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The Imperatives of NDE Programs for poverty reduction and youth employment in Nigeria.

Umar Farouk Musa¹ Mohamad Ainuddin Iskandar Lee Bin Abdullah² Ratnaria Wahid³
School of international Studies, College of Law, Government and International Studies, Universiti Utara Malaysia.

Abstract: The constitutional roles of National Directorate of Employment NDE on job creation and implications for poverty reduction have accelerated economic development via its laudable initiatives of establishing 174 skills acquisition centers in the thirty six states of Nigeria and the Federal capital Territory, Abuja. Concurrently, four model centers were equipped with boarding facilities and accommodated trainees. A total of 1721 participants of the Rural Agricultural Development Scheme were trained in different apprentice programs in 2014 alone despite its political and organizational challenges. This study uses qualitative research design, non-probability sampling, and semi structured interview via fifteen informants; we analyzed the data with Nvivo software. Our cardinal objectives were to explore the employment generation strategies and poverty reduction initiatives of this Directorate. Findings from our study reveal that the four basic packages of Small Scale Enterprises, Vocational Skills Development, Rural promotion scheme and Special Public Works were the prominent capacity building programs undertaken by this institution since its establishment in last 30 years. Our study passionately, recommended for the Provision of social amenities such constant electricity supply, funding and establishment of modern equipments, diversification of the economy, Good Governance and proper management of the endowed resources and establishment agro-entrepreneurship/ agribusiness projects respectively.

Keywords: NDE, youth employment, poverty reduction, initiatives

Corresponding author: faroukmusa2013@gmail.com (+60143048843)

1.1 Introduction

The 1980s economic recession mandated the federal government of Nigeria to address the unemployment saga by establishing the National Directorate of Employment, primarily with to combat mass unemployment in the country. Similarly, due to the population increase and desire by the government for expansion of educational institutions cum the need for poverty reduction and employment generation; different strategies were executed. Typically among the various programs and schemes include NDE; National Directorate of Employment; NAPEP; National Poverty Eradication Program (Idris, 2016). Small and Medium Scale Development Agency of Nigeria, SMEDAN; National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies NEEDS and among other laudable initiatives (Okafor, 2016). However, the establishment of NDE, in the 1986 pave a way for hopes and aspirations as an average total of 108,000 unemployed people joined the scheme yearly, meaning that jobs would have been created for over 3 million people since its inception the last 30 years. NDE provides capacity building and skills development to some entrepreneurs, apprentice across the 36 states of the country. Despite these initiatives and policies unemployment and poverty are apprently in the country. Therefore, this study explored the activities of NDE in relation to job creation and poverty reduction. The paper is structured into introduction, literature review, research objectives, research questions, research methodology, data collection and analysis; discussions, policy recommendation and references.

2.1 Literature review

2.2 The concept of poverty

Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon which varies according to time, situation, causes and manifestation, these scenarios makes it difficult for an acceptable definition to emerge (Sam, 2014). However, the World Bank 2011, defines poverty as distinct deprivation in the general living condition of people with multiple dimensions, such as the inability to accessed human basic needs, inadequate income to have a standard way of living (Eseyin, Toluyemi, & Oni, 2016). Scholars have written much on poverty as it affects people in different locations world over, to these end, attempts were made in distinguishing poverty into two basic categorised, absolute and relative poverty (Eze & Nwali, 2012; Sam, 2014). Absolute or Extreme poverty refers to the inability of an individual or individuals to meet up with basic needs for a living and personal protection. These basic needs include food, clothing, clean water, shelter, qualitative education, health facilities, credit facilities and transportation due to inadequate employment opportunities or jobs (Ijaiya, 2015). Relative poverty on the other hand, means the incapability of the people to meet of with perculiar economic and social expectations, relativity is measured on the acceptable standard of living which differs from one country to another (Alkire & Santos, 2011; Dauda, 2016). Generally, poverty is identified in four phases; these include inadequate access to basic needs; inequality of income; consumption habits between the rich and poor while the vulnerability of falling into poverty line. Literature indicated some factors responsible for the causes of poverty which include; low

level of entrepreneurship development, corruption, inadequate technological development and marketing opportunities, over dependence on primary goods for exports, insufficient medical facilities, mono-cultural economy, poor developmental policies and underutilization of natural and human resources (Alabar, Sev, Shima, & Lim, 2016). Other factors such as Parochial approach to public and private sector management by the leaders of many African countries (Nkurunziza, 2014). Low rural-urban development programs and skilled manpower and insufficient of mortgage scheme. Poverty is a complex phenomenon and can be seen from various perspectives (Sola, 2006).

2.3 The concept of unemployment

Unemployment means the people available, willing and capable of being engaged into productive jobs but unable to find a suitable employment opportunity. The International Labor Organization defined unemployment as the total numbers of economically vibrant population who available without job but seeking for; these include people who lost their jobs and others who willingly quit jobs (John O.A, 2012).

Studies have categorized the population of countries into the economically active and economically inactive or dormant. Thus, economically active aspect of the population or labor force include those who are willing, able and vigorously undertaken in the process of the production of goods and services. Secondly, economically inactive aspect of the population refers to people that are either not working nor searching for jobs opportunities.

3.3 The Connection between youth Employment and Poverty Reduction

Literature has indicated a strong empirical proof on the connectivity between these two concepts, as noted by Holmes (2013), job opportunities generally created an increased in the income which directly reduces the poverty level in a country both at micro and macro. Employment serves as a key mechanism for economic prosperity. Again Idoko (2013), attested that the link between human capital and country's level of development is determined to achieve sustainable development via employment generation to the youth in order to promote their psych and moral stability. Youth employment leads to the sagacious utilization of human resources which in turn accelerates the availability of goods and services. The aforementioned development augments the economy through trade, improved tax system and general improvement in the living standard of the people. Similarly, employment generation for youth strengthens the process of income reallocation in the economy. More so, an improvement in the public expenditure on youth employment scheme will promote national income, tax collection and economic growth while directly alleviating poverty (Mercy . A & Christie, 2014).

Nwachukwu, 2016 studied the role of vocational and Technical education as a panacea to unemployment in Nigeria and discovered that, neglect of agriculture, inadequate finance to set of businesses, unstable government policies, underdevelopment of Small and Medium scale industries were some of the factors which attributed to the high rate of youth unemployment in the country. The paper recommended to the

government to establish a Micro credit scheme devoid of collateral authentication.

3.1 Research Questions

What are the best ways to secure jobs for the unemployed youth?

What are the strategies used by the NDE to reduce poverty?

4.1 Research Objectives

To explore the youth employment policy applied by NDE.

To examine the strategies used by NDE to reduce poverty.

5.1 Methodology

This paper utilized qualitative research paradigm; non-probability sampling technique and semi-structured interviews. The data were collected from fifteen informants, Purposively selected from The NDE office, Ministries, Agencies and Commissions in Bauchi state, Federal Republic of Nigeria. The population of our study consist of the policy makers, stakeholders and beneficiaries of the Bauchi state youth employment and poverty alleviation programs. A thematic data analysis was employed in the study using Nvivo 10 software.

5.2 Data collection and Analysis

Despite the challenges of NDE in providing employment, capacity building for youth and subsequently reduces poverty; the fifteen informants categorically gave in-depth views on the strategies used by the directorate to provide employment and subsequently reduce poverty.

Meaning of NDE

The informants define government initiative, base on their perception according informant 12, thus:

Initiatives are policies guidelines and programmes that address multifarious economic, social challenges, educational and communal issues. It is on this background that the federal government of Nigeria established NDE in 1986 to provide alternative jobs and capacity building to young school graduates, the poor and other unemployed Nigerians. NDE has offices in all the states.

Government initiatives are policies designed to regulate, distribute and allocate resources to the desired sector of the economy. NDE is a federal government initiative inaugurated in 1986 to tackle the high rate of unemployment among Nigerians immediately after the implementation of structural adjustment programme.

Equally, on NDE informant 4 also attested that:

NDE stand for National Directorate of employment which was established in 1986 by the military regime to cushion the effects of the structural adjustment programme. NDE has the following units in a rural employment programme, vocational skills, small scale enterprises and special public works.

5.3.1 Challenges of NDE

The challenges confronting NDE were classified into political and organizational challenges. Literature also, attested that the National Directorate of Employment is facing difficulty of inadequate equipment, coverage in rural areas and funding (Amire & Chidi, 2015).

5.3.1.1 Political challenges

Political challenges cover the inability of the government to adequately provide the required resources such as capital finance, proper implementation of programs related to youth empowerment. Subsequently, informant 3 postulated that:

The National Directorate of Employment is confronted with financial constraint, poor management and implementation of programs by the government, specifically on the aspect of youth unemployment. These make it very difficult for the people to access the training scheme of the directorate.

The informant maintains that poor funding, inadequate implementation of the skills acquisition programs and high rate of unemployment are some of the major predicaments affecting NDE in Nigeria. Similarly, the directorate faces shortage of funds, inadequate industries to placed the trained youth, poor communication facilities, inadequate machines for the beneficiaries (informant 1).

Parable, the major political challenges which deter the activities of the directorate according the articulations

of all the informants were financial constraints, inadequate implementation of the programs, political interference, poor data based and insufficient materials to train the unemployed youth. These predicaments, may have repercussions

5.3.1.2 Organizational challenges

Organizational challenges are the administrative difficulties the Directorate faced in the process of carrying out its activities. The informants also articulated their views as follows: "The challenges include personal interest or dubious act by the personnel and those in the authority. Others are poor motivation to the trainees and trainers. Lack of adequate supervision, misappropriation of equipments provided by the government." (Informant 5). The challenges identified according to informant 5, include deviant behavior, poor motivation and poor supervision. Literature justified that deviance in places of work, causes set back to an organization in terms of portraying personal interest and compromise (Vardi, 2001). Base on these, informant 7 postulated that: "The inability to have a data base of all youth and unemployed people in Bauchi state and Nigeria on the basis of qualification, sex, inadequate skilled manpower and inadequate finance to carry out its activities are some of the challenges bedevilling the Directorate" (informant 10).

The interpretations of the informants based on the political and organizational difficulties facing the directorate focused on inadequate funding, corruption, poor implementation of programs, inadequate supervision and lack of data based of the unemployed people in the country. Certainly, if these barriers are

properly attended to NDE will serve a remedy and alleviate some of the socioeconomic difficulties in the country.

In another opinion informant 11, observed that:

The provisions of capital, establishment of industrial centres and SMES will minimize the pressure of many people trying to access the services of NDE. Moreover, the directorate should launch offices in all local governments in the country, to me this will ensure wide coverage of its services.

It should be noted that the National Directorate of Employment offices covers only the thirty six states, excluding the seven hundred and seventy four local governments, therefore, if the services are extended to the LGAs, most of the rural areas will have access to skills acquisition centres in their doorstep. This will further improve small scale business in the remote areas.

6.1 The Domineering roles of NDE for youth employment and poverty Reduction

According the 2014, report; the law mandating the establishment of the Directorate was design to: I. Combat high rate of employment in the country; II. To articulate policies with the aimed at designing programs via labor intensive potentials; III. To establish and maintain a data based on employment and vacancies with the view to serve as clearance house for applicants in collaboration with other public organizations; and IV. To implement other policies as may be

applied from time to time by the Board of the Directorate. To these extend the main functions of the NDE is to reduce mass unemployment by way of skills acquisition; self-employment and intensive labor scheme.

The Directorate basically operates Four main skills Development Programs and these include Vocational Skills Development, Rural Promotion Scheme, Small Scale Entreprises and Special Public Works respectively.

Vocational Skills Development as noted by informant 1; this program provides technical and vocational training for tertiary institutions graduates, secondary school, and some primary school leavers in various crafts and careers; such as computer maintenance and repairs, tailoring, carpentry, welding, automanic, hand set repairing, catering and fashion design.

The Directorate provides capacity building and refresher courses for rural farmers via the Rural Employment Promotion Program covers: Rural Agricultural Development Training Scheme; Rural Handicraft Scheme; Integrated Farming Training Scheme and NDE Agricultural Park Project, which focuses on poultry production, fish farming, cattle rearing, crops production and seedlings nursery packages respectively.(Informant 2).

Informant 3 responded that, the Special Public Works operates through the following projects: Graduate Attachment Program and Environmental Beautification Training Scheme among other projects which trains the youth and other unemployed on Road

maintenance, interlocking, Gardening, Bricklayering , mason and other roofing works respectively.

Small Scale Enterprises, this project covers business training; loans disbursement scheme; Training for Women to generate income; Common Facilities Centers and collaborates with government agencies, multinational corporations and other individuals and communities. The program empower the poor through various entrepreneurship and other crafts especially; softloans are given to those with practically and concret business plans/ proposals such as soap making, cosmetics production and air freshners among others.

6.1 Discussions

The results of our study, reveals that there are four main scheme/strategies used by the Directorate to secure employment opportunities to the graduates, secondary and primary school leavers. For instance, the Vocational Skills Development scheme via the Basic and Advanced National Open Apprenticeship has offered capacity building for over 5828 people across the thirty six states. Furthermore, The Small Scale Enterprises project, which specifically empowered 50 graduates with the sum of two hundred and fifty thousand naira each across twenty four states and the Federal Capital Territory Abuja with two beneficiaries from each state. Special Public Works Program, through the Graduate Attachment Program; Graduate Coaching Scheme; Environmental Beautification Training Scheme: seven hundred and eighty-five people benefitted. The Solar Energy

Training Scheme influences the lives of one thousand youth either via self-employed or wage employment packages. Another set of seven hundred youth benefitted in thirty-four states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja respectively. We have discovered that the Rural Employment Promotion unit, which directly stimulates job opportunities for one thousand seven hundred and twenty one which cut across all categories of unemployed people ranging from Retirees, underemployed and other people with special needs benefitted in 2014, alone. Based on the aforementioned findings, NDE has provided empowerment program, capacity building and contributed in the poverty reduction initiatives of the federal Government of Nigeria.

7.1 Policy Recommendation and Conclusion.

Despite, the laudable achievements of NDE in employment generation and poverty reduction, this study passionately, recommended that policy makers should as matter of urgency address the following areas so as to enable the Directorate function effectively.

Provision of social amenities: Basic facilities such as road network linking rural areas across the federation, modern training facilities, constant electricity supply and well equipped training centers. These will go a long way to influence the lives of the masses and reduces the hardship encountered by unemployed and other the rural dwellers.

Funding and provision of modern equipments: We recommended for increased capital resources so that the Directorate will finance capital projects such as establishment of permanent

training centers, disburse cash to the trained manpower and ensure the availability of soft loans.

Diversification of the economy: Government should expand the economy and exploit other non-oil revenue so that more job opportunities will be created. The country has abundance solid minerals, solar energy potentials and tourism attractions such as Yankari Resort and Safari in Bauchi state etc.

Good Governance and Proper management of human, capital and mineral resources, honesty, accountability, discipline and public trust are some of the vital attributes required in most public institutions/organizations in Nigeria for service delivery and results oriented aftermath.

Establishment of Agro-entrepreneurship and Agribusiness Projects: Our study further recommended that based on the agricultural potentiality of the country, farm centers, pre-vocational and cooperative agricultural programs should given priority. Agribusiness programs shall equally accelerate the processing, marketing of these products for export (Tersoo, 2014). The government should encourage agro-allied industries and small scale business in order to increase job opportunities in Nigeria.

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