour¹. Therefore, the development of human capacity as a development strategy must aim at improving skills for executing vital functions, solving problems, defining and achieving objectives and focusing on building the individual's knowledge base, skills, attitudes, competencies, abilities while at the same time expanding and strengthening network of individuals and institutions by creating a pool of talents which will potentially and significantly improve sustainable development practices.

According to Onyishi, the goal of the NYSC scheme includes developing youths especially graduates with sound minds and result oriented goals that are driving towards the actualization of national cohesion and unity and to incorporate national coexistence. It is an exercise that develops the individual minds and makes them bring out their best for service for national development and nation-building². However, for the

¹W.A. Isola, and R.A. Alani, 'Human Capital Development and Economic Growth: Empirical Evidence from Nigeria.' *Asian Economic and Financial Review*, 2(7): (2012): pp: 813 - 827.

²A. O. Onyishi, 'Youth and National Development in Nigeria: An Analysis of National Youth Service Scheme: 1999 – 2000.' *International Journal of Modern Political Economy*, 2(1), (2011): 87 – 102.

The Role of National Youth Service Corps Scheme in the Development...

NYSC, some enormous challenges such as underemployment and unemployment confronting Nigeria, has made it necessary to expand operation of the Scheme to address these emerging challenges³.

In the country today, there is an escalating rate of poverty, unemployment among graduates and other social vices that have bedevilled the society and the youth specifically. Deebom and Okwelle stated that these may have resulted from the lack of appropriate skill acquisition by graduates and the youths in general⁴. Furthermore, there has been an upsurge of the unemployment level in Nigeria; as at April, 2018, the unemployment rate in Nigeria is 18.80%. This figure is relatively high if compared with countries like India (3.4%), Mexico (3.20%), Indonesia (5.50%), Turkey (10.40%), and Brazil (12.60%)⁵.

Ehirheme and Ekpenyong observed that most of Nigerian graduates upon completion of the compulsory one-year national service remain jobless after 5 years thereby causing an increase to the unemployment rate and the society at large⁶. It is for this purpose that the author of this chapter decided to take a look at the imperatives of effectual human capacity development in Nigeria. At this juncture, it is pertinent to ask the questions, "What are the challenges of human capacity

³C. Okafor, & J.KAni,.'The National Youth Service Corps Programme and Growing Security Threat in Nigeria. *Africa's Public Service Delivery and Performance Review*, 2(2),2014): 149-164.

⁴Deebom, M. T. & Okwelle, P. C. (2016).Empowering Rural Youths for Maximum Societal Impact through Skills Acquisition Programme in Ogoni Area of Rivers State.*African Journal of Historical Sciences in Education*, 12(1), 222 – 250.

⁵National Bureau of Statistics. Indices of Poverty, unemployment and poverty in Nigeria, 2019

⁶P. E Erhirheme, and L. E.Ekpenyen. Assessment of opinions of student on the implementation of Entrepreneurship in selected Nigeria tertiary institution in Edo, Delta, Lagos, Ogun states. Paper Presented at an international conference in African indigenous Research and development initiatives at the Goodness Convention Centre, Johannesburg, South African, 14th -16th March, 2012

THE NYSC AND SAED

Onuorah Onyeka Leo

development in Nigeria? and what is the significant relationship between the National Youth Service Corp Scheme and the development of Human Capacity in Nigeria? Lastly, what strategies are best suited for improving human capacity development in Nigeria? This study is anchored on these research questions and an attempt is made in providing feasible answers to the questions.

An Overview of Human Capacity Development

It is a truism that human resources and their intrinsic capacities are the sole and centre of development. From the primordial era to the period of the dark ages and to the ancient civilization of Rome, Athens, and Egypt where human capacity development for leadership, athleticism, war, education, especially philosophy and science took centre stage. Human capacity building and development has generated greater attention to the extent that international development agencies have set standards and measures for enhancing human capacity, its building, and development. It follows that human capacity and capacity building are some of the developmental indices of any nation.

According to the New International Webster Comprehensive Dictionary, human capacity is the adequate mental power to receive, understand, and also the ability, talent, and capability inherent in individuals. Human capacities rooted in the human capital is the aggregate stock of knowledge, habits, social and personality attributes, including creativity, embodied in their ability to perform one or more of multifarious activities so as to produce economic value⁷. Human capacity as an epithet of the human capital represents the driving force of the development of mankind and the potentials for transformation, innovation and sustainability.

⁷Erhirheme, and L. E. Ekpenyen. Assessment of opinions of student..'

The Role of National Youth Service Corps Scheme in the Development...

Human capacity development is seen by the World Bank as the proven ability of vital take holders in a society to achieve socio-economic goals on their own. This is established through the functional presence of a combination of factors such as: viable institutions and respective organizations; commitment and vision of leadership; financial and material resources; skilled human resources. Human capacity development involves human resource development of nations or organizations and fostering the materialization of an overall policy environment beneficial to the creation of suitable responses to rising needs.

Human capacity development refers to the art of educating people to extract their potentials and instinctive abilities for the benefit of society. Expansively, human capacity development involves the process of intensification of the skills, knowledge, competencies, and abilities in an individual to survive, adapt and thrive in an evolving world. According to Etuk, human capacity development is the process of educating and training people for productive employment role⁸ and Ushie describes it as a process which deals with the development of human competence, skills, and attitude for meeting the demands of the nation occupationally, professionally, administratively and technically. Human capacity development is of great value to any nation in the world⁹.

From the foregoing, human capacity development is much more than training but a process of transformation; for this reason, it is about managing transformations, individual capacities, institutional capacity

⁸E. J. Etuk, 'Education and manpower development in Nigeria.' In O. E. Uya, D. Denga, J. Emeh, & J. Okoro. (Eds.) *Education for sustainable democracy: The Nigerian experience.* (2004). Pp.167-177

⁹E. M. Ushie. 'Education and effective human resource development in organizations.' In O. E. Uya, D. Denga, J. Emeh & J. Okoro (eds.) *Education for sustainable democracy. The Nigerian experience.* (Pp.222-236) Calabar, Nigeria: University of Calabar Press.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Onuorah Onyeka Leo

and a society's capacity change over time. Capacity development is the element that gives variability, plasticity and functionality of individuals to adapt to changing demands.

Human Capital Theory as a Theoretical Framework of Analysis

This study is anchored on the human capital theory as a theoretical framework of analysis. Human capital theory relies on the postulation that formal education is exceedingly instrumental and essential to develop the productive capacity of a populace. In diminutive terms, human capital theorists argue that an educated populace is a productive populace. Human capital theory emphasizes on how education fosters the productivity and efficiency of workers by improving the level of cognitive stock of economically productive human capability, which is a product of innate abilities and investment in human beings.

Human Capital Theory (HCT) agrees that investment in human capital will lead to greater economic outputs. However, the validity of the theory is occasionally difficult to attest and incongruous. In the past, economic potency was principally dependent on substantial physical assets such as land, factories and equipment. Labor was an indispensable element, but increases in the value of the business came from investment in capital equipment. Modern economists seem to concur that education and health care are the key to improving human capital and ultimately increasing the economic outputs of the nation¹⁰.

In the contemporary economy, solid tangible assets may not be as vital as investing in human capital. Evidently, Thomas Friedman, in his winning book, *The World is Flat 2007*, wrote expansively about the significance of education in the contemporary economy. Friedman, not

¹⁰G. S. Becker, *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis with Special Reference to Education* (3rd Ed.). (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993)

The Role of National Youth Service Corps Scheme in the Development...

to be confused with the famous economist Milton Friedman, is a journalist. His popular book has uncovered millions of people to human capital theory. The term itself is not introduced, but evidence as to why people and education (human capital) are vital to a nation's economic success, is a common reoccurring theme in the book. Human capital theory stresses the connotation of education (human capital) as the key to adequate participation in the contemporary economy. A report by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), claims that the radical changes to the public and private sectors of the economy introduced over recent years in response to globalization will be severe and disturbing to many established values and procedures. The OECD also boldly asserts that internationalism is a means to improve the quality of education. In keeping with human capital theory, it has been argued that the overall economic performance of the OECD countries is increasingly more directly based upon their knowledge stock and their learning capabilities. Clearly, the OECD is attempting to produce a new role for education in terms of human capital subject required in economized institutions.

The progress of a nation as regards human capacity development is in principle dependent upon the physical and human capital stock. Consequently, recent social research focuses on the behavioural sciences of humanity in relation to economic productivity. In the main, human capital represents the assets each individual develops to enhance economic productivity. Additionally, human capital is concerned with the wholesome adoption of the policies of education and development. In short, the human capital theorists argue that an educated population is a productive population. Human capital theory emphasizes how education increases the productivity and efficiency of workers by increasing the level of cognitive stock of economically productive human capability, which is a product of innate abilities and investment in human beings. The provision of formal education is seen as a productive investment in human capital, which the proponents of

THE NYSC AND SAED

Onuorah Onyeka Leo

the theory have considered as equally or even more equally worthwhile than that of physical capital.

According to Babalola, the wisdom behind investment in human capital is based on three arguments:

- i. The new generation must be given the appropriate parts of the knowledge which has already been accumulated by previous generations.
- ii. The new generation should be taught how existing knowledge should be used to develop new products, to introduce new processes and production methods and social services;
- iii. People must be encouraged to develop entirely new ideas, products, processes, and methods through creative approaches¹¹.

Based on the importance of education, the concept of human capital has been brought to the forefront of many discourses in the field of economic growth and development. Studies have shown that improvements in education accelerate productivity and contribute to the development of technology, thus improving human capital. Babalola (2003) asserts that the contribution of education to economic growth and development occurs through its ability to increase the productivity of an existing labor force in various ways.

In order to boost human development in the society, it is essential to apply the theory of human capital to educational systems. Through such means, productivity is improved and sustained based on an increased and diversified labor force. It has been proven that the human capital theory and educational systems work magnificently for the development of persons and nations at large, particularly developing nations. The human capital theory emphasizes the need for

¹¹H. Babalola, *Economic Growth and Human Development* (Nsukka, University Press, 2003),

The Role of National Youth Service Corps Scheme in the Development...

policymakers to allocate significant resources to the expansion of educational systems, while some governments may be unenthusiastic to invest in education, the positive returns from this investment will considerably outweigh the costs. Many of the developing nations have thus realized that the principal mechanism for developing human knowledge is the education system. Thus, they invest huge sums of money in education, not only as an attempt to impart knowledge and skills to persons, but also to impart values, ideas, attitudes, and aspirations which may be in the nation's best developmental interest. The educational system is used tentatively in relation that graduates who go for NYSC are products of the education system in the country, thus; investment in education invariably impacts the quality of graduates going to NYSC scheme.

National Youth Service Corp Scheme and Human Capacity Development

During the Gowon regime in 1973, the National Youth Service Corps Scheme was introduced to address post war policies of reconstruction, rehabilitation, reconciliation, and fostering of togetherness in the country. The Scheme was established with a view to giving appropriate support and development of common ties and endorsement of national unity among youths. A major expectation of the scheme is that the corps members should be posted to states away from their original homes (states of origin), where they are expected to relate with people from other ethnic groups and learn to appreciate the culture of such people. The posting was such that graduates must not be allowed to serve in their biological state of origin¹².

The objectives of the NYSC scheme are premeditated to be communally reinforcing to guarantee systemic and institutional efficiency of the

¹²M.O., Ogundele, A.O., Sofoluwe, & D.J. Kayode'Integrating Entrepreneurship Skills Acquisition in to National Youths Service Corps Programme in Nigeria.'Journal of Entrepreneurship and Management, 2(3),(2012). 24-28.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Onuorah Onyeka Leo

scheme and human capacity development in Nigeria. The mobilization of youths for economic and socio-cultural development is also driven by the need to prepare future leaders with a positive ethos for national cohesion, development and self-reliance¹³. In this regard, several studies consider the NYSC as a corridor and podium that improves youth transition into productive adulthood and effective citizenship¹⁴. The expected outcomes of youth participation in the NYSC scheme include but is not limited to psychosocial and¹⁵, character development¹⁶; interethnic tolerance through enhanced cognitive and perceptual shifts that seeks to eliminate discriminatory practices and manage conflicts¹⁷; creation of platforms for youths to gain practical experience, reflexive learning and exit opportunities; competence, skills (both soft and technical), and social capital development¹⁸; improved levels of patriotism and citizenship through awareness, loyalty, and sense of belonging¹⁹; entrepreneurship development

¹³H., Perold, L.A., Graham, E.M., Mavungu, K., Cronin, L. Muchemwa, and B.J. Lough, 'Colonial Legacy of International Voluntary Service' *Community Development Journal*, vol. 48(2); (2013): 179-196.

¹⁴E. Obadare 'Statism, Youth and Civic Imagination: A critical Study of the National Youth Service Programme in Nigeria, *CODESRIA Monograph Series* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2010)

¹⁵C. Bodley-Bond, and K. Cronin, *National youth service, employability, entrepreneurship and sustainable livelihoods: Overview of the national youth service landscape in Sub-Saharan Africa*. (Washington DC: Innovation in Civic Participation. 2013)

¹⁶ ICP National Youth Service Project on Employability, Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Livelihoods in Sub-Saharan Africa: Synthesis Report. (Washington DC: Washington DC: Innovation in Civic Participation, 2013)

¹⁷T.A. Olaifa, Youth and Ethnic Movements and their Impacts on Party Politics in ECOWAS Member States, *Sage Open*, (2014): p. 1-12.

¹⁸Eberly, D.J. (2008): National Youth Service: An Institution for Building and Sustaining Peace. In Caforio, G., Kummel, G. and Purkayastha, B. (eds.) (2008): Armed Forces and Conflict Resolution: Sociological Perspectives, p.383-392.

¹⁹Raimi, L. and Alao, O. (2011): Evaluation of the economics (cost and benefits) of National Youth Service Corps for sustainable development in Nigeria, *Humanomics*, Vol. 27(4), 270-281.

The Role of National Youth Service Corps Scheme in the Development...

through orientation programmes; as well as, deployment and usage of youth capabilities solely for national interest and economic development needs.

In Nigeria, there is scarcely, no facet of the economic, social and cultural life the NYSC scheme has not impacted meaningfully. Distinctively, the scheme offers numerous graduates an entry point into the labour market and many devoted corps members have obtainable employment in their various places of primary assignment. These are graduates who would ordinarily have been unemployed and badly informed of the opportunities that exist in other parts of the country.

The nexus between National Youth Service Corp Scheme and human capacity development cannot be overemphasized. Therefore, the role of NYSC in human capacity development in Nigeria is intrinsic and cannot be directly measured when compared and contrasted with other forms of resources such as material, land, minerals resources, and other raw materials. It represents the manifestations in terms of the wealth of the nation, material and social well-being of the general public, the effectiveness of institutions and systems as well as the quality of human development indices that can be assessed. The human capital condition of a country unswervingly influences and associates with economic and social indicators such as gross domestic product (GDP), income per capita, the balance of trade, life expectancy, literacy rate, level of industrialization, and the quality of infrastructural provisions. It can also have an immense impact on political stability, national peace, and as well as the prevailing philosophy.

The more a country has knowledgeable, skilled and resourceful persons contributing to national growth and development, the higher

THE NYSC AND SAED

Onuorah Onyeka Leo

the value of the human capital of that country²⁰. The significance of the human capital asset of a country is a function of measure, quality as well as the operating environment. A country with high population can only have a higher potential for human capital development and considerable input and hard work are required to bring to the fore that potential in order to achieve human capacity development. Notable inputs are a sound and vibrant education system, motivational operating environment and support services. This chapter make bold to postulate the NYSC scheme as a significant input capable of impacting the country's human capacity development. The scheme does not fall short in building an apt balance and critical mass of human resource base and providing enabling environment for all persons to be fully engaged and contribute efforts to national development. It also provides opportunities to graduates to develop to their maximum potentials via education, training and motivation as well as creating the enabling environment for them to participate wholly in National development. All effort to increase human knowledge, enhance skills and productivity and stimulate resourcefulness of citizens depicts an effort in human capacity development.

Challenges of Human Capacity Development in Nigeria

In a developing country such as Nigeria, the challenge of human capacity development is enormous. The level of achievements by developed countries with regards to human capacity development cannot be compared with that of the developing countries. Nigeria is embodied with various challenges such as high population, diverse ethnic and socio-cultural groups, corrupt governance; all these make

²⁰C.K. Chikwe, R.Ogidi, .C.,Reuben and K. Nwachukwu Challenges of Research and Human Capital Development in Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice*. Vol.6, No.28, (2015)

The Role of National Youth Service Corps Scheme in the Development...

effective human capacity development even more daring. Below are inherent challenges of human capacity development in Nigeria:

Brain Drain: This seems to be a major challenge in Nigeria, as non-commitment at various levels of the government to human capacity development poses a major threat that has resulted in brain drain to universities in Nigeria. The issue of brain drain from the universities is a resultant effect of lack of motivation for lectureship post amongst students in Nigeria. Again, the gap in the number of trained professionals and the number affianced can be accounted for by "Brain Drain", low-capacity utilization and inauspicious working environment. Nigeria's best brains have been lost to other countries owing to high rate of unemployment and poor remunerations in the country. The depressing implications of this regarding Nigeria's human capacity development are overwhelming. This is an enormous challenge to the country that aims to be among the developed nations of the world in 2020.

In Nigeria, the resources and market for industrialization are apparent however, the poor administrative capacity and feeble technological institutions constitute major constraints, in a country where the education and other training institutions are not geared to the development of national capability, more productive technology cannot be engaged. This means that human capacity development institutions must be strengthened to develop the needed capacity for the country's development.

Underemployment: This factor is another inherent challenge to Nigeria's human capacity development and effective utilization policies encompassing balanced and progressive educational development and the creation of an enabling environment for the full and useful engagement of yield of the education system. It is worthy to note that merely producing large number of graduates is not apt, rather such graduates must be empowered and supported by enabling polices and

THE NYSC AND SAED

Onuorah Onyeka Leo

working environment, in order to become competent service providers, job and wealth creators. The case in Nigeria is that the graduates of our educational system are mostly under-employed due to non-availability of jobs and in unfavorable environment for job creation and self-empowerment. Underemployment consists of both open and disguised unemployed. Open unemployed represents those who are working less than the normal hours, while disguised unemployed represents those whose contribution to output is less than what they can produce by working for normal hours of work per day²¹. Yet again those who concentrate in particular areas tend to divert their skills to other areas where they did not have training or education; whereas some take on jobs less than the ones they are qualified for. All these vices are forms of underemployment in the country and pose threat to human capacity development.

Low Rating in Human Development Indices: The Nigeria's socio-economic feat and rating inhuman development indices which represents a mirror image of its human capital status is rather low and contemptible of a country with enormous natural resources and human capital potentials.

The Human Capital Index measures countries' ability to maximize and leverage their human capital endowment. The index assesses learning and employment outcomes across 5 distinct age groups, on a scale from 0 (worst) to 100 (best), and assesses 124 economies representing between 92% of the world's people and 98% of its GDP.

Nigeria is the most populated black nation in the world with an estimated population of about 201 million, loaded with biodiversity and rich natural and mineral resources including crude oil and natural

²¹M. L. Jhingan, *The economics of development and planning*. (Delhi: Vrinda publishers: 2007).

The Role of National Youth Service Corps Scheme in the Development...

gas. With all these endowments, Nigeria is expected to have a robust and vibrant economy and among the leading countries of the world, have at least a medium quality life index and well above the average of human development indices. Regrettably, this is not the case as Nigeria is grouped among poor under-developed countries in the world. The implication is that human capacity development is greatly affected.

Conclusion

Human capacity development is the empowerment of people which comprises their ability, will and skill to initiate, plan, manage, undertake, organize, budget, monitor/ supervise and evaluate project activities. This holds consequently that capacity development of an individual which takes the form of education as key information provider and character moulder, integrated training, skill acquisition, knowledge, networking, continuous learning and human resource development have always served as the bedrock of individual, institutional and national development²². It is therefore a truism that for apt human capacity development, effective educational policies, funding and infrastructure must become the foundations of national development plans. Such a policy should as well incorporate the strategies for Technological Capacity Building (TCB) as a continuous social process. To develop this capability, a nation, therefore, needs to have the appropriate policy, building the necessary institutions and structures which must be sustainable.

²²S. Mallick, 'Capacity Building: Concept, Definition and Methodology for Self-Assessment. Conference Proceedings of Human Resource Roadmap and Capacity building for new and expanding nuclear power programme.(2013).

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National Youth Service Corps Ventures and Socio-Economic Development

12

National Youth Service Corps Ventures and Socio-Economic Development

Suleiman Bilal Ishaq

Introduction

The National Youth Service Corps Scheme is a national programme for all Nigerian youths who had obtained first degrees or Higher National Diplomas from the tertiary institutions both locally and abroad. The age requirement is for only those who are thirty (30) and below at graduation. Also, professionals like Medical Doctors, Lawyers, and Pharmacists are allowed to defer their participation in the scheme until after the completion of their one year professional apprenticeship (Internship). This exception is due to the insistence by the medical and

THE NYSC AND SAED

Suleiman Bilal Ishaq

pharmaceutical regulatory bodies that members must be certified before practicing, although lawyers may opt to go for national service before the call to Bar or the other way round. The youths are required to participate in this scheme mandatorily before seeking for employment in Nigeria as the one-year programme is regarded as a very essential training period. In other case, it is also required before further education or postgraduate studies, except where such graduate is exempted on the following grounds; above age limit, having served in Armed Forces or in Nigeria Police for more than nine months, a member of staff of State Security Services, National Intelligence Agency or Defense Intelligence Service, or a holder of National Honour.¹

Other people who are excluded are graduates of part-time or distant learning programme. The NYSC scheme since its inception has come up with a formidable strategy, a plan that will aid in the meeting of the socio-economic needs and the achievement of more equitable development across the country. It has been noted that in this area, the scheme has recorded a very remarkable success. It is noteworthy to ascertain this fact examining their programmes that have led to this seaming breakthrough. The NYSC scheme in a bid to contribute to the socio-economic development of the country ventured into some economic sub-sectors that have not only profited or rendered services to the people but has also contributed to national development. The NYSC has ventured in Agriculture, Livestock Farms, Agro Based Projects, Shoe Factory, Garment Factory, Water Factory and even Bakeries and Confectionaries.

This study therefore, examines the various NYSC ventures and their impact on socio-economic development of Nigeria. The work is divided into five sections. Apart from the introduction, section one discusses the background to the establishment of the NYSC, section two gave an

¹ T.F. Abdullahi, National Youth Service in developed countries:
www.nationalyouthservicehtml, Accessed 17/03/2021.

National Youth Service Corps Ventures and Socio-Economic Development

overview of the NYSC ventures, section three examines the NYSC ventures and their activities, section four discusses the impact of the NYSC ventures on the socio-economic development of the country, section five discusses the challenges and prospect then, conclusion.

Conceptual Clarification

Socio-economic development: Socio-economic development is the process of social and economic development in a society. Socio-economic development is measured with indicators such as; GDP, life expectancy, literacy and levels of employment. Changes in less-tangible factors are also considered such as; personal dignity, freedom of association, personal safety and freedom from fear of physical harm, and extent of participation in civil society.

Youth Service: Youth service refers to a non-military, intensive engagement of young people in an organized activity that contributes to the local, national, or world community. Youth service is widely recognized and valued by the society, with minimal compensation or in some cases, no compensation to the server. Youth service gives opportunities for youth development, youth voice and reflection. This may take the form of a youth programme where young people are recruited, offered leadership opportunities, participate in activities that improve the community, and are trained and mentored. The most common age group defined as 'youth' is 15-30 years of age, and in other parlance, 15-40 years of age. The United Nations defines youth as 15-24 years of age. The duration of most youths in service for either their community or their nation depends on the settings they found themselves in. Some communities regard long-range youth service as being from six months to two years of service; however, this time range can vary with each country's national youth service policy.²

²"Youth Service" National Youth Commission. Accessed 15th March, 2021

THE NYSC AND SAED

Suleiman Bilal Ishaq

The NYSC Ventures: An Overview

In a bid to improve the scheme and adapt to modern realities of corporate institutions and contribute to the economy and society, the NYSC has gone into commercial ventures some years after its inception. The NYSC established commercial ventures such as Garment factories in Minna Niger state and Mgbakwu, Anambra State. The garment factories are purposely established with the aim of assisting the scheme in producing uniforms in large quantities used by corps members for the one year national service. The garment factories, apart from the production of uniforms for corps members, also design new patterns and samples for contractors. Corps members are also beneficiaries of the activities of the factories as some of them are trained in the factories. As a consequence, some of these corps members become professionals in the act of tailoring as they further pursue the career.³ Furthermore, to complement the government's efforts towards achieving self-sufficiency in the area of food production in the country, and to enable the NYSC to produce food items for consumption during orientation exercise, the scheme established integrated farm settlements in the six (6) geopolitical zones of the country. Apart from food production, corps members are equally trained on agricultural activities during their service year at the various farm settlements.

The NYSC Ventures and their Activities

The various ventures that were established by the NYSC were functional since 1984, ranging from the agricultural venture, livestock farming, agro-based projects, but these ventures during this time formed a unit under the community development service, not until in 2012 when they autonomously stood as a department of their own. By this time, the NYSC bakery and the NYSC water factory were added to the ventures. The essence of these ventures becoming an autonomous

³ G. Enegewa and G. Umoden, *NYSC...* 165
258

National Youth Service Corps Ventures and Socio-Economic Development

department of their own is to keep concentration on the businesses and also serve as an avenue for corps members to learn from the businesses that are run in the ventures. They engage in learning in the areas of production, manufacturing, marketing and general entrepreneurship. Also, all the ventures of the NYSC were incorporated as a public limited liability company registered under the Corporate Affairs Commission as companies under the NYSC.⁴The core mandate of these ventures includes:

Training of Corps members: Some of the corps members at the end of their service year were trained and empowered, they benefited from the training and those that learnt the skill well are attached to funding partners like the Central Bank of Nigeria, Bank of Agriculture, Bank of Industry, where loans are provided them for start-up.⁵

Generating revenue for the Scheme: The ventures also serve the purpose of generating revenue for the Federal Government through the Scheme.⁶

This section will focus on these NYSC ventures and their activities as per its impact on the socio-economic development of the areas in which they are situated and its impact on National Development.

Agriculture (Arable Farming): The beginning of food production represents a strategic shift in human behavior towards the manipulation of the soil environment, and through an influence on the composition of plant populations grown in that soil via preferential seeding and tending of one or a few species. While cultivation may involve a range of practices, and this will tend to select for morphological domestication, at least in seed crops, we can define

⁴Musa Ibrahim Abdu, 47, NYSC Official (Zonal Coordinator, Katsina), NYSC Zonal Office Funtua, 10thMarch, 2021.

⁵Musa, Interview Cited

⁶Musa, interview Cited

THE NYSC AND SAED

Suleiman Bilal Ishaq

agriculture in relation to the scale of cultivation, its prominence in local landscapes and in contributing a major component of human diet. In this sense, agriculture is the form of land use that represents a change in the landscape, as people regularly cultivate, raise, and focus more attention on domestic plants and/or animals. Agriculture creates fields for larger-scale production of crops and livestock.⁷

In the area of agriculture, it has been reported that the scheme has cultivated a minimum of 100 hectares of land in each of the 30 states of the federation in the 1980s thus, turning out a large tonnage of food annually. Also, over 7000 hectares of farmland have been acquired for arable farming in some of the states of the federation including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Major crops planted include maize, rice, guinea corn, millet, cassava, pineapple, soya beans, sorghum and cowpea. The agricultural venture has become a source of challenge for some corps members to design simple technology tools for use in the case of food production and processing. Some of these tools have already gained widespread acceptance, for instance, the famed tomato thresher. The successes in the farms have also accelerated the idea to establish some agro-based industries.⁸ Recently, there are four major farms which the scheme has focused on. In the area of arable farming, these four operational farms are currently very functional, they include; to start with, the NYSC farm Saminaka, Rice farm in Shanga Local Government Area of Kebbi state. Here, 60 hectares of rice was harvested.⁹ The NYSC management released a press statement that affirmed the above information in 2020 where it noted that:

⁷ D.R. Harris, and D. Q. Fuller, Agriculture: Definition and Overview. In Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology (Claire Smith, Ed.).Springer, New York.2004, pp 104-113.

⁸ G. Enegwea and G. Umoden, NYSC: Twenty years of National Service, (Abuja: Gabumo Pub, 1993). 166.

⁹ Musa Ibrahim Abdu, 47, NYSC Official, Interviewed at NYSC secretariat Kano. 10th March, 2021.

National Youth Service Corps Ventures and Socio-Economic Development

"The NYSC harvested its 60 hectares rice farm in Saminaka Shanga Local Government Area of Kebbi state, Nigeria. The NYSC farm settlements across the country were being enhanced especially with supply of equipment and other necessary inputs. The move is geared towards harnessing the scheme's revenue generation through reinvigorating its various ventures especially rice harvest."¹⁰

Furthermore, in the area of rice production, other locations that the NYSC has rice farms summing up to a total of 90 hectares of farmland of both swamp and upland rice include:

- I. Kwali-Abuja
- II. Ezillo-Ebonyi state
- III. Ikpelkot-Nkon Akwa Ibom State
- IV. Garatu/Tagwai-Niger State
- V. Talata MafaraZamfara State.¹¹

Secondly, the NYSC cassava farm Iseyin in Oyo state. NYSC has Cassava farms in some states of the federation which are located in; Akunyun/Afon in Kwara state, Emekuku-Emii in Imo, Oyam Dam in Ogun and Issua in Edo states.¹² In these three states, about 150 hectares of farmland yields were cultivated. The encouraging yield from these prompted the NYSC to engage in Garri processing. In this sector, Oyo state became the focal area of NYSC because it provides the largest quantity of cassava which in-turn is utilized for the purpose of Garri production. From the Oyo farms, the NYSC had harvested over

¹⁰ Nigerian Tribune "NYSC Commences Harvest of 60 Hectares Rice Farm in Kebbi State" Nov 18 2020.

¹¹G. Enegwea and G. Umoden, NYSC: Twenty years of National Service, (Abuja: Gabumo Pub, 1993). 166.

¹²G. Enegwea and G. Umoden, NYSC: Twenty years of National Service...

THE NYSC AND SAED

Suleiman Bilal Ishaq

100 hectares of Cassava over time and it has become a source for generating revenue to the government through the NYSC scheme.¹³

Furthermore, there is the NYSC Maize and Cowpea farm in Dangulbi, Bauchi State. The production of crops in the farms took off in 2017 at the NYSC settlement in the village. The initiative was in line with the NYSC management's resolve to restore the scheme's once vibrant agricultural practices. The then Director-General, Brigadier General Sulaiman Kazaure, visited the farm to assess the level of progress made in the cropping season. The farm had 24 hectares of maize intercropped with cowpea. So maize and cowpea were harvested in these areas.¹⁴ The then Director General said:

The NYSC management's decision to resuscitate the NYSC farm settlements was aimed at supporting the Federal Government's policy of ensuring food security through the encouragement of local production. He also expressed satisfaction with the progress made at the bauchi farm but remarked that there is room for improvement¹⁵

The NYSC Maize and Cowpea farm in Dangulbi, Bauchi State has been a top priority to NYSC, this is evidently seen by visits like that of the past Director-General, Brigadier General Sulaiman Kazaure which was discussed in the preceding paragraph, more so, In 2019, the current Director General of NYSC Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim also paid

¹³ Abdulrashid Musa, NYSCSAED resource person, 45+, Interviewed at NYSC secretariat Kaduna. 10th March, 2021

¹⁴ NYSC, DG Inspects NYSC Farm in Bauchi, 11, December, 2019, <https://m.facebook.com/officialnysc/posts/dg-inspects-nysc-farm-in-bauchi-the-director-general-brigadier-general-shuaibu-ib/2606892166059962/>, Accessed 17/3/21.

¹⁵ NYSC, DG Inspects NYSC Farm in Bauchi, 11, December, 2019, <https://m.facebook.com/officialnysc/posts/dg-inspects-nysc-farm-in-bauchi-the-director-general-brigadier-general-shuaibu-ib/2606892166059962/>, Accessed 17/3/21.

National Youth Service Corps Ventures and Socio-Economic Development

an unscheduled visit to the NYSC farm in Dangulbi village of Bauchi State. The D.G inspected the farm for the training of Corps members with interest in Agro-Allied operations.¹⁶ The farm manager Mallam Zaillani noted that:

The entire farmland spanned over 150 hectares of land.

He added that: food crops like beans, cowpea, maize and soyabean have been harvested in large quantities from the farm over the years. He also requested for the increase and timely funding, including the provision of a delivery vehicle and mechanized equipment for the farm in order to boost its operation.¹⁷

The Director-General, commended Bauchi State Government for releasing the land to NYSC for farming. He said:

The activities on the farm would stimulate the interests of corps members who have passion for mechanized farming as it will serve as a training arena and also boost the internally generated revenue of the scheme. He also warned that those in charge of the NYSC farm should be sincere, diligent and loyal to the scheme's management in running the affairs of the farm adding that the request of the farm Manager would be looked into.”¹⁸

¹⁶ NYSC, DG Inspects NYSC Farm in Bauchi, 11, December, 2019, <https://m.facebook.com/officialnysc/posts/dg-inspects-nysc-farm-in-bauchit-the-director-general-brigadier-general-shuaibu-ib/2606892166059962/>, Accessed 17/3/21.

¹⁷ NYSC, NYSC Grow Maize, Cowpea in Bauchi State, 8, August, 2017, <https://m.facebook.com/officialnysc/posts/1419146368167887/>, Accessed 17/3/21.

¹⁸ NYSC, NYSC Grow Maize, Cowpea in Bauchi State, 8, August, 2017, <https://m.facebook.com/officialnysc/posts/1419146368167887/>, Accessed 17/3/21.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Suleiman Bilal Ishaq

According to the Guardian Newspaper in 2017, the Director-General of NYSC Brigadier General Sulaiman Kazaure said that:

Arrangements were being made to enable corps members interested in farming to access soft loans for the 2017 farming season. Inspecting 145 hectares NYSC farmland in Bauchi, Kazaure explained that the aim was to train corps members in modern farming to enable them to become self-reliant after their service year. The D.G noted that: talks were ongoing between the NYSC and various banks such as bank of Industry and Heritage bank in that direction.¹⁹

Other areas where the NYSC possesses farm land for maize cultivation include:

- a. Kwali-Abuja
- b. Biu-Borno
- c. Issua-Edo State.
- d. Mayo-Ine-Adamawa State.
- e. Afon-Kwara State.
- f. Garatu/Tagwai-Niger State.
- g. Iseyin-Oyo state.
- h. Itaogbolu-Ondo state
- i. Oyan Dam-Ogun state
- j. Kassa/Riyom-Plateau State.²⁰

Fourthly, there is the NYSC farm in Kwali which is another major concentration of the NYSC where farm produce like groundnut, sesame seed, cassava among others. The Nigerian Blue Print Newspaper

¹⁹ The Guardian News, Corp Members to access loan for 2017 Farming Season, 27/April/ 2017

²⁰ G. Enegewa and G. Umoden, NYSC: Twenty years of National Service, (Abuja: Gabumo Pub, 1993). 166.

National Youth Service Corps Ventures and Socio-Economic Development

reported in 2014 that: The Former Director General of the NYSC Brigadier General Johnson Olawumi:

Has assured of resuscitating the NYSC farm at Kwali Area Council of the FCT, adding that other farm settlements would be set up across the country to reduce the rate of youth unemployment. Olawunmi charged the ventures department of the scheme to come up with proposals for the appropriate maximization of the use of the entire farmland, rather than the small portion of it currently used for cassava and groundnut production. The D.G urged the directors to include modalities for the posting of corps members to the farm for their primary assignment, accommodation, security, transportation and other incentives.²¹

The size of the NYSC farm land Kwali is over 100 hectares and cultivated under collaboration on cassava and groundnut production between the NYSC and the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA). The collaboration was to enable the IITA use the farm for its cassava seedlings multiplication programmes²².

Other agricultural projects the NYSC has ventured in include Guinea corn and millet production in Kaduna, Kebbi and Katsina States, and the Pineapple Orchard in Cross River State. The yields are encouraging and expansion programmes aimed at commercial production is ongoing. There are also, oil plantations work in Akwa Ibom and Orile Owu in Osun States with over 25 hectares.²³ It is pertinent to note the contributions of collaborative agencies that have assisted the NYSC

²¹Blueprint Newspaper, "Youth Unemployment, NYSC Moves to Revive Farms", July 24, 2014.

²²Jibril Umar, Head of Ventures Kubwa, 50+, Interviewed at Kubwa Abuja, 15/3/21

²³G. Enegewea and G. Umoden, NYSC: Twenty years of National Service, (Abuja: Gabumo Pub, 1993). 167.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Suleiman Bilal Ishaq

ventures in the area of agriculture, these collaborators includes, but not limited to: the NCRI- National Cereal Research Institute, IITA-International Institute for Tropical Agriculture. These agencies give professional advice on agricultural programmes and better yielding mechanisms.²⁴

NYSC Livestock Farms

The NYSC also embarks on livestock farming as a way of contributing to national development. These productions include: fish farming/fisheries poultry farms, piggery farms and beef fattening farms. Fish farming is a form of aquaculture in which fish are raised in enclosures to be sold as consumable products. It is the fastest growing area of animal food production. In recent times, a large quantity of fish consumed globally is raised in the artificial environments. The NYSC venturing in fish farming and the fish farming business has been lucrative as it has brought in incomes for the scheme. The NYSC has fisheries in Rivers, Ogun and Osun states with over 20,000 fingerlings.²⁵ Poultry farming which involves the raising of birds domestically, primarily for meat and eggs is also carried out by the NYSC. Poultry farms are established in Benue, Imo and Osun states. There are piggery farms established in Lagos, Enugu and Plateau states. For instance, in Plateau State piggery alone, there are about 1800 fatteners and over 200 matured pigs made up of soars and boars. Also, beef fattening farms are located in Kano, Bauchi, Sokoto and Katsina state. The beef fattening ventures go along with small stock of goats and sheep, for instance, at the end of 1992 were: Cattle: Over 250, Sheeps Over 150 and Goats over 200.²⁶ Those who are engaged in managing these farms for NYSC are mostly veterinary doctors and those corps members who are specialized in veterinary medicine and other agro-allied courses.

²⁴Jibril Umar, Head of Ventures Kubwa, 50+, Interviewed at Kubwa Abuja, 15/3/21

²⁵G. Enegewa and G. Umoden, NYSC: Twenty years of National Service, (Abuja: Gabumo Pub, 1993). 168.

²⁶G. Enegewa and G. Umoden, NYSC: Twenty years of National Service...

National Youth Service Corps Ventures and Socio-Economic Development

This sector also generates revenue and provides a platform for training of youths of the NYSC.²⁷

NYSC Agro Based Projects

In order to gain profit from farms and increase the volume of revenue generated by the NYSC, some agro-allied projects were established. NYSC also runs some small and medium scale enterprises, thereby providing employment, producing goods and boosting the nation's economy. These projects include:

- a. **Feed mill:** The feed mill was established in 1992 and located in Ipaja, Lagos state. The mill produced a total of 1,920.85 metric tons of assorted livestock feeds such as layer mash, growers mash, broilers finisher mash, chick mash, pig fattener, among others. The products from this mill have been serving both the scheme and the general public.²⁸
- b. **Cassava Processing Plant (Garri):** The Garri processing plants in Afon, Kwara state and Kwali in FCT Have been meeting the demands for the feeding of corps members during orientation courses in North Central and south Western states. And recently, the NYSCgarri is used in all NYSC camps nationwide.²⁹
- c. **Rice miill:** The scheme established two rice mills in Ezillo in Ebonyi state and TalataMafara in Zamfara State. Some stateswithin the geopolitical zones the mills are located in the country purchase their de-stoned rice from the mills;all the southeastern states of Enugu, Ebony, Anambra, Imo and Abia

²⁷Jibril Umar, Head of Ventures Kubwa, 50+, Interviewed at Kubwa Abuja, 15/3/21

²⁸G. EjelaEmenako (ed), 1986. 12 Years of National Youth Service Corps in Nigeria: 1973 – 1985, (Gabumo Press, Yaba, Lagos).

²⁹S.O. Asein, Call to Service: Twenty Years of the National Youth Service Corps Scheme 1973 – 1993, (Sam Bookman, Ibadan).

THE NYSC AND SAED

Suleiman Bilal Ishaq

procure their rice from the rice mill in Ezillo. The products are also made available for members of the general public.³⁰

NYSC Garment Factory

NYSC established two garment factories in Minna, Niger state, and Mgbakwu, Anambra state. The two factories produce Physical Education (P.E) shorts, the NYSC khaki, plain vests, caps, vests and crested vests components of the corps members' uniform. With modern equipment, experienced tailors, and committed staff, the factories can produce these kit items for 100,000 corps members per annum. Selected corps members also go to the factories for post-camp SAED training, thereby, developing their entrepreneurial skills. The two factories have impacted positively on the growth and development of the nation's economy by providing gainful employment to youths, as well as making available finished products.³¹These garment factories have standard machines and are headed by deputy directors of the scheme, the workforce also include staff (NYSC) and also, hired tailors. Corps members are also trained there on the skill of tailoring. Some of the corps members after their service decide to embark on the learning of this skill during their post-service year. As a result, some are retained as they become professionals in the skill.³² Regarding the commercialization of the NYSC tailoring venture, the NYSC employees can render services outside the production zones of the NYSC. But the frequent nature of camping activities does not always warrant an avenue for that.³³

³⁰National Directorate Headquarters, National Youth Service Corps (1992).Imperatives of National Service in the 90s.A Collection of Speeches (Vol.I), Johnmof Printers, Ibadan.

³¹National Directorate Headquarters, National Youth Service Corps (1992).Imperatives of National Service in the 90s.A Collection of Speeches (Vol.I), Johnmof Printers, Ibadan.

³²Jibril Umar, Head of Ventures Kubwa, 50+, Interviewed at Kubwa Abuja, 15/3/21

³³Jibril Umar, Head of Ventures Kubwa, 50+, Interviewed at Kubwa Abuja, 15/3/21

National Youth Service Corps Ventures and Socio-Economic Development

NYSC Bakery and Pure Water Factory

As part of efforts to address the challenge of unemployment and develop entrepreneurial skills in corps members, NYSC management established a bread bakery and pure water factory in Kubwa, FCT. These factories employ Nigerian youths, serve as centers for skills acquisition for youths, and sources of income for the government. In the same vein, Osun state Secretariat has also established a bakery in the camp where bread is produced to feed corps members during orientation courses. Products from these ventures are also available to the members of the public.³⁴The NYSC produce bread alone as plans for the productions of other confectionaries are in place. They supply bread to the camps as the state coordinators pays for the bread and this generates income for the Federal Government through the NYSC. In the area of water production, both satchet and bottle water-are also produced and supplied to the NYSC camps nationwide.³⁵

NYSC Entertainment: There is also the NYSC entertainment venture that operates just the way Kannywood or Nollywood operates. This segment of the NYSC is termed as the NYSC wood. This venture is made up corps members who are hired for events and they are paid. For instance, those that studied theatre arts in the university are active participants here, also others who are passionate for the work are incorporated like those who have the skills of singing among others. Another segment of this venture is the NYSC band. The NYSC bands are known as the National Band, they sing during annual cultural festivals and other events that concern the youths and the president. They are also called upon during celebration times like the independence celebration, they also join the Nigerian Army to play band at other events.³⁶ To add to the entertainment venture, plans are at advanced

³⁴Agu, U. NYSC and Nigerian Unity: A Critical Appraisal, ACENA Publishers, Enugu, Nigeria. 1995.

³⁵Jibril Umar, Head of Ventures Kubwa, 50+, Interviewed at Kubwa Abuja, 15/3/21

³⁶Jibril Umar, Head of Ventures Kubwa, 50+, Interviewed at Kubwa Abuja, 15/3/21

THE NYSC AND SAED

Suleiman Bilal Ishaq

stage for an NYSC national cultural troupe , made up of talented corps members in Arts and Culture.

Impact of NYSC Ventures on socio-economic

The NYSC since it began its adventurism into operational ventures has contributed in one way or the other to socio-economic development of the nation. These ventures have been able to generate revenue for the government as the policy of generating revenue to the government was resuscitated and redoubled with the coming on board of the current Director General Brigadier Shuaibu Ibrahim. He noted that the NYSC should not become a burden to the government alone, as it can also serve as an income generator to the government. As a consequence, all proceeds from these ventures are remitted to the federal government single treasury account. It has been estimated that as at December 2020, the NYSC paid over 280 million naira to the T.S.A.³⁷

Furthermore, corps members who are willing to engage in learning of any form of skill regarding what is obtainable at the ventures are given the necessary trainings. There are enormous facilities at the ventures to tap ideas and learn skills from. There are no charges for any form of skill acquisition at the ventures but instead the corps members are provided with upkeep stipends in recognition for their hard work. The NYSC recorded various successes and is trying to improve on the operations of the ventures. The NYSC bread is supplied throughout the NYSC camps of the 36 states of the federation including the FCT, and the general public. The same goes with the NYSC water and the products of the NYSC Garment factory in Minna Niger state. Farming which is hitherto detest by the youths has been mechanized and the corps members are engaged in the area of machine operations in the farms as well as cultivations of Non-corps members are also hired for the job description.³⁸ More so, a corps member who takes advantage of

³⁷Jibril Umar, Head of Ventures Kubwa, 50+, Interviewed at Kubwa Abuja, 15/3/21

³⁸Jibril Umar, Head of Ventures Kubwa, 50+, Interviewed at Kubwa Abuja, 15/3/21

National Youth Service Corps Ventures and Socio-Economic Development

the farming activities, make A living as they use the experience gained to establish their businesses.

Challenges and prospects of the NYSC ventures

The challenges confronting these ventures are not far from the issues of inadequate funding that is a bane to the success of organisations. Although, most of the NYSC ventures are in the process of revival and others are still being managed to meet up with the desired standard needed. As noted earlier the venture began autonomous operation when the Ventures Department was separated from the CDS Department in 2012. As a consequence, the ventures were faced with some operational challenges which includes inadequate manpower and efficient modern facilities. But The NYSC is working hard to resuscitate some of these ventures that have been moribund for a long period of time. For instance, the Ezillo rice mill in Eboyi state. These ventures if revived within a very short period of time, will contribute to enhance revenue generation by the NYSC and will in-turn, contribute to the socio-economic development of the nation.

Conclusion

The contributions of the NYSC to the socio-economic development of the nation cannot be overemphasized. This study found out that through the NYSC ventures a lot of great enterprises have been put in place and it has led to human and capital development. The NYSC through its ventures have impacted the lives of youths especially the corps members as they have learnt from the various activities at the ventures ranging from farming, tailoring, bakery, water production among others. This study also found out that the NYSC ventures have become a department that has contributed solely to the process of revenue generation to the scheme and the federation.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Suleiman Bilal Ishaq

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THE NYSC AND SAED

Nuralsah Zubairu

13

**National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the
Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)/Sustainable
Development Goals (SDGs) Programme in Nigeria**

Nuralsah Zubairu

Introduction

The introduction of the National Youths Service Corps in Nigeria was geared towards achieving some objectives such as national reorientation, integration and socio-economic development in general. The scheme has made effort in achieving the set objectives through its various programmes, which include

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the Millennium Development...

orientation course, primary assignment and community development service.

The role of NYSC in the development of Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. The scheme has contributed immeasurable to the development of Nigeria in various ways. These key areas in which the scheme has contributed include the following; orientation programme, primary assignment and community development. This paper is a historic account of the contribution of the NYSC to the development of Nigeria through the MDGs /SDGs CDS. The paper argues that although the MDGs have not been adequately achieved throughout the globe, but some landmark achievements were made in addressing some of the socio-economic challenges facing Nigeria. Thus, with the proclamation for the desire to achieve the 2030 developmental goals, NYSC has also continued with campaign for the realisation of the goals through the MDGs /SDGs CDS. The chapter largely relied on written documents such as journal articles, magazines and scheme bulletins.

The NYSC Scheme and National Development

The scheme was established in 1973 as a post-civil war socio-economic and political development programme in Nigeria. It was set up in order to serve as a vehicle for mobilising the Nigerian youths towards achieving national re-orientation, socio-economic development, unity and integration in the country.¹ This decision was based on the belief that graduate youth ought to be mobilized from different backgrounds, with a view to inculcate in them the desired discipline and leadership qualities. This was essentially important in preparing the youth corps members to have the right sense of patriotism to play key roles in

¹ F.C.T KOPA: Magazine / Photo Album of the F.C.T 2007 Batch 'B' Corps Members, Publication of National Youth Service Corps, Vol. 15, No. 9, September, 2008, Abuja, p.6.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Nuralsah Zubairu

achieving the development objectives of Nigeria.² Discussing the major reason that necessitated the establishment of the NYSC scheme, Onwere observes that:

To ease tensions and prejudices among the ethnic groups, the Nigerian government established the NYSC whose primary aim is to help weave a spirit of oneness among the ethnic groups and inculcate national loyalty, which should supersede all other loyalties. The NYSC thus, represents a massive exercise in national integration-an attempt to change the face of Nigeria through changing the attitudes of young graduates towards fellow nationals and the nation³.

Onwere tries immensely to link the establishment of the NYSC scheme to one of the bad moments in the history of the Nigerian state-the Nigerian Civil War of 1967. This was a phenomenon that bedevilled most African countries few years after attaining their independence from various European colonial governments to which Nigeria was no exception. After all, the war had already damaged the peaceful co-existence of various communities in the country, in the Nigerian State. The government on the other hand however, also failed to fulfill its promise particularly that related to reconciliation by giving the Igbos equal opportunities in all the spheres of life. Onwere therefore, presented this view and commented on not only the reasons behind the emergence and establishment of the scheme, but to also show the necessity of such programme in bringing unity, national integration and mutual cooperation between the various ethnic groups living in

² Handbook for Corps Members on Teaching Assignments: Orientation Lecture Series, Directorate Head Quarters, Abuja, 1980, p.4.

³Onwere C., 'National Youth Service Corps Programme and National Integration in Nigeria', (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of International and Comparative Education, University of London,1992), 93.

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the Millennium Development...

Nigeria, which is one of the most pluralistic nations on the African continent.

The scheme has carried out its activities through various programmes. These include; orientation course for corps members, primary assignments and community development. The orientation programme is usually a three weeks exercise in which the corps members were given professional orientation. During the exercise resource persons are invited to the various orientation camps across the country to lecture and give practical demonstration on teaching, administration among others on young graduates to be posted to the places of primary assignments.⁴ This approach has worked for some years, especially when the number of corps members were few. However, with the expansion of the scheme and the posting of increasing number of corps members who had no teaching experience to assignments in schools, it became necessary for the scheme to intensify and improve the strategies for ensuring greater attitudinal orientation and competence of corps members.⁵ During the orientation, series of lectures, workshops as well as military drills were given to the corps members. This has impacted positively on the minds of the corps members and it has assisted them during their service year and beyond.

The primary assignment is another important programme of the NYSC through which the Scheme carry out its activities. At this period, corps members are assigned to work in areas relevant to their field of study either in the public or private sector. This activity affords the corps

⁴ Handbook for Corps Members on Teaching Assignments: Orientation Lecture Series..., p.5.

⁵ Handbook for Corps Members on Teaching Assignments: Orientation Lecture Series..., p.5.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Nuralsah Zubairu

members ample opportunity to contribute their quota to the socio-economic development of the country.⁶

Another important programme of the National Youth Service Corps is the Community Development Service CDS where corps members are allowed to choose a group, irrespective of their individual course of study, execute projects that are relevant to the needs of the host communities. Through the CDS, corps members are directly involved in community development in one form or another. This has made the corps members to be involved in activities such as construction of small bridges, primary health care centres, class room blocks and culverts amongst others.⁷This initiative transcends ethnic sentiments and has made an average corps member more patriotic to Nigeria as a nation.⁸ Akume et al while discussing the role of the CDS to NYSC as a scheme and to Nigeria as a whole argue that:

The CDS requires that corps members use their acquired skills to provide services such as education, healthcare delivery, rural infrastructural and community development, agriculture, science and technology and enlightenment campaigns for the benefit of their host community...as such, ensuring the success of community development service imposes on the corps members to wear a spirit coated with dedication and enthusiasm irrespective of the

⁶ F.C.T KOPA: Magazine / Photo Album of the F.C.T 2007 Batch 'B' Corps Members..., p.6.

⁷ D.O. Arubayi, "Youths in Development: Understanding the Contributions of the National Youths Service Corps (NYSC) to Nigeria's National Development", p.90 and C. Onwere, "National Youths Service Corps Programme and National Integration in Nigeria", PhD Thesis, Department of International and Comparative Education, Institute of Education, University of London, 1992.

⁸ F.C.T KOPA: Magazine / Photo Album of the F.C.T 2007 Batch 'B' Corps Members..., p.6.

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the Millennium Development...

challenges they might face in so far as they are not life-threatening⁹.

It should be noted that, NYSC as discussed by Akume et al has developed a plan through which corps members are systematically grouped based on their skills and areas of specialization in order to bring a positive change to the development of their host communities. Through this process, an important bridge is built to link people of the Nigerian state, which had suffered some damages through the regional and confrontational politics, Civil War of 1967.

The scheme has no doubt contributed immensely towards the promotion of national unity and integration despite all the challenges of the modern Nigerian state. The corps members have been trained in various disciplines. In this regard, they helped in many ways in arresting the major socio-political and economic challenges of their host communities.

The Emergence of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The history of the emergence of Millennium Development Goals can be traced back to September, 2000 when the Millennium Summit was held in New York, United States of America. During this summit, all the 189 heads of state at the United Nations adopted the Millennium Declaration. The declaration outlines eight broad goals which include: eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/Aids, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability and develop a

⁹Akume, A.T., Solomon, M. and Mohammed, O.A.' Conflict, the NYSC Programme and the Question of Policy Relevance in Present Day Nigeria: An Assessment', in Abdurrahman, D.A., Ogundiya, I.S., Garba, T. and Dankani, I.M. (eds.), 50 Years of Nigeria's Nationhood: Issues and Challenges for Sustainable Development (Ibadan: Crown F. Publishers, 2012), 106.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Nuralsah Zubairu

global partnership for development.¹⁰ The year 2015 was set as benchmark for the actualisation of the MDGs.¹¹

National Youth Service Corps and MDGs in Nigeria

Following the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, Nigeria being a signatory to the declaration, made an effort towards realising its goals. In the first place, the Federal Government launched its own version of the development agenda called National Economic Empowerment Strategy (NEEDS) in 2004, in order to address the development challenges of the country.¹²

The NYSC being a development agency that works with youths also keyed in to assist the Federal Government of Nigeria in the campaign for the realisation of the MDGs. In August 2005 after a workshop organised for NYSC staff and schedule officers by the British Council and the World Bank Group, a mandate was given to the schedule officers of FCT, Lagos and Kano to arrange, organise and train 60 corps members each at the orientation camp, in collaboration with facilitators from the World Bank and British Council.¹³ Therefore, in September 2005, 60 volunteer corps members were trained as Development Knowledge Facilitators (DFKs) in Kubwa NYSC Orientation Camps, Federal Capital Territory. These corps members were mandated to train Nigerians on development issues as it relates to the United Nations MDGs and the National Economic Empowerment Strategy (NEEDS), under the umbrella of the Debate to Action

¹⁰M.A.L.T : NYSC/FCT DTA Magazine by FCT 2006 Batch 'B' Corps Members Maiden Edition, Pp 24-25.

¹¹M.A.L.T : NYSC/FCT DTA Magazine by FCT 2006 Batch 'B' Corps Members Maiden Edition, p.5.

¹²FGN,NEEDS: NIGERIA: *The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy Document*, National Planning Commission, Abuja, 2004, p.3.

¹³M.A.L.T : NYSC/FCT DTA Magazine by FCT 2006 Batch 'B' Corps Members Maiden Edition, p.3.

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the Millennium Development...

Community Development Group, otherwise known as MDGs Awareness CD group.¹⁴

The first batch of the volunteer corps members who received training as Development knowledge facilitators had a challenging experience in kick starting the project. Being the first to extend the message of the MDGs to various communities in Nigeria, they faced rejection and resentment from various quarters but they remained steadfast which enabled them lay solid foundation for the success of MDGs campaign CD group in FCT.¹⁵ The corps members involved in this programme have successfully carried out outreach programmes with different themes; such as “you can help achieve MDGs”, “MDGs and you”, “MDG staking in into the communities”. These are important programmes geared towards taking MDGs campaign to every society in Nigeria.

The MDGs CD group under the name Debate to Action has taken the MDGs campaign awareness to various communities. Their activities certainly enhanced the progress made in the realisation of MDGs in Nigeria. This can be adduced from the accomplishments of the Corps members in each of the goals of the MDGs:

First, the NYSC MDGs CD group has contributed immensely to the realisation of goal one of the MDGs which was aimed at eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. This was done through skill acquisition projects where different skills such as assembling of computers, GSM repairs, baking and sewing etcetera, were taught to different communities as a means of poverty reduction in Nigeria.¹⁶

¹⁴M.A.L.T : NYSC/FCT DTA Magazine by FCT 2006 Batch 'B' Corps Members Maiden Edition, p.3.

¹⁵M.A.L.T : NYSC/FCT DTA Magazine by FCT 2006 Batch 'B' Corps Members Maiden Edition, p.3.

¹⁶M.A.L.T : NYSC/FCT DTA Magazine by FCT 2006 Batch 'B' Corps Members Maiden Edition, p.3.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Nuralsah Zubairu

Similarly, the NYSC MDGs CD group has also made effort towards realising goal two of the MDGs which focused on achieving universal primary education. The corps members under this CD group have identified and sponsored indigent children who dropped out of school due to lack of financial resources that will be used to cater for their educational needs. The NYSC MDGs/ SDGs Community Development group has also made effort towards the realisation of goal three of the MDGs, which was to promote gender equality and women empowerment. The NYSC/ MDG CD group has carried out public awareness campaigns in the Federal Capital Territory for the empowerment of women in various sectors of the society and economy in Nigeria. The CD group has called on those in authority to give more political offices to women as a means of empowering Nigerian women.¹⁷

The Debate to Action CDS has also contributed to the effort of Nigerian Government in realising goal four of the MDGs, which was aimed at reducing child mortality rate. This was done through enlightening and educating the people of their host communities on the need to safe guard the lives of their infants, by way of following the advice given by medical experts such as giving birth in the hospital as well as ensuring that children are given the necessary immunisation.

Improving maternal health is goal five of the MDGs, which has also received the attention of MDGs Community Development Group. This is because the corps members have carried out activities for the improvement of maternal health. This was done through sensitisation campaign for the improvement of maternal health. Through this medium women and the entire families were advised on the importance of antenatal care during pregnancy. This is relevant in

¹⁷M.A.L.T : NYSC/FCT Magazine by FCT 2006 Batch 'B' Corps Members Maiden Edition, p.13.

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the Millennium Development...

identifying danger signs, which will give room for emergency referral and the choice of safe birthing options.¹⁸

Combating H.I.V/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases is goal six of the MDGs. The effort in realising this goal in Nigeria has also received the attention of the MDGs Community Development Group. This was done through various outreaches to various communities whereby the volunteer corps members campaigned and sensitised people on the need to protect themselves against these deadly diseases. People were enlightened on how to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS by avoiding unnecessary sex. Similarly, people of the various communities were encouraged to cultivate and maintain a healthy environment as a way of protecting themselves against malaria and other diseases.¹⁹

In addition, the NYSC/MDGs Community Development Service Group has also supported the Federal Government of Nigeria in its effort to realize goal seven of the MDGs. The MDG CDs group have carried out outreaches in various communities in Nigeria where they sensitised people on the need to safe guard their environment through hygienic practices as a way of ensuring environmental sustainability.

Developing Global Partnership is goal eight of the Millennium Development Goals. The achievement of this goal has also received the attention of the MDGs Community Development Service in Nigeria. The corps members have used several mediums for the actualisation of this goal including through their publications in the NYSC Magazines whereby they reiterated that if all countries are to achieve these goals, international cooperation is necessary.

¹⁸M.A.L.T : NYSC/FCT DTA Magazine by FCT 2006 Batch 'B' Corps Members Maiden Edition, p.20.

¹⁹M.A.L.T : NYSC/FCT DTA Magazine by FCT 2006 Batch 'B' Corps Members Maiden Edition, p.13.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Nuralsah Zubairu

However, by 2015, when it was realised by world leaders that the MDGs were not comprehensively achievable by all countries of the globe, a new set of development goals were adopted by 193 countries in a special summit at the United Nations (UN). These goals are called the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They are designed to essentially end poverty, achieve gender equality, and ensure food security worldwide by 2030.²⁰ In this effort, nearly all the countries in the world have promised to improve the planet and the lives of its inhabitants. They have committed themselves to 17 life-changing goals outlined by the United Nations. These goals include the following: poverty eradication, zero hunger, good health, education for all, gender equality, clean water, clean energy, economic growth, industry and infrastructure, end to inequality, sustainability, responsible consumption, climate action, life under water, life on land, peace and justice as well as partnership. The Nigerian Government being a signatory to this declaration, has made appreciable efforts towards the realisation of these goals. Similarly, the NYSC MDGs/SDGs Community Development Service groups have also continued with their efforts towards realising the Sustainable Development Goals.

Conclusion

The National Youths Service Corps (NYSC) has contributed to the effort of Nigerians towards the realization of the MDGs/SDGs through the activities of Debate to Action (DTA) Community Development Service. This is because the volunteer youths have extended the campaigning for the awareness of the goals to local communities. They also encouraged both government and people at individual and collective levels to adopt the attitude of more action less talk in an effort to achieve the goals. This to some extent enlightened the people of various communities in Nigeria to contribute their quota to the

²⁰ M.M. Bawa, *Repetition of History: The Role of SDGs in Nigeria*, Lapai Journal of Nigerian History, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2020, p.63.

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the Millennium Development...

actualization of the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals.

Though the central focus of this chapter is the MDGs and their roles in the socio-economic and political development of the Nigerian state through the NYSC scheme, this chapter also made an incursion into some of the major areas of the NYSC community development scheme to which MDGs is an integral part.

THE NYSC AND SAED

Nuralsah Zubairu

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National Youth Service Corps and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

14

National Youth Service Corps and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Ladi Charles Chiwar

Introduction

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) is a program established by the Nigerian government which involves the engagement of the Nigerian graduate in nation building and development of the country. It was established in 1973 to foster national unity and cohesion traceable to the event of the Civil War of 1967-1970 which had threatened the corporate unity of the county. The NYSC has played a significant role in reducing the tension of the Civil War, where young graduates have the opportunity to mingle with one another irrespective of region, tribe or

NYSC ANDSAED

Ladi Charles Chiwar

religion. The scheme's mandate is to raise a class of patriotic, morally and physically disciplined Nigerian youth. Throughout the duration of the programme, corps members live among and within their host communities facilitating unity, integration and through the scheme's Community Development Service (CDS) corps members felt identify felt needs of communities and mobilize the people to execute projects for the development of such community. The National Youth Service Corps Scheme is also ensuring that Nigerian graduates participate actively in championing Sustainable Development at the grassroots. Sustainable Development is an initiative that will bring development to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. It focuses on three fundamental components that is; environmental protection, economic growth and social equity. Also, addressing the global challenges such as; poverty, inequality, climatic change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. The goal is to meet the needs of today without compromising the needs of tomorrow. It is compulsory for the corps members to belong to a Community Development Service (CDS)group. Sustainable Development Goals is one of the CDS groups tasked with achieving and sensitizing the populace on the 17 goals of the SDGs.¹

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are;

1. End poverty
2. End hunger
3. Good health and well being
4. Quality education
5. Achieve gender equality
6. Clean water and sanitation
7. Affordable and clean energy

¹United Nations (2015): Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (online) available at [www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/.../transforming-our-world-document..-bid\(para78,pg 28\)](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/.../transforming-our-world-document..-bid(para78,pg 28))

National Youth Service Corps and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

8. Decent work and economic growth
9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure
10. Reduced inequalities
11. Sustainable cities and communities
12. Responsible consumption and communities
13. Climate action
14. Life below water
15. Life on land
16. Peace, justice and strong institution
17. Partnerships for the goals.

Nigeria was among the 189 countries worldwide that supported the United Nations Millennium Goals in September 2000. This led to the adoption of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with several targets and indicators meant to be achieved in 2015. In September 2015, the UN member countries adopted a new comprehensive ambitions and United Nations (2015) Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and transformational development agenda. 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets aimed at eradicating poverty and transforming the planet into a sustainable and resilient development pathway to ensure the wellbeing of everyone including the environment.² Since the SDGs were adopted in 2015, conspicuous progress has been made in tackling global social and development issues following the implementation of actions relating to the MDGs. Several challenges remained which continued to affect the achievement of the goals in many countries. These challenges are in the areas of ending poverty and hunger, ensuring good health, quality education,

²United Nations (2015): Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (online) available at [www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/.../transforming-our-world-document..-bid\(para78,pg 28\)](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/.../transforming-our-world-document..-bid(para78,pg 28))

NYSC ANDSAED

Ladi Charles Chiwar

gender equality, clean water and sanitation, good jobs and economic growth, reducing inequalities and improving the climate.

The scope of the SDGs has been expanded significantly compared to the MDGs from 8 to 17 goals. The goals are interconnected, and the key to success on one will depend, to a large extent, on issues associated with others are resolved. This is a global programme spread to all countries and people to enhance their value and quality of life in a sustainable way for future generations. They tackle the basic foundations of poverty and unite people to attain positive change. The programme presents a unique opportunity to put the whole world on a more prosperous and sustainable development path. One of the ways in which Nigeria implements the 17 Sustainable Development Goals is by active engagement of the corps members serving across the country. The NYSC scheme train corps members to play an advocacy role for the SDGs at the grassroots level by dispatching them into the various host communities where they are deployed for their primary assignment. This is a way through which these communities could feel the impact and also reap the benefit of development programme around them. NYSC/SDGs came into partnership of using corps members in achieving the objectives of the SDGs. The purpose of using the corps members in these communities is to ensure the proper harnessing and execution of the SDG goals at the grassroots.

Background to Sustainable Development

The term Sustainability indicates programs and actions aimed at the preservation of a particular resource. Sustainable means to be able to produce or sustain resources for an indefinite period without depleting future generation ability to do the same by not exceeding the generation capacity of nature. The concept of Sustainable Development was defined in the World Commission on Environment and Development's 1987 Brundtland report; as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future

National Youth Service Corps and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

generations to meet their own needs.³" It goes beyond that to emphasize a form of development that also supports the attainment of the needs of future generations. Sustainable development is the organizing principles for meeting human goals. It is also defined as the practice of maintaining world processes, productivity natural or human made by replacing resources used with resources of greater value without degrading or endangering the natural biotic system.⁴ It refers to the four (4) areas that is; human, social, economic and environment. Human Sustainability; this is aimed at maintaining and improving the human capital in the society. Investments in the health and education system, access to services, nutrition, knowledge and skills are all program under human sustainability. This encompasses the development of skills and human capacity to support the functions of sustainability and promote the wellbeing of communities. Social Sustainability; this concept accommodates a large view of the world relating to communities, culture and globalization. It aims to preserve social capital by investing on services that constitute the framework of the society. Social sustainability focus on maintaining and improving social equality which addresses social and economic improvement that protects the environment and supports equality, therefore economic, society and ecological system are dependent.⁵

Economic Sustainability; this intends to maintain the capital intact. If social sustainability focuses on improving social equality, economic sustainability improves the standard of living.

³ Yourmatter.com, sustainable development what is it?<https://www.iisd.org/about-iisd/sustainable-development>, 19/02/2021.

⁴ Lynn Kahle, and Eda G. Atay, (eds.) *Communicating sustainability for the Green Economy*. (New York: M.E sharp 2014).p5

⁵ Futurelearn.com, The four pillars of sustainability:
<https://www.futurelearn.com/info/courses/sustainable-business/o/steps/78337>, 20/02/2021.

NYSC ANDSAED

Ladi Charles Chiwar

Environmental Sustainability; aims to improve human welfare to ensure that the needs of the population are met without compromising the needs of future generations through the protection of natural capital.

The Transformation from MDGS to SDGS. After three (3) years of debate, consultation, disagreements and agreements involving all stakeholders as to what, how and why there should be an all-encompassing post 2015 development agenda that will build on the MDGs which include areas and issues that were not capture in the MDGs. In September 2015 at the UN General Assembly, in reaching to the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari said the "SDGs have come to complete the unfinished business of the MDGs, and Nigeria is committed to completing this unfinished business and achieving success".⁶ The 17 sustainable development goals and 169 targets as signed in September 2015 demonstrate the scale and ambition of the new universal agenda with mandate to:

- Build on the Millennium Development goals and complete what they did not achieve.
- Seek to realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls.
- Place peace as central to the social, economic and environmental segments of sustainable development.
- Bring clean water, sanitation, clean energy and sustainable cities and communities as basic for human development.
- Integrate and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development; the economic, social and environmental.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were brought forth during a United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio De

⁶NYSCSDGs, *Advocacy Project, Temporary Trainers Manual*, NYSC, 2019, p1.
292

National Youth Service Corps and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Janeiro in 2012. The focus and intentions was to produce a set of globally acceptable goals to get acquainted with the environment, political and economic challenges facing the world. SDGs replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which took effect in 2001 with a global exertion to subdue debasement of poverty. The MDGs established subduing unfavorable condition of people in terms of objectives for preventing deadly diseases and expanding primary education to all children. For over 15 years, MDGs led progress in these areas; reducing income poverty, providing access to water and sanitation, driving down child mortality to its barest minimum level, improving materials health, and free primary education. Most significantly the MDGs made distinctive remarkable steps in fighting HIV/AIDS and other diseases like malaria and tuberculosis.⁷

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development charged a process to develop the goals SDGs which will carry on the developmental tasks generated by the MDGs and fit into a global development framework. The SDGs are committed to finish and gear up some challenges confronting the world today. All the 17 goals are interconnected, meaning success in one of the goals affect success in another.⁸ The fundamental goals for Sustainable Development were put into effect by United Nations Member States in 2015 as initiative to terminate poverty, protect the planet and guarantee that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. These 17 SDGs are interrelated in that they support each other because action in one area will affect outcomes in others. Overall, the SDGs underscore that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability, which is commonly referred to as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in business circles.

⁷United Nation Development Programme, sustainable development goals, <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>, 2/02/2021.

⁸“Agreement Reached on Weakened Outcome Text as Leaders Arrive for Rio Summit | International Center for Trade and Sustainable Development”.lcts.org.Retrieved 4 August 2014.

NYSC ANDSAED

Ladi Charles Chiwar

SDGs are designed to stabilize and halt the decline of the environment in all its ramifications, including bringing about zero poverty, hunger, and reducing discrimination against women and girls.⁹

Contributions of NYSC towards the Attainment of the SDGS

The energetic engagement of young people through Nigeria National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) is central to achieving peaceful and inclusive society as envisioned by the United Nations 2030 sustainable development agenda. Nigeria's one year service mandate is to raise a class of patriotic, morally and physically disciplined Nigerian youth. Corps members under the age of 30 who have graduated from universities and polytechnic (at home and abroad) through the scheme engaged in nation building and community development service.¹⁰ During the compulsory one year service, corps members live among and work within the host communities facilitating unity and integration. They also help in executing relevant community projects with the local people.

The Community Development Service (CDS) is one of the four (4) cardinal programmes of NYSC, geared towards the development of their host communities throughout the period of national service. UNESCO cited Onyeozu who defines community development as "an educational method by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities to integrate these communities into the life of the nation to enable them contribute fully to national progress."¹¹ Community development seeks to

⁹Wikipedia, <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable-Development-Goals>, 2/02/2021

¹⁰National Youth Service Corps, Historical Background, (NYSC, 2012), accessed 14th February, 2021, <http://www.nysc.gov.ng/history2.php>

¹¹M.A. Oyebamji and InermesitEssiestUmofoia, Influence of The Activities of the National Youth Service Corps Scheme on the Knowledge of Social Issues in Host

National Youth Service Corps and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

empower individuals and groups of people with the skills they need to effect change within their communities. These skills are usually created through the formation of social groups working for a common agenda. The Cambridge summer conference define community development as a movement designed to promote better living for the whole community with active participation and on the initiative of the community.¹²This community-building aspect of the NYSC scheme ensures corps members engage in activities to do with the improvement and development of community life.¹³These programme have transformed our communities in the area of education, health care delivery, agriculture, technology, economic empowerment, poverty eradication and social service.¹⁴

The NYSC activities and its development exercises have largely been impacted by SDGs conceptual structure. Initiatives that have emerged from the SDGs conceptual structure are embedded as part of the NYSC community development program such as the war against poverty (WAP), Family and Community Life Re-orientation Programme (FACOR), and the SDGs Advocacy Creation Programme (SACP). In this regard, the collaboration has gone in contributing immensely to national growth a considerable distance. The corps members have consistently served as election agents providing quality service and effective support as staff to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)that attract commendation by the international organizations such as the UNDP, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) etc.

Communities in River and Akwalbom States, International Journal of Education and Evaluation Vol.2 2016,p30.

¹²<https://infed.or/mobi/community-participation-community-development-and-non-formal>,3/02/2021

¹³NYSC, *ABC of Community Development Service*,(National Youth Service Corps Revised Edition October 2014),p1.

¹⁴Alison Gillchrist; Marilyn Taylor, *The Short Guide to Community Development*, Vol.3, Policy Press 2011, p2-3.

NYSC ANDSAED

Ladi Charles Chiwar

Another credible strategy by the NYSC has been the establishment of the Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) Department which has motivated partnership for ensuring a youth-impulsive approach to addressing the challenges of graduate unemployment. In 2012, NYSC was directed by the Federal Government to establish SAED department. The SAED was tasked with sensitizing corps members to realities of Nigeria job market as successful business requires awareness of one's knowledge, skills, ability, attitudes, values and preferences. This exposes them to the option of self-employment or start up their own business. The training package is an introduction to ethical entrepreneurship, which is aimed at installing a sense of self confidence and awakening corps members to the responsibility that self-employment, could be a viable career option. A key element of productive livelihoods is consistent with Nigeria vision 2020 and the first of Millennium Development goals, which is concerned with poverty eradication.¹⁵ These are some of the accent of the vehement response of the NYSC to absorb the corps members responsibly.¹⁶

Regardless of the challenges of unemployment, poverty, militancy, armed robbery, kidnappings, and other security related challenges, the mobilization and deployment of corps members have had profitable and inevitable flow of unity, peace, and stability of the country as initially provided in the NYSC enabling Act, which has shown vigor strength and firmness. The Sustainable Development Goals programme and its prosecution, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) programme is a universal call to action to end poverty, hunger, gender inequality, promotion of healthy living and economic growth. The NYSC/SDGs project is aimed at creating public awareness on policies and programmes of government concerning the SDGs using trained

¹⁵National Youth Service Corps, Starting My Own Business Small Business, A Training Module On Entrepreneurship for NYSC Corps Members(2016).

¹⁶Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim, *NYSC and Nation Development*, National Youth Service Corps

National Youth Service Corps and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

corps, volunteers as development knowledge facilitators. The main objective here is to make Nigeria become informed participant in the process of attaining sustainable national development. The NYSC participated actively in the awareness creation program for the SDGs. NYSC/SDGs advocacy project started in 2006 resulting in an outreach to over one million Nigerians on policies and program of government.¹⁷ The key aspect of the SDGs is War against Poverty (WAP) introduced by NYSC in 2009 with its components aimed at empowering corps members with skills and start-up capital for agro-allied business.

The Significance of NYSC/SDGS Advocacy Project (Sap)

The NYSC/SDGs advocacy project (SAP) provide a means to guarantee that all citizens become informed and can participate in the implementation and realization of the SDGs at community, local, national, regional and global level. The project started as NYSC/SDGs in September 2006 with the focus to galvanize and make all Nigerians active participants.¹⁸ Corps volunteers were trained as development knowledge facilitators to mentor youths on care for orphans, charity works and basic skills for sustainable livelihood. When the SDGs started in 2017, the office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on SDGs (OSSAP-SDGs) entered into partnership with the NYSC to train graduate youths to become SDGs champions in their host communities and areas of national service to create public awareness on policies and program of government concerning the SDGs.

The NYSC SDGs group through the Community Development Service offered free skills acquisition training program for students in Bayelsa State. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) CDS group in Bayelsa State organized a one week free skill acquisition program for Onopa community secondary school and the people. The free skill acquisition programme was carried out by Batch A 2019 corps members to impact

¹⁷ National Youth Service Year Book, 2018 edition, p13.

¹⁸ NYSC SDGs, *Advocacy Project,Temporary Trainers Manual*, (2019),p5.

NYSC ANDSAED

Ladi Charles Chiwar

on the lives of the young secondary school students of Bayelsa State. Participants received training in different areas such as production of liquid soap, Izal, Shampoo, Dettol, Air-freshener, Bleach, Tie and Dye, Shoes and Interlocking Stones.¹⁹ The purpose of skill acquisition programme is to prepare and equip the students and the Natives of the community with appropriate skills that would be beneficial to them in future. The skills acquisition is capable of ensuring value re-orientation among the students and transforms them into creators of wealth and employment rather than expecting to be white collar job seekers in the future.²⁰ The creation of wealth and employment will lead to poverty reduction and increase welfare status in the lives of the people.

The corps members also sensitize the students and people on the following;

- Teenage pregnancy
- Cultism
- Examination malpractice
- Menstruation
- Dirty environment
- Election violence.

Teenage pregnancy; this is the case of under aged pregnancy. The corps members educate the participants on sexual education. This is going to affect their lives negatively by limiting their education; stigmatization within peer groups and relationship with the immediate community education, so early awareness of its danger is better carried out to avert such.

¹⁹Abubakar Yau,25years, corps Member, Kaduna, 15,Feubuary 2021.

²⁰IdokoCletusUsman,Skill Acquisition and Youth Empowerment in Nigeria, Global journal of commerce & management perspectives (published by:Global institute for research & education) p.51

National Youth Service Corps and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Cultism; participants were identified and given orientation on cultism and its effect in terms of how it can morally degrade their lives, affecting their education, hopes and aspirations for the future.

Exam malpractice; this is a deliberate act of wrong doing contrary to the rules of examination. Examination malpractice also known as cheating is the morally illegal action that students take during their examinations to make good grades. Participants were given an intensive teaching on the effect of malpractice which includes; discouragement of students from hard work, low productivity, corruption and falsified certificates.²¹

Menstruation; participants were asked to identify changes. Responses from participants were used to inform them that when a girl is approaching adulthood, one of the changes is that she starts to menstruate (the flow of blood). This is natural and preparing her for womanhood. Menstruation is the flow of blood from the vagina of an adolescent girl which occurs once in a month and can last for 2-7 days.

The Corps members render their services in the aspect of Health as one of the SDGs. They visit schools, hospitals and places of gathering in their host communities to sensitize on health, inform and educate the people on how to take care of their health and preventing the root causes of ill health for health promotion and disease prevention. Free medical services were also given as achieving sustainability is impossible without addressing health issues. Batch A 2019 corps members in Bayelsa State also, visited Science Technical College Okaka for sensitization on sex education, and Lasa fever during the outbreak.²² In the aspect of education, Corps members played a vital

²¹Oko,SylvanusUshie, Examination Malpractice: Causes, Effects And Possible Ways Curbing The Menace . A Study of Cross River University of Technology,international journal of Managerial Studies and Research, vol.4 (print) & ISSN 2349-0349. P.59

²²Suleiman K. Gambo, 28 years , Medical Doctor, Kaduna, 18,Febrary ,2021.

NYSC ANDSAED

Ladi Charles Chiwar

role in the education of the community members. They were posted to schools to teach, to help build students reading skills, and organize seminars on Education, Health and Sex education. Education for sustainable development is mentioned in goal 4 of SDGs, which aim to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skill needed to promote sustainable development, and the youths are a credit to the actualization of these goals.

In a virtual seminar with the theme, “Alleviating Hunger and Poverty through Agriculture: Today Youth- Tomorrow’s Leaders”, which was organized by corps members serving at the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture, Ibadan. The NYSC Director-General, Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim, advised corps members to equip themselves with modern trends in agriculture practices.²³ He noted that the NYSC Management would seek the active participation of corps members in agriculture which is in line with the Federal Government’s drive to boost agricultural to diversify national economy. He urged the corps members to key in to other youth empowerment programmes such as; Youth Initiative for Sustainable Agriculture in Nigeria and other programmes that will make youth to be self-reliant.

Conclusion

Sustainable Development Goals is aimed at empowering and equipping current and future generations to meet their basic human needs using a balanced and integrated approach to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. It provides the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that empower learners to contribute to the attainment of sustainable development and to improve wellbeing and human security. The SDGs are all integrated and achieving particular goals of the SDGs helps in achieving the other goals as well. Nigeria has engaged the services of corps members across the country to champion the implementation of SDGs 2030 because the

²³ Media Assessment, Shuaibu Ibrahim’s Silent Revolution in NYSC, Vol. 2020.

National Youth Service Corps and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

young people are the largest population who are also adversely affected by the issues of bad governance, climate change, and environmental degradation leading to unemployment, displacement and poverty. It is no wonder that the key areas of the SDGs are on critical issues of poverty and inclusive economy, health and well-being, education and gender equality, enabling environment of peace and security. All nations must be determined to implement the SDGs as a development agenda. Focus on the needs of the poor and most vulnerable in the society regardless of differences in race, colour, language, religion, technological advancement or geographical boundaries must determine to foster peace and eliminate fear and violence. In the final analysis, it suffices to conclude that there is no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development; the two are mutually inclusive. The NYSC scheme has contributed so well providing the foot soldiers in carrying information of the SDGs to the nooks and crannies of Nigeria, particularly the rural communities where they serve.

NYSC ANDSAED

Ladi Charles Chiwar

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NYSC AND SAED

Mercy Chat Adms

15

The Prospect of Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) on Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

Mercy Chat Adms

Introduction

In Nigeria today, there is an increasing rate of poverty, unemployment, and other social problems that have bedevilled the youth in particular which Deebom and Okwelle¹ affirmed that these may have resulted from the lack of appropriate skill acquisition by graduates and the

¹M. T Deebom, and Okwelle, P. C. "Empowering Rural Youths for Maximum Societal Impact through Skills Acquisition Programme in Ogoni Area of Rivers State", *African Journal of Historical Sciences in Education*, 12.1,(2016): 222 – 250.

The Prospect of Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED)

youths in general. Also, the unemployment level in Nigeria has persistently been on the increase. As at April 2018, the unemployment rate in Nigeria is 18.80%. This figure is relatively high if compared with countries like India (3.4%), Mexico (3.20%), Indonesia (5.50%), Turkey (10.40%), and Brazil (12.60%).²

The issue of unemployment has been a major concern of the Federal Government leading to the introduction of different programmes such as the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Subsidy Reinvestment Programme (SURE P) among others. In 2012, the introduction of the Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) programme by the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) helped to engage graduates with skills that will enable them to become entrepreneurs after service, thereby making them self-sufficient and skillful, leading to a reduction in the rate of unemployment. It is against this background that this study seeks to examine the place of the SAED programme on youth empowerment in Nigeria.

Definition of Terms

Empowerment as defined by the World Bank is the process of developing the individual's (youths) capacity and capability to be able to make choices and to convert their decisions and thoughts into desired actions and outcomes.³ This definition views youths' empowerment from the perspective of human capacity building which targets how to make an individual or youths to be self-employed, independent, or self-reliant.

Also, Okwelle and Deebom stressed that empowerment could be seen as the process of molding an individual (youths) with the required skill

²Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics, 2017

³World Bank Group. Poverty reduction and equity. Accessed 12th March, 2020
<http://web.worldbank.org>: <http://go.worldbank.org/V45HD4P100>

NYSC AND SAED

Mercy Chat Adms

necessary for its economic, financial, social, moral, and psychological existence and development to enhance self-reliance individually and the society at large.⁴ In this study, empowerment is defined as the process of training the youths (Corp Members) for them to acquire different skills that can make them to be self-employed and to employ others. Based on this definition, it implies that meaningful skill acquisition programme like that of NYSC SAED should incorporate the youth for their empowerment. From the foregoing, the National Youth Service Corps Service Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development programme will only be meaningful if it influences the youth in a way of empowerment.

Over the years in Nigeria and other parts of the world, different programmes have been introduced to serve and tackle a particular situation. The programme could be to curb insecurity, enhance food production, reducing unemployment among others. Also, these programmes were targeted towards a particular set of people such as the adolescent, youths, adults, the elderly, educated, the non-educated, and even the physically challenged people. One of such programmes that were introduced targeting the youths is the National Youth Service Corps.

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) was established by the Nigerian Government to engage fresh Nigerian graduates of tertiary institutions in national development. The National Youth Service Corps is a programme meant for graduates of tertiary institutions to serve the nation for one year as a way of integrating them into another geographical region in the country. This was done as a way of

⁴P. C. Okwelle, &M. T. Deebom, 'Technical Vocational Education and Training as a Tool for Sustainable Empowerment of Youths in Niger Delta, Nigeria.' *International Journal of Innovative Social & Science Education Research* 5.1, (2017): 29-38.

The Prospect of Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED)

promoting national unity, Maduawuchi⁵ opined that during the early years after Nigeria gained independence from Great Britain, the country was filled with so much strife and tribal segregation that the Nigerian government of that time sought to foster peace and unity among Nigerian, starting with the youths through a programme that removed cultural and geographical bias.

After the Nigerian-Biafran War that took place between 1963-1970, the Federal Military Government under the military leadership of General Yakubu Gowon set out to rebuild Nigeria through a programme which was known as the 3R's – Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation. This programme of 3R's helped to set up the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) on May 22, 1973, through Decree No. 24. The aim of introducing NYSC according to Decree No. 24 was to develop common ties and promote national peace for coexistence through the youths.⁶ With these aims and objectives, it was categorically stated in the decree that all graduates from tertiary institutions such as Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education should be posted to other states within the country (Nigeria) to serve their fatherland in form of a national assignment. The posting was such that graduates must not be allowed to serve in their states of origin.⁷

Based on this purpose, each state of the federation has its place to accommodate these graduates for this exercise which is regarded as "Orientation Camp". They spent three weeks in this camp where they

⁵ Maduawuchi, OHistory of NYSC in Nigeria: When NYSC Started and Purpose. 2019. Accessed 10th March 2020 <https://nigerianinfopedia.com.ng//history-of-nysc-in-nigeria/>

⁶ National Youth Service Corps. Hand Book History and Objectives of the National Youth Service Corps, 1996.

⁷ M.O., Ogundele, M.O., Sofoluwe, x & D.J. Kayode, 'Integrating Entrepreneurship Skills Acquisition in to National YouthsServiceCorpsProgrammeinNigeria'JournalofEntrepreneurshipand Management, 2.3 (2012): 24-28.

NYSC AND SAED

Mercy Chat Adms

are exposed to paramilitary exercises or trainings to keep them physically fit and viable for the national service year. These training are handled by soldiers (Army). One of the major exercises participated by corps members is the “Endurance Trek” where you are allowed to trek over a long distance. The aim of this is to make the individual fit and develop the spirit of perseverance.

At the end of the orientation course, they are posted to different places or sectors within the states to carry out their Primary Assignment where they stay and work for the remaining part of the service year. Some of the sectors or places they are posted to include educational institutions (Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education, Secondary Schools among others), judiciary, industries, hospitals, state and federal secretariat, Local Government Councils, and so on. The service year ends up with a Passing Out Parade (POP) where and when each corps member is duly qualified and certified to be issued a Certificate of National service. The rationale of the Federal Government then was to post the fresh graduates as corps members to serve in a new state or community, so that they would be able to interact with the members of the new community, acculturate their ways of life, make friends and even marry. As such, there will be cultural integration; thereby fostering unity.

However, due to the enormous challenges such as underemployment and unemployment confronting Nigeria, other responsibilities have been put on the scheme. Due to the problem of unemployment of graduates bedevilling the country, in 2012, the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced a training programme into the NYSC known as the Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) project. The aim of the programme was for the acquisition of skills for graduate self-reliance. This was used to tackle the issue of unemployment and underemployment of graduates.

The Prospect of Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED)

The Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) project has its mandate of providing youth corps members open access to the acquisition of vita land essential skills and resources necessary to be successful in entrepreneurship. The goals of the scheme include creating awareness of young graduates who are corps members for the acquisition of basic skills training for entrepreneurship development and self-reliance. The Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) as a Department in NYSC is headed by a Director and is made up of Three divisions namely: Partnership, Programmes and Empowerment Division. These three departments are saddled with the responsibilities of:

1. Given orientation and trained over 200, 000 corps members for skill acquisition yearly.
2. Assist the training and tutoring of 100,000 young graduates in skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development for self-reliance annually.
3. Develop an entrepreneurship partnership aiming towards self-reliance of the youths between the private sector and the public sector as well.
4. Provide new ways and methods on how best Nigerian youths' employment and empowerment are done.
5. Support evidence-driven funding programmes to formulate policies that enhances youth Nigerian youths' employment and empowerment.
6. Organising orientation training programmes on the importance of corps members to enrol into the skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development program.
7. Development of a standard curriculum for the in-camp skill acquisition exercise.
8. Identification of organizations at state level to provide training and mentoring in specific skills sets.
9. Attachment of the corps members to the various organizations for skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development.

NYSC AND SAED

Mercy Chat Adms

10. On-going monitoring and supervision of trainee corps members and
11. Facilitate access to available funding opportunities

According to Faloye and Olatunji,⁸ the sole objective of SAED programmes is to encourage the Nigerians generally, and Nigerian youths particularly, to be highly involved in entrepreneurial activities thereby creating jobs. Others include enhancement of the partnership between the public and the private sector to develop skill-based development for self-reliance among Nigerian youths and graduates. To reduce the rate of unemployment among Nigerian graduates roaming about on the street with certificate qualifications without having a meaningful source of livelihood, the concept of entrepreneurial education (training) was introduced into tertiary education in Nigeria.⁹

The SAED program is aimed at young people who are corps members undergoing the compulsory one-year of national service to the fatherland. The programme was structured mainly for corps members to participate only during their camping period and throughout their one-year service (post-camp). It is expected every corps member learn a skill that is industrially based which can position them to become job creators rather than job hunters and hence reduce the number of unemployed graduates in the country. The SAED programme that was introduced in 2012 started with 12 different categories of skills offered in the program. These skills areas include Agro-allied, Automobile, Beautification, Construction, Cosmetology, Culture and Tourism, Education, Environment, Film and Photography, Food

⁸D.O. Faloye, & D.O. Olabode, 'Entrepreneurship Education and Self-employment Intentions among Fresh Graduates in Nigeria' *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, 9.12, (2018): 146-158.

⁹P. C. Okwelle&M. T. Deebom, 'Technical Vocational Education and Training as a Tool for Sustainable Empowerment of Youths in Niger Delta, Nigeria. *International Journal of Innovative Social & Science Education Research* 5.1, (2017): 29-38.

The Prospect of Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED)
Processing/Preservation, Information Communication Technology and
Power and Energy.

The SAED policy is one of the few in the country that is helping in empowering and preparing the youths for productive engagements. According to Utomwen,¹⁰ it was noted that at the end of the 2012 Batch "B" orientation course, 45,000 corps members had been trained in various skill areas. Out of this SAED trainee, the result revealed that 5,404 corps members had been trained in agro-allied skills while 5,509 corps members that enrol in food processing and preservation had also been successfully trained. However, 8,035 were trained in culture and tourism-related skills while just 5,062 who participated in cosmetology have completed the training. Furthermore, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), power and energy as well as environment had a total of 8,119,2,885 and 2,672trainees respectively. Also, in beautification, construction, and education, a total number of 2,837, 2,057 and 2,425 has been trained successfully. This implies that from the inception of NYSC-SAED programme to date, not less than 971,272 corps members have benefitted from the skill acquisition programme while over 7000 have established their preferred business. In 2014, about 159,732 corps members had completed the NYSC- SAED programme which comprises 69,904 females and 89,828 males. Over 500,000 corps members have been trained under the NYSC-SAED program since its inception. Surprisingly, out of the total number of trained entrepreneurs, 1,600 had become full-time entrepreneurs.¹¹ These are some of the benefits of NYSC-SAED programme in promoting employment among Nigerian graduates which also usher in socio-economic development and national integration.

¹⁰Utomwen, 'Tackling NYSC's Security Challenge,' . 2012. Accessed Retrieved 10th March, 2020 from <http://www.pmnewsnigeria.com/2012/12/10/tackling-nyscs-security-challenge/>.

¹¹ National Youth Service Corps. Hand Book History and Objectives of the National Youth Service Corps, 1996.

NYSC AND SAED

Mercy Chat Adms

Annually, the programme mobilizes and prepares over two hundred and fifty thousand (250,000) youths to become employable or start-up their businesses after completing the mandatory one-year service. The sole objective of these programmes is to encourage the Nigerian youths particularly, to be highly involved in skill acquisition for creating jobs. Skills are the proficiency, expertise, and ability to acquire a type of craft requiring specialist training. Osinem described skill as a well-established habit of doing something expertly.¹² However, in this context, the skill could be described as the ability of Corps Members to be able to carry out a specialized area in entrepreneurial trade expertly for self-reliance. To this end, it will not be an over statement to say skills acquisition programme is made up of various kinds of skills to provide basic and special training/skills and capacity building/empowerment for the upliftment and well-being of an individual or a people.¹³ When the youths acquire skills, it will lead to self-reliance and reduce the level of unemployment. For skill acquisition training programme to have an impact on society, Deebom and Okwelle¹⁴ avers that skill acquisition should be tailored and directed towards the youths as they are seen as the frontline for development, both rural and urban communities.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the National Youth Service Corps Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (NYSC-SAED) programme can enhance youth empowerment if they are acquired. More skills should be added by relevant authorities such as

¹²E. C Osinem, *Managing Agricultural Education and Training Resources, Principles and Principles*. (Enugu: Belong International Publishers Limited, 2008)

¹³IAdofu, 'Alleviating Poverty through the Use of Entrepreneurship Skill Acquisitioninkogi State, Nigeria.' *International Journal of Independent ResearchandStudies*, 1.1 (2013): 97-105.

¹⁴M. T. Deebom, &P. C. Okwelle, 'Empowering Rural Youths forMaximum SocietalImpact throughSkills AcquisitionProgramme inOgoni Area of Rivers State.' *African Journal of Historical Sciences in Education*, 12.1(2016): 222 – 250.

The Prospect of Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED)

government agencies so that beneficiaries will have a wider choice of skills; Corps Members should be given more sensitisation on the relevance of participating in NYSC-SAED programme as this will expose them to opportunities that will help in making them self-employed thereby reducing unemployment level in Nigeria.

NYSC AND SAED

Mercy Chat Adms

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NYSC AND SAED

BJ Audu and M. Hamza

16

**Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim:
An Overview of His Achievements as 18th NYSC
Director-General**

Bem Japhet Audu
and
Maryam Hamza

Introduction

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) has attained tremendous height since the assumption of office by Brig Gen Shuaibu Ibrahim as the Director General (DG) of the Scheme. This is not surprising, given the fact that Gen Ibrahim is a thoroughbred military administrator, who combines scholarship, emotional intelligence and finesse in his administrative duties. His experiences cut across administration in the

Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim:

military and civil establishments, which combination have accelerated the pace of the modest service rendered to the NYSC.

Key issues that confronted the Scheme upon his assumption of office include the need to sustain the relevance of the NYSC in a fast-changing world; second, inadequate motivation and welfare for Corps Members and staff of the Scheme. The third was the challenge of unemployment among the youths after the mandatory one year national service.

Gen Ibrahim's track record as a visionary leader readily came to play in tackling these challenges. He initiated a five-point policy thrust to address them. These five-point policy thrust include the following:

- ❖ Sustain effective utilisation of the potentials of Corps Members for optimal benefit;
- ❖ Strengthen existing collaborations with critical stakeholders;
- ❖ Improve on the welfare and security of Corps Members and staff;
- ❖ Pursue a technologically driven organisation to deepen effective service delivery;
- ❖ Reinvigorate the NYSC Ventures and SAED in line with the NYSC Act for greater impact.

It is against this backdrop that this essay examines the achievements of Gen Ibrahim as Director General of the NYSC, using a descriptive approach and evidence -- based study. The paper argues that Gen Ibrahim has not only transformed the NYSC, but has also repositioned it to benefit the Corps Members, members of staff and indeed, the nation at large.

The assumption here is that leadership is a process of galvanising resources to attain group goals. Gen Ibrahim's leadership style has led to the transformation of the NYSC by strengthening the institution, in terms of welfare, security, innovations and technological advancement. Despite these laudable achievements, there have equally been

NYSC AND SAED

BJ Audu and M. Hamza

challenges. The Corona Virus (COVID-19) pandemic threatened to derail the activities of the Scheme. As an astute administrator, he rose to the occasion through a robust coordinated response to manage the pandemic that has become a reference point and template for other establishments in the country.

Towards a Biography of General Ibrahim: Trends in his Academic, Military and Administrative Career

Brig Gen Shuaibu Ibrahim (Associate Professor), was born on the 13th July, 1967 and hails from Nasarawa Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. He attended the famous University of Jos where he obtained Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in History (1989 and 1992 respectively), before proceeding to bag a Post-Graduate Diploma in Education from Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu Ode, Ogun State. Driven by his tenacity to acquire knowledge, he went on to obtain a Ph.D in History from the University of Abuja in 2007.

Since his commissioning into the Nigerian Army, he has served in various capacities in military formations across the country. His appointments and postings include: The Institute of Army Education (Research Officer). Researched and produced Nigerian Army Journals and Briefs for the Nigerian Army in particular, and the Military in general; NYSC (Military Assistant to the Director General) 1997-1999; Nigerian Defence Academy (Taught 100 and 200 Levels 2000-2004; National Defence College (Staff Officer I Military History 2004-2009; Headquarters Nigerian Army School of Education (Senior Instructor) 2009-2011; Commandant Command Secondary School, Suleja 2012-2014; Nigerian Defence Academy (Head of Department, History and War Studies), 2015-2018; and Registrar, Nigerian Army University, Biu, Borno State(2018-2019).

Brigadier General S Ibrahim is a scholar of high repute, who authored, co-authored, edited, co-edited and contributed articles/chapters to numerous books and academic Journals.

Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim:

Despite his tight schedule, Brig Gen S Ibrahim still devotes time to academic work, including the supervision of students' thesis and dissertations, serving as Internal and External Examiner of Master's Students at the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria and the Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna.

Brig Gen Shuaibu Ibrahim was appointed 18th Director General of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), and assumed the leadership of the Corps on 10th May, 2019. This ushered in a transformation era for the Scheme which has not only been a source of immense benefit to the Service Corps, but the entire country in general.

The General also had a cluster of completed courses in the military, and excelled in these courses. Brig Gen Ibrahim is an Associate Professor in the Department of History and War Studies, Nigeria Defence Academy, Kaduna. These feats in both military and academic trainings, as well as experience in service are what marked him out as a visionary, seasoned and ingenious administrator.

Since assumption of duty as the Director General of the NYSC, the media has been awash with burgeoning records of his strides. His vision for the Scheme informed his decision to roll out a five-point policy thrust, geared towards utilising the potentials of the Corps Members maximally. Since assumption of duty at the NYSC, his pragmatic leadership skill has set the Scheme on the path of rejuvenation and continuous relevance. Like his predecessors, he came up with robust and ambitious programmes, aimed at repositioning the Scheme as a self-sufficient and revenue -- generating government organisation.

This chapter will attempt an appraisal of the delivery of these specific goals by the administration of Gen S Ibrahim within a short period of two years, in spite of the huge challenges facing the Scheme.

Sustain effective utilisation of the potentials of Corps Members for optimal benefit.

NYSC AND SAED

BJ Audu and M. Hamza

The successful conduct of the 2019 NYSC Sports and Cultural Festivals is a remarkable achievement of the Director General in harnessing the huge potentials of the Corps Members for national development. The NYSC Sports and Cultural Festivals serve as one of the veritable avenues through which the Scheme promotes national unity, cultural integration, as well as showcasing the abundant talents of Corps Members in the areas of sports and culture for gainful employment in the sports and film industries. The Festivals were revived by the present management. The grand finale was held in Abuja. Not only that, measures were put in place to ensure that the event holds annually.

Another success of the NYSC Director General is the production of an NYSC movie titled "A Call to Service" currently undergoing post production work. Apart from its entertainment value, the movie is being packaged to create public awareness on the roles of stakeholders to the Scheme. These stakeholders include the three tiers of government, Corps employers, as well as serving and prospective Corps Members. Ultimately, the film will promote better understanding of the Scheme to the public, in addition to sensitising them on their expected roles to the Scheme.

Another noteworthy achievement of the Director General is the establishment of NYSC National Cultural Troupe. This initiative is to provide a veritable platform for Corps Members to develop their talents in drama and cultural dance, while also eliciting public support towards harnessing such talents through private and corporate patronage. Remarkably, the NYSC Cultural Troupe will also shore up the revenue base of the Scheme through its activities which will be commercialised.

In the same vein, the NYSC Director General has successfully organised a National Anti-Corruption Walk. This is in furtherance of the NYSC's contributions to the fight against corruption through the activities of the Corps Anti-Corruption and Integrity CDS Group. The programme involved the participation of thousands of Corps Members in the first ever nationwide rally/road walk organised by the Economic and

Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim:

Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), in conjunction with the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development on 14th February, 2020. The Director-General personally joined the Corps Members and officials in Kano State for the rally, which was tagged "Nigerian Youths March Against Corruption."

This action further boosted the commitment of the NYSC in eradicating corruption and promotion of good moral and ethical values in the country.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic nearly crippled the global socio-economic activities and did not spare the Scheme. The 2020 Batch "A" Orientation Course was suspended barely eight days into the programme. However, the ever resourceful and proactive Director General challenged the creative ingenuity of Corps Members who responded appropriately to the challenge by producing non-pharmaceutical intervention materials such as face-mask, liquid soap, alcohol - based hand sanitiser and donated same to the indigent populace across the length and breadth of the country.

Under the leadership of Gen Ibrahim, the NYSC has also carried out public awareness campaigns on containment measures for the dreaded virus. The initiative of the Director General was later adopted by some public institutions.

Another innovative contribution of the NYSC in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic is the fabrication of foot-operated water, liquid soap and hand sanitiser dispenser by individual Corps Members in several States.

For instance, Babatunde Dolapo Dayo and Sebe Godspower - Abia State; Abdullahi Sani - Kano; Abdulsalam Abubakar and Obiefuna Ebuka - Kwara; Adeyanju Adeyemi, Afolabi Victor, Ogunmoye Victor - Oyo and Onyekwere Chiwotaoke - Zamfara and Ilori Deborah - FCT were among the Corps Members that fabricated and donated the devices.

NYSC AND SAED

BJ Audu and M. Hamza

In addition, Corps Members, acting on the platform of Charity CDS/SDGs Group, have been contributing towards mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 at the grassroots, through the donation of food and other relief items to State and Local Governments, as well as indigent members of the society. These strategies by the Director General paved the way for the Scheme to obtain approval from the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) to resume full operations, especially the Orientation Course.

Relatedly, several Corps Members on teaching assignment also contributed towards sustaining the educational progress of their students by adopting virtual teaching approach while schools remained closed as a result of the pandemic.

As per the pursuit of a technologically-driven organisation to deepen effective service delivery, the Director-General recently conducted the first ever video conference with the 2021 Batch 'A' Stream 1 Corps Members in all the 37 Orientation Camps. It was an avenue to interface with thousands of Corps Members simultaneously, in line with COVID-19 safety protocols. He has sustained this initiative by periodically holding virtual meetings with serving Corps Members, as well as NYSC State Coordinators across the country.

It is gratifying to disclose that the Director General's interface with National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) has ensured the equipping of the NYSC Rivers Secretariat with computers by the agency. That singular gesture has in no small measure deepened the proficiency of Corps Members and staff members in the area of Information technology.

The Chief Executive introduced the inscription of date of birth on the Certificate of National Service and Exclusion Letter, beginning with the 2019 Batch "A" Corps Members and 2019 Batch "C" respectively. This is in a bid to check the manipulation of date of birth by ineligible persons seeking mobilisation for National Service, and it has had a positive

Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim:

effect in checkmating the falsification of records for employment, visa, political appointments, among others.

Brig Gen Shuaibu Ibrahim conceptualised and designed a state-of-the-art ICT Office for the Scheme. The design had already been forwarded to the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) and Federal Ministry of Works and Housing for approval. The cost of construction was appropriated in the 2021 Budget, and the Scheme is awaiting the release of funds for its commencement.

Other laudable efforts by Gen Ibrahim to deepen effective service delivery include, the development of a Five-Year Strategic Development Plan for the Scheme, review of the NYSC Composite Policy Document and documentation of the activities of the Scheme, all aimed at positioning the Scheme as a research hub for academics and the general public.

Under his watch, the Federal Government drafted the NYSC into the Presidential Steering Committee on Alternate School Programme. The inclusion of the Corps in the Committee is in recognition of the invaluable contributions of the Scheme to national development, particularly in the sphere of Education.

NYSC is a repository of talents, parading the most enlightened class of Nigerian youths, who in forty - eight years of the Scheme's existence have continued to make varying degrees of multi-sectoral contributions to the growth and well-being of the nation.

Therefore, the inclusion of the Scheme, whose visibility has been top-notch in the last two years as member of the Mambila Hydro Power Project speaks on the high premium the Federal Government places on the Corps.

Undoubtedly, membership of these august bodies have clearly underscored the high pedestal the Director General has taken the Scheme in his two years of his eventful and remarkable administration.

NYSC AND SAED

BJ Audu and M. Hamza

In respect of improving the welfare and security of Corps Members and staff, in a rare demonstration of empathy and commitment to the welfare of Corps Members, the Director General personally visited and encouraged Corps Member Saidu Mohammed Adamu, who was admitted at the Federal Teaching Hospital, Ado-Ekiti, as a result of gunshot injuries that he sustained while on election duties during the recent bye-election held in Ekiti East Local Government Area of Ekiti State in March 2021.

Similar visits were also paid to several members of the Service Corps on admission in hospitals in Sokoto, Katsina, Edo, Plateau, Taraba and Kwara States, among others, following their involvement in road traffic accidents.

The Director General has also paid condolence and reassuring visits to the families of deceased and missing Corps Members in Plateau, Kaduna and Edo States. Such gestures have increased the confidence of Corps Members and their families in the Scheme, and have also engendered more zeal for patriotic service by the members of the Corps.

The Director General further demonstrated his commitment to Corps welfare by procuring prosthetic limbs for a Corps Member in furtherance of his welfare policy. The sum of Thirty-two Million Naira (N32,000,000.00) was expended to procure the limbs for Corps Member, Nuraddeen Tahir from Kano State, who, along with other Corps Members, was involved in a road traffic accident, while on his way to report for Primary Assignment after the 2019 Batch 'B' Stream 1 Orientation Course in Taraba State. The Corps Member, who had earlier lost an arm at a younger age, had the other one amputated as a result of the accident. The artificial limbs have already been supplied, while Nuraddeen was trained on the effective use of the limbs before he was re-united with his family. With this development, he can now effectively perform normal tasks such as writing with the limbs.

Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim:

The Director General relentlessly pursued the issue of increment of Corps Members' allowance in the wake of approval of the new National Minimum Wage. His effort paid-off and the allowance of Corps Members was increased from Nineteen thousand, Eight hundred Naira (N19800.00) to Thirty-three Thousand Naira (N33,000.00). Following the commencement of the payment of the new rate with effect from January 2020, the Director General along with the Honourable Minister of Youth and Sports Development and some representatives of Corps Members paid a "Thank-you" visit to His Excellency, the President and Commander-in-Chief, Armed Forces, Federal Republic of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari GCFR on 6th February, 2020 at the Presidential Villa, Abuja.

Following improvement in the security situation in the country, the Director General sought for, and got approval from the Federal Government for a return to the earlier suspended ceremonial passing-out of Corps Members. Accordingly, the Passing-Out Ceremony of the 2019 Batch 'A' Corps Members was marked with colorful parades nationwide, thereby increasing the visibility of the NYSC.

The successful conduct of Orientation courses is also another achievement of the Director General as he oversaw the successful conduct of the 2019 Batch 'B' Streams I and II, as well as 2019 Batch 'C' Streams I and II Orientation Courses.

As a proactive measure, NYSC Management suspended the 2020 Batch 'A' Stream 1 Orientation Course just a week into the exercise as a deliberate effort to avert the spread of COVID-19 in the Orientation Camps. The commendable action equally brought to the fore his concern for the health and general well-being of Corps Members and staff.

In recognition of his efforts at curtailing the spread of COVID-19, Victims Support Funds (VSF), an organisation chaired by Lt Gen TY Danjuma donated 60,000 RDT test kits to the Scheme. The kits are used

NYSC AND SAED

BJ Audu and M. Hamza

for the screening of prospective Corps Members and camp officials for COVID-19 in NYSC Orientation camps nationwide.

In his quest to expand the administrative structure of the Scheme, the Director General ensured the smooth take - off of the NYSC Area Offices, whose approval had earlier been secured by the immediate past administration of Gen Kazaure, one in each of the six geo-political zones of the country, headed by a Director on salary grade level 17. This feat has opened up more vacancies, allowing for posting of other cadre of staff alongside the Directors to man the Offices. The Area Offices are located in Kaduna (North West), Niger (North Central), Bauchi (North East), Enugu (South East), Osun (South West) and Delta (South South) have since taken off and have in no mean way boosted staff morale and operations of the Scheme.

In line with one of the cardinal points of his policy thrust, the Director General has been pursuing policies that are geared not only towards motivating staff, but also promoting industrial harmony in the Scheme. This has been aptly demonstrated through prompt payment of entitlements, capacity building programmes, as well as timely and transparent conduct of promotion examinations. During the 2020 Promotion Exercise for instance, One Thousand Seven Hundred and Eighteen (1,718) out of the Two Thousand One Hundred Fifty-One (2,151) officers that participated in the event were elevated to the next grade level after meeting the requirements stipulated in the Public Service Rules and NYSC Conditions of Service. Additionally, the 2021 Senior Staff Promotion Examination recorded a huge success. The impact of these promotion exercises has reinforced the commitment of staff to work for an enhanced performance.

Meanwhile, as Management strives to enhance the motivation of staff, much premium is laid on the need to have a highly disciplined workforce. In this regard, officers who commit infractions are reprimanded in line with the provisions of the Public Service Rules (PSR).

Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim:

On strengthening the existing collaboration with critical stakeholders, on assumption of office, the Director General saw the dire need to sustain and strengthen the existing collaboration with critical stakeholders to garner more support and involve them in the management of the Scheme. He therefore embarked on advocacy visits to the stakeholders such as the former Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon, whose administration founded the Scheme. The Director-General has had interface with the 36 State Governors, the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, heads of Security and Anti-Corruption Agencies, Federal Road Safety Corps, among other stakeholders. The impact of this initiative is the improvement already being achieved in stakeholders' support to the Scheme which is of great essence.

The Director General also addressed a meeting of the Nigeria Governors' Forum – the first of such engagement by any Chief Executive of the Scheme. He used the occasion of the meeting to appreciate the State Governors for their support to the Scheme, through various intervention projects in their respective States. He drew their attention to other areas that needed to be addressed, being part of the obligations of the State Governments to the Corps, as spelt out in the NYSC Act.

Consequently the hosting of the meeting of NYSC top Management with the representatives of State Governments and the Federal Capital Territory Administration, a fallout of the meeting with the Governor's Forum is aimed at strengthening the collaboration with the Scheme, with a particular focus on the discharge of the statutory obligations of the States and FCT to the NYSC, as spelt out in its enabling Act.

The impact of the meeting is profound, as several State Governments have made remarkable gestures in support of the Scheme. Prominent among them is the donation of two NYSC permanent Orientation camps by Edo and Anambra States, plans by the Lagos State Government to build a 14,000 -- capacity Orientation camp and the ongoing upgrading and rehabilitation of camp facilities in twenty five States, while the

NYSC AND SAED

BJ Audu and M. Hamza

expansion of camp facilities has commenced in nine States to meet the 5,000 -- Corps Member and 500 -- course official -- capacity camp.

Other notable gains derived from the meeting include, constitution of functional NYSC State Governing Boards in seventeen States, with eighteen States enhancing the regular payment of state allowance to Corps Members, provision and upgrading of transit camps for Corps Members in thirty -- one states, provision of watertight security for Corps Members in all the States and the FCT, issuance of circulars by State Governments against the rejection of Corps Members, increased partnership with the Association of Local Governments of Nigeria (ALGON), provision of decent accommodation or payment of allowance in lieu of that to Corps Members and provision of office and residential accommodation by the States hosting the Headquarters of the Area Offices.

In Promoting NYSC/Media relations, the Director General has since assumption of duty, strived to strengthen the cordial relations the Scheme enjoys with the Media. This, he kick-started with his maiden chat with Editors, Bureau Chiefs and Youth Correspondents of various Media Organisations in the country on 15th August, 2019. Brig Gen S Ibrahim also paid courtesy visits to Media offices in Abuja, including the Headquarters of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), Media Trust Limited and Leadership Group Limited. Similar visits with Director-General's directive were also made to Lagos Head Offices of The Punch, Daily Sun, The Nation newspapers, among others. He has consistently maintained his Media-friendly posture, thereby attracting wider publicity for the Scheme's activities.

To deepen and sustain the wide publicity that the Scheme has enjoyed, he has resuscitated the production and airing of the NYSC Half Hour programme on NTA International Channel 251 and Armed Forces Radio FM. So far, plans have reached an advanced stage to establish the first ever NYSC FM Radio that will be useful to adequately drive the

Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim:

publicity efforts of the Scheme and showcase its activities to Nigerians and the entire world.

The Director-General in furtherance of his transparent, inspirational and all-inclusive style of administration paid visits to some former Chief Executives of the Scheme. The gesture was aimed at appreciating their respective contributions to the development of Scheme when they were in the saddle of leadership, and also tap into their vast wealth of experience. The former Chief Executives appreciated the initiative as it was the first ever visit paid simultaneously to them.

The maiden meeting with the Registrars of some Foreign Corps Producing Institutions was also held, having, uncovered the fraudulent activities of some tertiary institutions in Africa, especially in the West Africa sub region which have the penchant to issue questionable academic certificates to unqualified persons, who in turn present same to get mobilised for national service. The Director-General has commenced an aggressive fight against this menace which has earned him the commendation of the President, His Excellency Muhammadu Buhari GCFR, during his address at the 2018/2019 President's NYSC Honours Award Ceremony. Similar commendations were given to him by a broad spectrum of vice chancellors of some indigenous and foreign institutions, including the Honourable Minister of Education.

In addition to hosting the meeting with the Registrars, internal mechanisms have been put in place for easier detection of unqualified persons attempting to present themselves for mobilisation for service. As a result of the stance of Management, some of the foreign institutions are now volunteering to alert NYSC of suspected fraudulent practices by their students. Interestingly, out of over twenty thousand (20,000) persons who registered online as foreign-trained prospective Corps Members of the 2019 Batch 'C' Service Year, only three thousand, four hundred and twenty (3,420) turned up for the pre-mobilisation physical screening of their credentials.

NYSC AND SAED

BJ Audu and M. Hamza

To serve as a deterrent to others, sixty-five (65) unqualified persons arrested during the 2019 Batch 'B' Stream II Orientation Course in camps across the country are being prosecuted with some convictions already secured. These steps taken by Management have helped to create national awareness, especially on the need for parents and guardians to check the accreditation status of the institutions attended by their wards, and also monitor their academic progress.

The bold move by the Director General in sanitising the mobilisation process will also ensure that only well trained and competent persons occupy critical positions that will fast-track the development of the country.

The Director-General has equally hosted a national sensitisation programme on the NYSC Act on 24th July, 2019 in Abuja. Prior to this, it was clear that many Nigerians were not aware of the provisions of the Act – a situation that has led to avoidable infractions. With the sensitisation, which is still on-going, organisations and individuals are now having better understanding of their obligations to the Scheme. In particular, cases of evasion and abscondment from Service, especially by the foreign-trained Nigerian graduates, are expected to reduce drastically.

Broadly looking at the reinvigoration of the NYSC ventures and skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development programme in line with NYSC Act for greater impact, the Director General has been speaking passionately about his desire to make the Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) Programme and NYSC Ventures Management Departments more functional.

To match words with actions, he has taken several steps towards reinvigorating the SAED programme, including, but not limited to the following:

- Renewal of commitment by the NYSC and Bank of Industry towards the resuscitation of empowerment of Corps entrepreneurs with business loans under the BOI-NYSC Graduate Empowerment Fund.

Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim:

- Intensive monitoring of GEF beneficiaries.
- New collaboration with NIRSAL Microfinance Bank on empowerment of Corps entrepreneurs.
- New partnership with Unity Bank Plc on a programme named 'Allawee' aimed at empowering Corps members.
- Collaboration with British-American Tobacco Foundation on empowerment of Corps Members with agricultural skills and business trainings, farm internship, mentoring and farm input supplies.
- Hosting of the 2020 NYSC SAED Stakeholders meeting aimed at reviewing the programme implementation strategies, as well as strengthening of existing partnerships and exploring new ones for further technical and material support.
- Pursuing the completion of the North West Skill Acquisition Centre in Kazaure, Jigawa State, this is now at advanced stage.
- Commencement of work on the North Central Skill Acquisition Centre in Keffi, Nasarawa State.
- Research-based collaboration with OAU-NACETEM sponsored by a Canadian Agency, International Development Research Centre on evaluation of the impact of SAED and reinvigorating it for greater impact.
- Resuscitation of NYSC Water Factory and Bakery at NYSC Orientation Camp Kubwa. The NYSC Water Factory and Bakery were revived and revitalised by the Director-General immediately he assumed office, and these two ventures are now producing at full capacity. The water and bread produced in these ventures are being supplied to the FCT, Nasarawa, Kogi, Kaduna and Niger State Orientation camps and the general public. These ventures now generate revenue to the Scheme and help Corps Members acquire skills too.
- Purchase of modern farm equipment for the four NYSC functional farms namely, NYSC Farm Kwali in FCT, Saminaka, Kebbi State, Dungulbi, Bauchi State and Iseyin Oyo State. Each of these farms now has tractors and other basic farm equipment.

NYSC AND SAED

BJ Audu and M. Hamza

- The consistent support in terms of funding and staffing has increased the hectares under cultivation from 60 hectares to 160 hectares during the 2020 farming season.
- Reclaiming of NYSC farmland at Ezillo which hitherto was collected by the Ebonyi State Government. Immediately after the reclaiming, tractor was purchased for farming operations at the Ezillo Farm.
- The structure of Ventures Management Department was expanded which gave room for the promotion of staff, and has in no mean way motivated the staff members.
- Registration of the two NYSC Garment Factories, Water Factory and Bakery with the Corporate Affairs Commission. Arising from the last Meeting of the NYSC Top Management with Representatives of State Governments, the Governors of Edo and Ekiti States announced the donation of land for the siting of two garment factories which will boost the production of Corps Members' kit items.
- Developing partnership with relevant institutions such as International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA), National Agricultural Land Development Agency (NALDA), NCRI, NCAM, ARMTI, NCAC etc. to enhance the productivity of NYSC Farms/Ventures among others.
- Resuscitation of moribund NYSC Feedmill, Lagos. The mill is now ready to start production of animal feeds.
- Construction of new poultry pen at NYSC farm Kwali, FCT.
- The Director General has met with the State Governors and other stakeholders with a view to securing land in all the States for agricultural production.

In addition to the above, twelve States have opened up their skills centres for the post camp training of Corps Members to further strengthen the skills and entrepreneurship training acquired in camp.

- The tremendous support given by the Director General has repositioned all the NYSC Ventures for greater revenue generation for the Scheme.

Brigadier General Shuaibu Ibrahim:

Interestingly, the Scheme paid into the national coffers over Two Hundred and Eighty Million Naira (N280, 000,000.00) as internally generated revenue which is unprecedented in the annals of the Scheme.

The Director General who has introduced the use of name tags by every member of staff for easy identification, equally in an unprecedented move sought the help of the Federal Government in tackling the ecological challenges confronting some of the NYSC Orientation camps. Government granted the request through the deployment of Ecological Fund to tackle the menace. Eight camps have been approved as beneficiaries in the first phase of the intervention. Already, work is ongoing in Cross River, Taraba, FCT and Nasarawa Orientation camps.

In recognition of his service to the nation, Brig Gen Shuaibu Ibrahim who has institutionalised Farewell Parade for outgoing NYSC Chief Executives - a novelty, has received numerous commendations and awards which include:

- Chief of Army Staff Award as the Overall Best Participant for 2013 NAEC Executive Management Course.
- Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) Special Recognition Award 2014.
- Award for Distinguished Professional Contributions to Public Service/Fellowship (FCAI) by Institute of Corporate Administration.
- Professional National Award (Historical Society of Nigeria HSN) and
- Chief of Army Staff Commendation Letter 2018.

Conclusion

The above discourse has given an insight on the achievements of General Shuaibu Ibrahim since becoming the Director General of the National Youth Service Corps. Within the last two years, the Scheme has made some giant strides owing to the pursuit of strict implementation of the Director General's five-point policy thrust. Therefore, the

NYSC AND SAED

BJ Audu and M. Hamza

contributions of Brig Gen Ibrahim to the NYSC since his ascension into office cannot be overemphasised. These contributions are indeed remarkable, and will undoubtedly stand the test of time, having set the Scheme on growth trajectory and continuous relevance.

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NYSC AND SAED

BJ Audu and M. Hamza

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Emeka -- Rems Mgbemena, Deputy Director and Head, Publications Division, Press and Public Relations Unit, NYSC National Directorate Headquarters, Abuja, 50+, Interviewed at Abuja, 15/3/21

INDEX

INDEX

- Abdullahi, H., 193, 206,
Abdullahi, R. I., iv, 42,
Abdullahi, T. F., 256,
Abdulrahman, D. A., 279,
Abubakar Audu University, iv,
Adam, M. C., iii, 304,
Adebayo, A. A., 212, 234,
Adejumo, G., 53, 58,
Adeleye, R., 78, 79,
Adetunji, F., 93, 97, 99, 100, 103,
105, 110, 112, 113,
Adewusi, A. A., 43, 54, 58, 83, 87,
177, 185,
Adisa, B. J., 43, 54, 58, 177, 185,
Adofu, I., 312, 314,
African Union, 295,
Agu, E., 53, 58, 269,
Agu, U., 269, 272,
Ahmad, M. S., 213, 235,
Ahmadu Bello University, iii,
Ahmed, A. O., xii,
Aja-Okorie, A., 176, 185,
Akande, T. T., 47, 58,
Akuegwu, B., 3, 10, 22,
Akume, A. T., 279,
Akwa Ibom State, 295,
Alao, O., 172, 185,
Amadi, O. B., 193, 206,
Anambra state, 268,
Ani, J. K., 239, 253,
armed banditry, 215,
robbery, 43, 296,
ARMTI, 105,
Arubayi, D. O. 125, 278, 286,
Asein, S. O., 267, 272,
Audu, B. J., iii, xii,
Babalola, H., 244, 252,
Babatunde, I., 70, 87,
backward integration, 91,
Bankole, S., 38, 39, 40,
Bashir, S., 31, 40,
Bawa, M. M., 284, 286,
Bayelsa State, 107, 299,
Becker, G. S., 242, 252,
Bell, S., 90, 117,
Bodley-Bond, C., 246, 252,
Boniface, O. I., iv, 189,
brain drain, 43,

INDEX

- Brazil, 239, 305,
Bula, H. O., 2, 22,
business development, 151,
capacity-building, 141, 231, 251,
character development, 246,
Chikamnayo, E., 170, 185,
Chikwe, C. K., 248, 252,
China, 165,
Chiwar, L. C., iii, 287,
Christopher, L., 105, 106,
Chukwuemeka, O., 173, 187,
CILRM, 231,
civil war, 60, 287,
climate change, 288, 301,
corpreneurship challenge, 159,
corruption, viii,
COVID-19, 180,
CSLCMO, xii,
CSR, 293,
cultism, 298, 299,
cultural barriers, 28,
cybercrime, 43,
Damilola, A., 203, 206,
Danga, J. Y., iii, 211,
Deebom, M. B., 67, 87, 151, 166,
178, 187, 239, 252, 304,
306, 310, 314,
deployment, 172, 296,
digital branding, 83,
marketing, 83,
Diigbo, G., 198, 206,
Douli, J. C., 194, 206,
DTA, 284,
Eberly, D. J., 172, 185, 246, 252,
272,
economic development, 123, 130,
170, 257, 274, 275,
sustainability, 291,
ECOWAS, 295,
Eda, G., 291, 302,
Ede, S., 170, 185,
EFCC, 27,
Egbetokun, A., 84, 87,
Eke, O., 204, 206,
Ekeocha, J., 95,
election violence, 298,
Emefiele, G., 140,
Enegwea, G., 258, 260, 261, 264,
266, 272,
environmental degradation, 291,
301,
Erhirieme, P. E., 239, 240, 252,
ethno-religious crisis, 215,
Etuk, E. J., 241, 253,
evaluation, 50, 54, 55, 70, 154,
183,
examination malpractice, 298,
299,
FACOR, 93,
Faloye, D. O., 177, 185, 310, 314,
Faniyi, B. A., 103,
Fatoki, O. O., 67, 167,
FEAP, 91,
financial planning, 74,
Fletcher, A., 200, 206,
FMARD, 96,
food security, 95,
Friedman, T., 242, 243,
Gambo, S. K., 299, 302,
Gilchrist, A., 295, 302,
globalization, 291,
Gowon, Y., xiii, 30, 60, 307,
green revolution, 91,
Hamza, M., iii, xii, 124, 125, 147,
Hamza, N., 27, 40,
Haris, D. R., 260, 272,
Henry, S. H., 213, 235,
HIV/AIDS, 31, 94, 283, 293,

INDEX

- human capital theory, 242, 244,
development, 193, 205,
241, 248, 249, 271,
Hussaini, M., 193, 206,
Ibadan, 300,
Ibrahim, S., xii, 66, 72, 80, 84, 87,
92, 94, 97, 101, 102, 109,
125, 126, 127, 128, 147,
162, 164, 166, 197, 270,
296, 300, 302,
ICAN, 33,
ICPC, 27,
Idoko, C. U., 4, 22,
Idris, H. D., 40,
Igba, E., 180, 186,
IITA, 106, 265, 266,
Ikaka, A. W., 93, 101, 104, 109,
110,
ILO, 157, 158, 179, 190, 206,
immunization, 282,
India, 305,
Indonesia, 239, 305,
INEC, 295,
inequality, 288, 289,
insecurity, viii, 215, 237,
insurgency, 90,
internship, 255,
Isa, W., 180,
Ishaq, S. B., iv, 255,
Isolor, W. A., 238, 253,
ITF, 98,
Jhingan, M. L., 250, 253,
Jimba, D. I., 193, 206,
Jonathan, G. E., 199, 207,
Jonker, J. 5, 7, 22,
Kaduna State University, 111,
168,
Kauffman, J., 3, 4, 10, 11, 13, 14,
17, 19, 22,
Kayode, D. J., 245,
Kazaure, S., 264,
Kenedy, J., 221, 236,
Key, S., 23,
kidnapping, 43, 296,
Kuti, Z., 193, 207,
Lawal, A., iii, 24,
Lawanson, O., 190, 207,
leadership, 257, 307,
Leo, O. O., iv, 237,
Lot, C., 30, 41,
Lynor, K., 291, 302,
Maduawuchi, O., 307, 314,
Mallick, S., 251, 253,
materialization, 241,
MDG, 24, 37, 115, 280, 281, 282,
283, 285, 292, 293, 296,
Mexico, 305,
Michael, S., 170, 186,
militancy, 296,
mobilization, 46, 296,
monitoring, 71, 114, 154,
Muktar, J. I., iii, 1,
Murtala, M. L., iv, 120,
NALDA, 105,
NAPEP, 65, 91, 216, 231, 305,
Nasarawa state, 104,
national cohesion, 238,
consciousness, 27,
development, 64, 67, 173,
190, 193, 251,
re-orientation, 274,
nation-building, 170, 238, 287,
294,
NBTE, 122, 131, 133,
NCAM, 104,
NDE, 194,
Nduka-Ozo, S. N., 23,
NEEDS, 280, 286,

INDEX

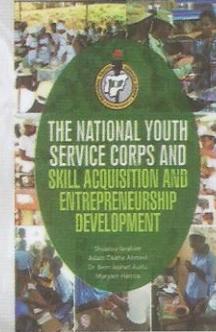
- Newitt, K., 90, 117,
NIA, 256,
Nigerian Defence Academy, iii, iv,
NITDA, 175, 186,
Njoku, A., 212, 235,
Noe, R. A., 221, 235,
Ntiwunka, G. U., 195, 207,
Ntukogu, O. T., iv, 89,
Nwouso, M., 33, 36, 41,
NYIF, 113,
Oba, J., 95, 98, 100,
Obadare, E., 27, 41, 246, 253,
OECD, 25, 243,
Ogbonna, N., 202, 207,
Ogidi, R., 248, 252,
Ogoni, 304,
Ogun state, 103,
Ogundele, M. O., 245, 253, 307,
 314,
Ogundowolo, E. K., 170, 187,
Okafor, C., 239, 253,
Okafor, E. E., 58,
Okeke, M., 58,
Oko, S. U., 299, 303,
Okpara, J., 59,
Okwelle, P. C., 239, 304, 305, 306,
 310, 314, 315,
Olabode, D. O., 310, 314,
Olaiya, T. A., 246, 253,
Oluwaseun, A., 65, 70, 154, 156,
 228,
Omuaha, G., 45, 59,
Onwere, C., 276, 286,
Onyishi, A. O., 238, 254, 315,
orientation course, 56, 61, 228,
 277,
Osinem, E. C., 312, 315,
Osun state, 108,
Oyebanji, M. A., 294, 302,
Oyo state, 108,
Padgett, J. F., 151, 167,
patriotism, 28, 275,
Pennick, B., 5, 7, 22,
Perold, H., 246, 254,
Pollyn, B. S., 25, 41,
poverty reduction, 26, 295, 305,
poverty, 213, 288, 296, 301,
Prichard, J., 231, 236,
primary assignment, 265, 277,
productivity, 32,
Pyla-Mak Publishers Ltd., ii,
Raimi, L., 172, 186, 246, 254,
reconciliation, xiii, 60,
reconstruction, xiii, 60,
rehabilitation, xiii, 60,
Rivers State, 304,
Robert, A., 213,
Ronstadt, R. C., 45, 59,
SACP, 295,
Sahu, P. K., 6, 23,
Salami, C.G.S, 191, 208,
Saltzman, E. L., 2, 23,
Samson, O. T., 28, 41,
sanitation, 37,
SAP, viii, 90,
SDG, 24, 37, 38, 94, 100, 284,
289, 290, 292, 296, 297,
301,
Segun, A., 74, 185,
self-defence, 28,
 -empowerment, 214,
 -reliance, 69, 151,
sensitization, 46, 62, 81, 176,
Singh, G., 221, 235,
Sirajo, H., iii,
SMEDAN, 77, 97, 123,
Sofoluwe, A. O., 245, 307, 314,
SOWESS, 195,

INDEX

- SSS, 256,
Sule, A., 104,
Tahir, A., 61, 87,
Tanimu, Y., 98, 104,
Taylor, M., 295,
teenage pregnancy, 298,
TETFUND, 115,
thurgery, 215,
Tijani, S. A., 93, 113, 114,
Timmons, J. A., 44, 59,
Torikka, J., 212,
trader money, x, 91,
TSA, 270,
Turkey, 239, 305,
Udo, M. F., 2, 8, 18, 21, 23,
Ugochukwu, O., 203, 208,
Umar, A. Y., iii, 60, 149, 168,
Umar, J., 267, 268, 269, 270, 272,
Umar, M. A., 2, 23,
Umoden, G., 260, 264,
UNDP, 25, 295,
unemployment, 34, 42, 121, 140,
 148, 170, 190, 210, 208,
 211, 212, 215, 217, 218,
 237, 296, 308,
UNESCO, 294,
UNFPA, 76,
UNGA, 37,
UNITAR, 121,
United Nations, 24, 37, 90, 124,
 257, 284, 288, 289, 293,
 302,
University of London, 286,
USA, 106,
Ushie, E. M., 241, 254,
Usman, I. S., 62, 69, 167, 303,
Uzochukwu, N., 191, 208,
VBE, 20,
Victor, J. U., iii, 169,

ABOUT THE BOOK

As the global population increases, the challenges of unemployment, inequality, scarcity and want continued to characterise humanity. In Africa, the challenge of youth unemployment has led to endemic poverty, crime rate, and various forms of conflicts. In Nigeria, the expanding, young, and vibrant population with restless energy present both challenges and opportunities for economic prosperity. Strategies to tap into the opportunities of having a young population in Nigeria have continued to emerge with mixed results. The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) has been at the forefront of youth entrepreneurship development since its establishment in 1973. Indeed, as the world moves to a skill-based economy, the NYSC has responded by evolving the Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) in 2012 for youth economic development, self-dependence, and national economic sustainability. The book, *The National Youth Service Corps and Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development* is a very comprehensive and ambitious account of the successes, challenges, and prospects of the SAED programme. The book is an edited volume of well-research articles documenting the efforts of NYSC at youth economic empowerment and national economic development.



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