



IMPACT OF NYSCS SKILL ACQUISITION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME ON JOB CREATION IN ABUJA, NIGERIA

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Abstract:

This research examined graduates' unemployment reduction in Abuja, using the NYSC's Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) Programme as a case in point. The study adopted a descriptive approach, and anchored on the Oxenfeldt's refugee effects theory which states that unemployment drives youth to self-employment. The study revealed that SAED programme has contributed to 35% business employment for those who completed the post-camp training. Findings also show that corps members participate in the in-camp training. However, there seems to be a very sharp decline in participation between the in-camp and post camp segments of the programme as very few participates in the post-camp exercise where the main skill acquisition training is expected to take place. The reduction in number in the post-camp training is occasioned by some challenges ranging from unconducive training/seminar venues, attitude of trainers, inadequate time etc. which leads to loss of interest in the programme. This is coupled with the fact that the post camp training attracts payment, and the NYSC is not actually involved in the negotiation of the terms of engagement of the corps members with the trainers in the post-camp training. More still, training centres do not exist in all the areas especially in the remote ones. It is against this backdrop that the study recommends that for effective and efficient skill acquisition and participation of corps members both in the in-camp and post-camp training exercise, adequate sensitization, conducive training environment, quality lectures/trainings, availability of skill acquisition centres, accessibility to credit facilities, and that NYSC should be involved in negotiation and monitoring of skill acquisition training programmes in the post-camp exercises among others.

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1. Introduction

Before the discovery of crude oil, Nigeria's economic sectors (agricultural, industrial, health services and public service sector) were able to effectively generate employment and income for the country. The sectors also ensured food, nutritional security and livelihood enhancement (Omoroguiwa *et al.*, 2014). However, during the period of oil boom, attention was shifted from the economic sectors and livelihood generating activities (Ojebiyi *et al.*, 2015). There was total reliance on the oil while the economic sector was neglected. The recent dwindling in oil price with adverse effects on the country, especially on youths, include economic recession, high rate of unemployment, poverty and social vices. As a result of the adverse effects of overconcentration and dwindling of oil price, the Nigerian government has been working relentlessly to achieve youth independence and improve economic status through several reforms and programme initiatives. Some of these initiatives include the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) initiated in 1986, Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YOUWIN) initiated in 2011 and Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) of the National Youth Service Corp of 2012 (Ekong and Ekong, 2016). This is because 80% of graduate youths find it hard to get employment every year despite the fact that the country is endowed with abundant human and natural resources (Undiyaundeye, 2015).

SAED programme was initiated by Nigerian federal government to tackle youth unemployment in order to secure the future prosperity of the country. The programme started in the year 2012 with the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) at the orientation camps in the 36 states of the federation including Federal Capital Territory Abuja with motivation and sensitization of corps members on importance of skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development by resource personnel. The youths are trained on entrepreneurship skills for eleven days at the various orientation camps. From the twelve available skill sets, each youth graduate is requested to select his/her skill set of interest which will be learnt for these few days while on the camp. After the orientation camp, graduate youths are expected to undergo Post-camp training on the skill set chosen by them. The time frame for the skill acquisition depends on the skill set chosen by individual graduate youth. For instance, for the Agro-allied skill set, the training runs through the whole service year and participants are trained by private establishments/resource personnel that registered/partnered with National Youth Service Corps. Skill acquisition is the privilege, opportunity and ability of an individual to be trained on one or more task, job, occupation, business or any income generating activity and become an expert in it. Skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development is designed to improve economic and human development through its positive impact on wealth creation, unemployment reduction, poverty alleviation, creativity and innovative production which invariably increase the gross domestic product of the

country and increase psychological rewards for humans. Entrepreneurship development which has been globally accepted as an instrument of economic growth and development (Oghojafor *et al.*, 2011; Emmanuel, 2013). It is also a process of enhancing or improving skills acquired by a person which invariably brings about economic and social advancement in terms of quality of life of individual.

The mandate of SAED is to collaborate with agencies and stakeholders on skill acquisition and entrepreneurship, to advocate and influence policies on youth empowerment, to mobilize and train over 200,000 corps members yearly, to develop the spirit of self-reliance in the corps members towards job creation, to train the corps members, have at least 100,000 young entrepreneurs yearly and then developed policies that will sustain the programmes. At the end of the SAED programme, graduate youths are expected to become entrepreneurs and employers of labour. According to Asogwa and Dim (2016), the programme is expected to bring about responsible creation and expansion of opportunities to a large extent for the other two economic activities, that is, employment creation and entrepreneurship. Against this backdrop, it becomes imperative to assess the impact of this programme on reducing the level of unemployment with a specific focus on FCT, Abuja.

Unemployment rate has been consistently increasing in Nigeria especially among the youths. As at 2012 when the NYSC SAED programme was introduced, unemployment rate was 10.6 %, with youth unemployment at 6.64% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019), however, seven years after the commencement of the programme, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2019) statistics show that total unemployment rate was 23.1% as at the 3rd quarter of 2018, while youth unemployment soared as high as 36.5% within the same period. This shows that there could be a problem with the SAED programme which is expected to train about two hundred thousand (200,000) youths yearly, either at its conception or implementation stages. This study, therefore, assesses the implementation of the programme in FCT, Abuja in order to examine the impact of the Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) scheme of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) on employment generation in FCT, Abuja.

2. Conceptual Issues

2.1 Unemployment

Every economy is characterized by both active and inactive populations. The economically active ones are referred to as the population willing and able to work, and include those actively engaged in the production of goods and services and those who are unemployed. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines the unemployed as numbers of the economically active population who are without work but available for and seeking work, including people who have lost their jobs and those who have voluntarily left work (World Bank, 1998). According to Fajana (2000), unemployment refers to a situation where people who are willing and capable of working are unable to find suitable paid employment. It is one of the macro-economic problems which every

responsible government is expected to monitor and regulate. The higher the unemployment rate in an economy the higher would be the poverty level and associated welfare challenges. Fajana (2000), Alao (2005), and Wikipedia (2010) identify the following types of unemployment.

- 1) Structural unemployment occurs when there is a change in the structure of an industry or the economic activities of the country. This may be because people's tastes have changed or it may be because technology has outmoded and the product or service is no longer in demand. It is mostly to be found in the developing countries of Asia and Africa. This type of unemployment is due to the deficiency of capital resources in relation to their demand. In other words, structural unemployment results from a mismatch between the demand for labour, and the ability of the workers.
 - 2) Frictional Unemployment is caused by industrial friction in which jobs may exist, yet the workers may be unable to fill them either because they do not possess the necessary skill, or because they are not aware of the existence of such jobs. The employable may remain unemployed on account of shortage of raw materials, or mechanical defects in the working of plants. Therefore, the better the economy is doing, the lower this type of unemployment is likely to occur.
 - 3) Seasonal Unemployment is due to seasonal variations in the activities of particular industries caused by climatic changes, changes in fashions or by the inherent nature of such industries. In the tropical region, ice factories are less active in rainy season because demand for ice is low. Seasonal oriented industries are bound to give rise to seasonal unemployment.
 - 4) Cyclical Unemployment also known as Keynesian unemployment or the demand deficient unemployment is due to the operation of the business cycle. This arises at a time when the aggregate effective community demand becomes deficient in relation to the productive capacity of the country. In other words, when the aggregate demand falls below the full employment level, it is not sufficient to purchase the full employment level of output. Cyclical or Keynesian unemployment is characterized by an economy wide shortage of jobs and last as long as the cyclical depression lasts.
 - 5) Residual Unemployment is caused by personal factors such as old age, physical or mental disability, poor work attitudes and inadequate training.
 - 6) Technological Unemployment is caused by changes in the techniques of production. Technological changes are taking place constantly, leading to the increased mechanization of the production process. This naturally results in the displacement of labour and finally causing unemployment (Oladele, et al, 2011).
- Whatever the type and cause of unemployment, entrepreneurship is its answer.

2.2 Entrepreneurship

Binks and Vale (1990) defined an entrepreneurship as 'an unrehearsed combination of economic resources instigated by the uncertain prospect of temporary monopoly profit'.

Hence Kanothi, (2009) defined Entrepreneur as the “*instigator of entrepreneurial events for so long as they occur*”. Tijani-Alawiye (2004) also defines entrepreneurship as the process of increasing the supply of entrepreneurs or adding to the stock of existing small, medium and big enterprises available to a country by creating and promoting many capable entrepreneurs who can successfully run innovative enterprises, nurture them to growth and sustain them, with a view to achieving broad socio-economic developmental goals which includes the sustenance of employment.

Furthermore, Acs and Szerb (2007) noted that entrepreneurship revolves around the realization of existence of opportunities in combination with decision to commercialize them by starting a new firm. This reasoning is what Thornton (1999) called demand and supply perspectives of entrepreneurship discourse.

However, Shepherd and Douglas (1997) observed that the essence of entrepreneurship development is the ability to envision and chart a course for a new business venture by combining information from the functional disciplines and from the external environment in the context of the extraordinary uncertainty and ambiguity which faces a new business venture. It then manifests itself in creative strategies, innovative tactics, uncanny perception of trends and market mood changes and courageous leadership. To the duo, ‘entrepreneurship’, when treated as ‘enterprise-creation’ helps develop new skills and experiences that can be applied to many other challenging areas in life. More importantly, Schnurr and Newing (1997) justified the need for promoting entrepreneurship culture on the ground that youth in all societies have sterling qualities such as resourcefulness, initiative, drive, imagination, enthusiasm, zest, dash, ambition, energy, boldness, audacity and courage which are all valuable traits for entrepreneurship development.

Supporting this assertion, Bennell (2000) maintained that governments, NGOs and international bodies seeking to improve youth livelihoods could best pursue their empowerment objective by tapping into the dynamism of young people and build on their strong spirit of risk-taking through entrepreneurship development. Entrepreneurship development has also led to employment generation, growth of the economy and sustainable development.

2.3 Entrepreneurship and Job Creation

Entrepreneurship and job creation are intimately related. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Report (2000), about 70 percent of an area’s economic performance and wellbeing is dependent upon how entrepreneurial the area’s economy is. The above assertion is an indication that when there is entrepreneurship development, jobs will be created and there will be increase in the supply of goods and services, inflation will reduce, employment will create wealth and poverty will be alleviated.

In line with the above, Assudani (2009) observed that one of the major contributions that entrepreneurs make on an economy is job creation and the reduction of unemployment levels within the economy. In developed countries, almost 40 to 50 percent of the workforce is employed in small and medium scale business enterprises set

up by various enterprising individuals. In developing countries like Nigeria, millions of people have been able to pull their families out of poverty through self-employment and entrepreneurship. It has been estimated that between 45 to 60 percent of the urban labour force work for private enterprises. The small and medium enterprises sector provides, on average, 50 percent of Nigeria's employment, and 50 percent of its industrial output (Ariyo, 2008). A World Bank Report (2004) has put SME contribution to employment and GDP in three categories of: low-income countries; middle income countries; and high-income countries.

Ikon (2007) remarks that with the present global trend of liberalized economies, entrepreneurship is at the center stage as both the driver and facilitator of economic development efforts. In capitalist societies, entrepreneurs have played crucial role in manufacturing and service output, contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employment generation and overall economic development.

2.4 Skill Acquisition

Skill acquisition can be defined as the form of training by individuals or group of individuals that can lead to acquisition of knowledge for self-sustenance. 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. Ochiagha (1995) defined skill acquisition as the process of demonstrating the habit of active thinking or behaviour in a specific activity.

He further stated that skill acquisition is seen as the ability to do or perform an activity that is related to some meaningful exercise, work or job. He maintains that for skill to be acquired, appropriate knowledge, attitudes, habits of thought and qualities of character are learnt to enable the acquirer develop intellectual, emotional and moral character which prepares him or her for a brighter future.

Similarly, Donli (2004) is of the view that skill acquisition is the manifestation of idea and knowledge through training which is geared towards instilling in individuals, the spirit of entrepreneurship needed for meaningful development. He stressed that if individuals are given the opportunity to acquire relevant skills needed for self-sustenance in the economy, it will promote their charisma in any work environment. He further maintains that skill acquisition increases competition and cooperation among people.

Accordingly, Magbagbeola (2004) posited that skills acquisition requires the accumulation of different skills that enhance task performance through the integration of both theoretical and practical forms of knowledge. He enumerated the guidelines for the sustenance of skill acquisition programme to include the following;

- 1) Provision of training that gives the trainees the opportunities to acquire skills that are appropriate for preparation in a field of trade for gainful employment.
- 2) Provision of definite skills that relate to each trade that makes one a professional in one field instead of the others.
- 3) that training has to be done by competent, experienced and qualified instructors

- 4) Skill acquisition requires much practice, patience, interest, ability, aptitude and personality traits.
- 5) Skill acquisition requires conducive environment.
- 6) Training requires constructive human relationship, business skills, imitation and constructive ideas.
- 7) The principles guiding training in a particular field in terms of attitude, customer-relationship, productivity, efficiency, supply and demand needs to be appreciated.

From the above, it can be stated that skill acquisition requires a holistic approach in the realization of creative ideas. It helps in the transformation of knowledge and skills into creative ventures.

2.5 Skill Acquisition and Job Creation

The concept of entrepreneurial skill according to Anho (2014) is associated with various activities, but not limited to the following: innovation, creativity, risk taking, initiative, vision, focus, determination, team spirit, resourcefulness, financial control, self-confidence, versatility, knowledge, dynamic thinking, optimum disposition, originality, people oriented, flexible in decision, responses to suggestions and criticism, need achievement driven, profit oriented, persistent and persevering, energy for hard work, adjustment to challenges and future looking.

Entrepreneurial skills help to create and develop enterprise in various areas (Ewubare, 2010). In similar vein Entrepreneurial skills is associated with various activities such as; innovation, imitation, creativity resourcefulness, need achievement driven, profit oriented persistent and persevering, adjustment to challenges and future looking (Anho, 2014).

Drucker (1985) argued that entrepreneurial skill is a practice and discipline and like any discipline, it can be learned. Entrepreneurial skill process occurs over a period of time and requires the active involvement of entrepreneurs. These skills according to Cooney (2012) are:

- 1) Technical Skills, which are those skills necessary to produce the business product or service.
- 2) Managerial Skills, which are essential to the day-to-day management and administration of the company.
- 3) Entrepreneurial Skills, which involve recognizing economic opportunities and acting effectively on them.
- 4) Personal Maturity Skills, which include self-awareness, accountability, emotional skills and creative skills.

Odia and Odia (2013) posit that entrepreneurial skills acquisition can be obtained through various avenues such as: attending entrepreneurial training classes, development programme seminars and workshops. Universities, job rotation, special (intensive) training, articleship or apprenticeship, organisational learning, R&D Institutions, consultants, natural and international agencies and bodies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and professional bodies. Akibu (2002) notes that

entrepreneurial skills include perception of business opportunities where others do not, searching for change, responding to it and exploiting it as an opportunity. Steinhoff and Bureass (1993), Nelson and Leach (1981), as cited by Anyakoya (1995) see entrepreneurial skills as capitalist qualities which help to recognize money-making opportunities, gather resources, assume risks through the imitation of actions, organizes and manages these resources to exploit the opportunities so identified.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

2.6.1 The Refugee Effect

This process of unemployment fast-tracking entrepreneurship activity has been termed a "refugee effect". This remarkable view dates back at least to Oxenfeldt (1943), who pointed out that individuals confronted with unemployment and low prospects for wage employment often turn to self-employment as a viable alternative. This observation was also an extension of Knight's view that individuals make a decision among three states – unemployment, self-employment and employment. The simple theory of income choice lends credence to refugee effect by suggesting that increased unemployment will lead to an increase in start-up business activity on the grounds that the opportunity cost of not starting a firm has decreased (Evans and Leighton, 1990; and Blanchflower and Meyer, 1994). Similarly, Picot et al. (1998) and Pfeiffer and Reize (2000) observe that new firms hire the needed employees to work for them, thus helping to reduce the level of unemployment in the society. Evans and Leighton (1990) found that unemployment is positively associated with greater propensity to start a new firm. Many other studies established that greater unemployment serves as a catalyst for start-up activity (Reynolds, Miller and Makai, 1995; Reynolds, Storey and Westhead, 1994).

In Nigeria, accurate unemployment rates are difficult to access. However, according to Oyebade (2003), Nigeria's unemployment can be grouped into two categories: first, the older unemployed who lost their jobs through retrenchment, redundancy, or bankruptcy; and second, the younger unemployed, most of whom have never been employed. For Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010), the statistics from the Manpower Board and the Federal Bureau of Statistics showed that Nigeria has a youth population of 80 million, representing 60% of the total population of the country. Also, 64 million of them are unemployed, while 1.6 million are under-employed.

Specifically, as regards the age group, educational group and sex, data provided by the National Bureau of Statistics (2010:3) further showed that as at March 2009 in Nigeria, for persons between ages 15 and 24 years, 41.6% were unemployed. For persons between 25 and 44 years, 17% were unemployed. Also, those with primary education, 14.8% were unemployed and for those with only secondary education, 23.8% were unemployed. Furthermore, for those with post-secondary education, 21.3% were unemployed. For those who never attended school and those with below primary education, 21.0% and 22.3% were unemployed respectively. As regards sex, data showed that males constituted 17.0% while females constituted 23.3%. It is important to note that the figures above may not have captured in totality the youth unemployment situation

in Nigeria, however, they are pointing to the fact that the phenomenon is a very critical issue with far reaching implications for stability of Nigerian democracy.

3. Methodology

The study adopted descriptive research approach. This method allows the research to analyse and describe documented evidence on how the SAED programme of NYSC has reduced the level of unemployment in FCT. The study obtained data from the documented register of corps members who have participated in the SAED programme from the year 2017 to 2020. The information obtained include the number of corps members that participated in the programme in various batches across the years under focus, the in-camp and post-camp participants, the skill areas they participated in and the type of credit facilities available to the participants of the scheme. These data tabulated in the components of participants' gender, percentage of in-camp and post-camp participation, Skill Areas and the number of businesses established after the SAED Training.

Content analysis was utilized as a method of analyzing the data gathered. By this method, the study interpreted information on the tables with the intention of finding out how many corps members have proceeded through the post-camp training and succeeded in registering businesses from the scheme in the Federal Capital Territory. This process also invariably showed the challenges faced by the programme in FCT.

4. Findings and Discussion

Table 1: In Camp Training in Abuja (2017 – 2020)

Year	Batch	Total Participants Registered		Total	Total Participants in SAED in Camp Training		Total
		Male	Female		Male	Female	
2017	Batch A	1257	1424	2681	1206	1394	2600
	Batch B	2568	2041	4609	2527	1993	4520
	Total	3825	3465	7290	3733	3387	7120
2018	Batch A	1828	2148	3976	1494	1796	3290
	Batch B	2256	2667	4923	1585	1974	3557
	Total	4084	4815	8899	3077	3077	6847
2019	Batch A	2504	2762	5266	1979	1874	3853
	Batch B	1515	2087	3602	675	1452	2127
	Total	4019	4849	8868	2654	3326	5980
2020	Batch A	1583	1926	3509	1181	1326	2507
	Batch B	2302	2562	4864	1624	1508	3132
	Total	3885	4488	8373	2805	2934	6639
	Grand Total	11,928	17,617	29,545	12,269	12,724	24,993

Source: SAED Branch; NYSC Abuja Secretariat 2021.

A table indicating number of corps members posted to Abuja and number that participated in the SAED programme from 2017 – 2020 is presented above.

Table 1 presents the data of corps members' participation in the in-camp training in Abuja from 2017 to 2020. It was divided into registration and participation. Because of the regimented pattern of living in the orientation camp, registration and participation were compulsory. This attests for the reason why there were no significant difference in the number of corps members that registered and those that participated. In total, there were 29,545 registered and 24,993 participated in the in-camp training in that period. Equally, a table indicating the number of corps members that participated and completed the post camp training is presented below:

Table 2: Post Camp Training in Abuja State (2017 – 2020)

S/N	Skill Area	Year / Number of Participants				
		2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
1.	Agro Allied	24	28	17	26	95
2.	Automobile	9	7	11	8	35
3.	Construction	2	3	6	13	24
4.	Cosmetology	70	66	50	79	265
5.	Culture & Tourism	77	86	80	119	262
6.	Education	–	5	11	8	24
7.	Environment	9	9	13	10	41
8.	Film & photography	11	17	28	41	97
9.	Information Communication Technology	20	32	37	59	158
10.	Food processing	26	21	32	39	118
11.	Beautification	4	6	5	11	26
12.	Power and energy	7	16	21	26	70
	Total	249	296	301	452	1,298

Source: SAED branch, NYSC Abuja 2021.

Table 2 above presents the skill area where corps members underwent post-camp training under the SAED programme from 2017 to 2020. There were 12 skill areas in total, including Agro-allied, automobile, construction, cosmetology, culture and tourism, education, environment, film and photography, information communication technology, food processing, beautification and power and energy. Of the 24,993 that participated in the in-camp training between 2017 and 2020, only 1,298 successfully completed the post-camp training in the identified skill areas. Furthermore, a summarized/abridged table showing the number of corps members that participated in the in-camp training and number that completed the post camp training indicating its difference and percentage.

Table 3: Percentage Ratio of In-Camp to Post Camp SAED Training

Year	In-camp Training	Post Camp Training	Difference	Percentage Ratio
2017	7120	249	6871	3.5%
2018	6847	296	6551	4.3%
2019	5980	301	5679	5.03%
2020	6639	452	6187	6.8%

Source: SAED branch, NYSC Abuja 2021.

Table 3 above presents the percentage ratio of the in-camp and post-camp training participation in a trend from 2017 to 2020. The result indicates that there is gradual improvement in the percentage ratio from 3.5% in 2017 to 6.8% in 2020. Although, this does not mean that the programme has fared well because, within the scope of study, there has been no double-digit percentage ration of in-camp and post camp participation. Given that the practical and more intense aspect of the training are taught in the post-camp session, there has been low patronage overall of this critical part of the programme. Furthermore, a table showing the number of business enterprises setup by corps members that participated in the SAED programme within the period is presented below:

Table 4: Number of Recorded Business Establishment
 Indicating Nature of Businesses Established

S/N	Skill Area	Year / Number of Participants				Total
		2017	2018	2019	2020	
1.	Agro Allied	4	11	28	33	76
2.	Automobile	–	–	2	4	6
3.	Construction	1	–	–	2	3
4.	Cosmetology	6	14	11	23	54
5.	Culture & Tourism	9	21	30	25	85
6.	Education	–	–	1	2	3
7.	Environment	–	2	–	5	7
8.	Film & photography	2	6	11	10	28
9.	Information Communication Technology	4	11	17	21	53
10.	Food processing	5	8	6	16	35
11.	Beautification	–	–	3	5	11
12.	Power and energy	–	2	4	3	9
	Total	30	75	113	149	357

Source: SAED Branch, NYSC secretariat, Abuja 2021.

From the Table 4 above, a total of 357 business ventures were recorded to have been established by participants of the SAED programme from 2017 – 2020. However, the scope and size of such business was not ascertained. A very critical aspect of the SAED programme especially as it relates to establishment of business ventures is the issue of funding and accessibility to such funding. The table below presents a list of loan, grant, and aid indicating year, amount, and institution issuing such.

From the table 5, a total of 41 recipients benefitted from various sources of credit facility to facilitate their entrepreneurship endeavours. The amount received varied from N250,000, N300,000, N500,000, N750,000 and N1,000,000 (Source SAED Branch NYSC Abuja, 2021). From the above data presented, it is glaring that the average corps members are aware of the NYSC Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED). Equally, majority of them have either participated or are participating in the programme.

Table 5: List of Recipients of Loans, Grants, Aids, Support, etc.,
 Indicating Year, Amount and Issuing Organization

S/N	Year	Nature of Credit Facility	Number of Recipients	Issuing Organization
1.	2017	Loan	5	Bank of Industry / Bank of Agriculture / CBN
		Grants/Aid	1	
		Support	–	
2.	2018	Loan	3	Bank of Industry / CBN / NYSC Foundation
		Grants/Aid	3	
		Support	2	
3.	2019	Loan	6	Bank of Industry / Bank of Agriculture / CBN / SMEDAN
		Grants/Aid	7	
		Support	–	
4.	2020	Loan	6	CBN / BOI / CBN / NYSC Foundation / Hope Alive Foundation
		Grants/Aid	3	
		Support	5	
		Total	41	

Source: SAED Branch, NYSC secretariat, Abuja 2021.

However, there seems to be a very sharp decline in participation between the in-camp and post camp segments of the programme. This is so because the in-camp training is basically concerned with sensitization and mobilization towards stirring the interest of the corps members in the programme. The real or main skill acquisition training is expected to take place during the post camp training. The large participation in the in-camp exercise could be attributed to the fact that the SAED programme is an integral and even basic activity of the orientation camp and as such seemed almost mandatory for corps members in camp. Equally, such sensitization and training is free of charge. It could also be attributed to the usual experimental push in corps members towards new programmes or activities.

The reduction in number in the post camp training could be occasioned by some evidenced challenges ranging from unconducive training/seminar venues, attitude of trainers, inadequate time etc. and might have led to loss of interest in the programme. This is coupled with the fact that the post camp training attracts payment, and the NYSC is not actually involved in the negotiation of the terms of engagement of the corps members with the trainers in the post camp training.

Furthermore, training centres exist in Abuja City center which are generally far from most corps' members especially those in the remote ones. The greed and exploitative tendencies of the trainers could also an inhibiting factor. All these factors combined or separately could account for the low number recorded in the post camp training. This in turn have a negative impact on the programme. This is not encouraging, and leads to the question of how willing are the corps members will be to continue in the programme. It raises the fundamental question of motivation to participate.

The issue of access to fund for even those who completed the post camp training is also a grey area. In the case of availability of credit facilities, the NYSC have signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with some financial agencies. However,

accessibility to such fund has not been easy. Corps members most times do not get much support from the NYSC in the application and accessibility of this fund especially if it is done within the time when such participant is an ex-corps member. This brings a lot of frustration.

All these factors enumerated above combines to lower success and interest in the programme. Thus, the NYSC does not seem to have put in place the veritable enabling environment for effective participation of corps members in the programme. There seems to be a lot of discouraging factors that can inhibit interest in the programme; and this has really affected the level of participation especially from the post camp training level and beyond. Interestingly, the NYSC itself has always lamented that non availability of equipped skill centres and even lecture halls in most of the orientation camps has drastically affected the effectiveness of the programme.

The fact that the SAED In-camp training affords vast number of corps members the opportunity to participate coupled with current unemployment rate in the country, one is left with not much option or choice than to think of self-reliance. It therefore implies that the sensitization in the camp is effective to the extent of arousing a change in perception from quest for white collar job to vocational skill acquisition and self-employment. However, whether this new value perception has actually enabled actual skill acquisition and entrepreneurship endeavour is another issue of concern.

Based on the forgoing, it is expedient to evaluate the operation of the programme and how far it is addressing youth entrepreneurship development, skill acquisition and job creation with the aim of reducing unemployment in Nigeria. It is noteworthy to point out that increase in self-employment and reduction of youth unemployment is the foremost reason for the introduction of the programme. Furthermore, the presentation of number of recorded business establishment by participants of the SAED programme in Abuja indicated that a total of 357 businesses were established from 2017 to 2020. Majority of the business endeavours are in agro allied, cosmetology, culture and tourism and ICT. Within this period a total of 25,352 participated in In-camp training, while 1053 completed the post camp training. Although the number of business establishment represents about 35% of those that completed post camp training, when it is compared to the number that participated in In-camp training (25,352) or the number of corps members actually registered (29,010), it is only representing a meagre fraction. In essence, it does not really portray a significant impact on unemployment. It therefore becomes necessary to evaluate the factors that could have led to decline in participation or more importantly the inhibitions against establishment of business enterprise by even those that completed the post camp training. A key element in this regard is funding. The NYSC management has categorically stated that it lacks the requisite fund to run the programme talk less of providing credit for participants. As a way out they entered into partnership with some stakeholders through memoranda of understanding. Notable among them are Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Bank of Industry (BOI), Bank of Agriculture (BOA), Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), NYSC Foundation, Hope Alive Foundation etc. These agencies are to

provide fund/credit facilities for intending entrepreneurs who have participated in the SAED programme.

Related to this is the issue of adequate monitoring, supervision and coordination of the SAED programme by the NYSC. For a programme of this nature and magnitude to succeed, there is a need for constant monitoring and coordination of the various segments to ensure effective linkup of the stages and smooth transition from one level to another. Relevant to this is also the issue of record keeping. If there is inadequate monitoring and coordination, there is a likelihood that efficiency in record keeping will be lacking. This will undoubtedly affect review and evaluation of the programme, and in essence affect future incremental decisions on the way forward.

5. Summary and Conclusion

Findings from this study reveals that SAED programme of NYSC is gradually reducing the level of unemployment in FCT through its in-camp and post-camp training activities. From more than 3% reduction of graduate unemployment in 2017 to almost 7% in 2020. One of the cardinal objectives of the SAED programme is to create a change in value perception in the corps members from the quest for white collar jobs towards vocational skill acquisition and self-employment. For this to occur, participants need to be convinced from the onset that the programme is real and workable. This requires enhanced and sustainable motivation. Against this backdrop the research examined graduates' unemployment reduction in Nigeria, using the NYSC's Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) Programme as a case in point. The study reveals that the scheme has created jobs for 35% of corps members who completed post-camp training between 2017 and 2020 in Abuja. However, there seems to be a very sharp decline in participation between the in-camp and post camp segments of the programme as very few participates in the post-camp exercise (where the real or main skill acquisition training is expected to take place). The reduction in number in the post-camp training is occasioned by some evidenced challenges ranging from unconducive training/seminar venues, attitude of trainers, inadequate time etc. and leads to loss of interest in the programme. This is coupled with the fact that the post camp training attracts payment, and the NYSC is not actually involved in the negotiation of the terms of engagement of the corps members with the trainers in the post-camp training. More still, training centres does not exist in all the areas especially in the remote ones.

6. Recommendations

In line with the foregoing, the study recommends that:

- 1) for effective and efficient skill acquisition and participation of corps members both in the in-camp and post-camp training exercise, motivations such as adequate sensitization, availability of conducive training environment, quality lectures/trainings, availability of skill acquisition center should be provided

- 2) smooth accessibility to credit facilities etc. should be made available; and
- 3) adequate monitoring and coordination are needed for effective and efficient skill acquisition by corps members.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interests.

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