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Government Policy Intervention Programmes in Ogun State: Youth Acceptability and Challenges

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Keywords: *government intervention programme, youth, acceptability, challenges.*

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Government Policy Intervention Programmes in Ogun State: Youth Acceptability and Challenges

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Abstract Every government acknowledged to be proficient is always observed to be responsive to the needs of her citizenry particularly the teeming population of her youth through series of intervention programmes. This study examined the available government intervention programme, its youths' acceptability of such programmes and some challenges encountered in the process. The study adopted the qualitative design using narrative approach with a population of 4,500 Voluntary Teachers Corps Scheme (VTCS) and 12 Desk Officers in the Teaching Service Commission of Ogun State. A sample of 60 VTCS and two (2) Desk Officers constituted the Focus Discussion Group. The selection process involved the multi stage, stratified, purposive, convenient and simple random sampling techniques. The data collected were analyzed using content analysis. The results showed that government intervention programmes were in different areas such as sports, education, job creation, rural school study, agriculture and agro allied matters, works and services to mention a few. These intervention programmes were well accepted by the youths due to the potential prospects there in, and the availability of the youth who showed interest but could not be satisfied posed a serious challenge. It was however concluded that since its impact remained positive, the intervention programme should be embraced more and sustained for better and improved youthful living.

Keywords: government intervention programme, youth, acceptability, challenges.

I. INTRODUCTION

The empowerment of youths has being a challenge to development of the nation particularly in Ogun State. Large numbers of youths from both urban and rural areas are seen roaming the streets in search of jobs and a few are involved in social vices that threaten the peace of the state. The educated ones among the populace are thrown into the labour market seeking jobs that are either nonexistent or difficult to come by. Consequent upon this, the Ogun State Government has put in place policy programmes to quell the effect of youth redundancy. The essence of government policy intervention programmes to empower the Nigerian youths is to help reduce unemployment and enhance their self-sustenance in addressing poverty and other deprivations. Thus, empowerment will go a long way in creating employment and self-reliance among youths, it

will also curb crime rate and insecurity related to lack of employment in Nigeria. In line with the provision for employment opportunities and improved living conditions, the state government of Ogun state, designed some specific schemes and strategies aimed at developing the skills and talents of youths in the state. Among the programmes identified in the study area are Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP), State/Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS/LEEDS); Fadama II, III; and the present International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD), Assisted Value Chain Development Programme (VCDP) aimed at ensuring food security, generating more employment opportunities and providing raw materials for industries. Therefore, this paper seek to investigate youth acceptability and the challenges faced in implementing government policy intervention programmes in Ogun State, Nigeria.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Various governments at all levels in Nigeria are working seriously to ensure that youth unemployment is brought to bearable level. To achieve this, governments have brought about various policies for solving the unemployment problems and also helping the unemployed in Nigeria. The 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in section 16 (2), stated that employment benefits should be provided for all citizens. The 1989 constitution reiterated the same provision in section 17 (2)d. While Section (3)a of the 1999 constitution emphasised same provision. Based on the aforementioned provisions in the constitution, there is an indication of government's intentions to see that the unemployed citizens are being taken care of. However, the question is how realistic are these statements? Are they merely policy statements or documents which are never implemented? Akukwe (1992), opined that the Federal Government is saddled with responsibility providing welfare to all the segments of her citizens. This could be achieved by promulgating laws, good policy guidelines, sufficient funds, and direct services. In April 1986, General Babangida constituted a Committee on Strategy for Dealing with mass unemployment in Nigeria (COSDUM). The committee was charged with working on the following:

- Encouragement of self-employment by ensuring that higher institutions produced graduates with relevant skills;

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- Discouraging geographical obstacles to employment through working out a system which enables Nigerians to work in any state irrespective of their state of origin;
- Encouragement of technologies that are more labour-based and at the same time efficient;
- Revitalizing the employment exchange with a view to making their use legislatively obligatory; and
- Greater screening of expatriate employees to facilitate a zero-based expiation quota budget. These were meant to be achieved through the cooperation of government relevant bodies and companies employing expatriates (Nwokoye, 1986).

The worthiness of the programme was believed to be towards a long-term approach to the constraints of lack of employment in the country. Based on the outcome of the committee in 1987, the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was launched. The NDE has four major programmes.

- National Youth Employment and Vocational Skill Development Programme;
- Special Public Works Programme
- Small-Scale Industries Development
- Agricultural Sector Programme (Ola, 1988).

With the establishment of the NDE, the Babangida Administration seemed to have addressed the problems of youth unemployment for the first time in Nigeria. Also, the Babangida administration embarked on the campaign enjoining the unemployed to work towards self-employment or go back to their farms. There are obvious difficulties which the government may not have considered before the said programme. Some of these include the fact of non-availability of free land. Most of the individuals coming out of school cannot get enough land for mechanized farming that can provide food production. Furthermore, after the Babangida administration, succeeding governments in their various strategies focused on poverty and unemployment. In early 1999, NAPEP was conceived and launched. NEEDS was later launched by Obasanjo's government, where wealth creation and employment generation were pursued with vigour. The administration of Yar'adua, in its seven-point agenda also had the programme of addressing unemployment in Nigeria. In relation with the function of human capital and the recognition of youth self-sufficiency as an instrument to attain economic development, the government in the past introduced several empowerment programmes for the youth which are listed below:

- National Directorate of Employment (NDE). This agency of government was introduced and saddled with the responsibility of providing employment for the youth or the retired persons in Nigeria. It is expected that NDE trained those selected in their

chosen vocations but much have not been seen to that effect.

- Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN). This agency of government was introduced by SMEDAN act of 2003 to stimulate the growth of MSME segment of the national economy. SMEDAN is saddled with the role of ensuring effective micro, small and medium enterprises segment that will promote economic development and ensure self-sufficiency of persons in the country.
- Youth Empowerment Programme. The National Information Technology (IT) this programme is to empower Nigerian youth on the technology skills they required in order to compete global.
- Youth Empowerment Network. This programme was introduced by the Federal and State government in Nigeria under the Millennium Declaration to provide an enabling environment for the youth to secure employment anywhere in the country.
- National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP). This programme was established by the Federal government in Nigeria to provide employment for the youth in order to reduce poverty.
- Amnesty Programme of the Federal Government introduced by the then government of Late Umar Yar'adua and continued by his successor Goodluck Jonathan, with the objective of incorporating the Militant of the Niger Delta into the economic sector of the country. This has also produced result. Also, the introduction of free education for the Alimajiri and street children in Northern part of the country is geared towards empowerment (FGN, 1999; 2004).

In addition, the Federal Government of Nigeria in recent times introduced Youth and Women Employment (PW/WYE) section of the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) established the Graduate Internship Programme. This Graduate Internship Programme (GIP) is geared towards providing graduate youths in Nigeria an avenue to be engaged in governmental and non-governmental organisations segment to promote human resource management. The programme is expected to recruit 50,000 youth nationwide in order to utilize their skills in providing employment for them on a short term basis. The GIP is to provide a placement for the youth for a period of one year to undergo training either in public or private sector where their skills will be improved on. Equally, SURE-P programme is designed to accommodate the unskilled and under-employed peasant women and youth in the society by providing avenue for them in Public Works Programme and training in organisations. This programme is expected to recruit 50,000 skilled employment and 320,000 unskilled employment openings for youths and women in governmental and non-governmental organisations. This

effort of the Federal government is to be achieved in collaboration with the other levels of government in Nigeria and the private sector (FGN, 2012).

Empirically, a study carried out by Ezekiel and Edwin (2016), established that there has not been any form of continuity in succeeding administration intervention programme in ensuring the growth of SMEs in the country. Several programmes have been introduced with huge financial commitment and strategy plans design to achieve its stated objectives however, the succeeding administration often cancels them and a new one put in place. It is also discovered that the curriculums in our institutions of learning do not design programmes to inculcate self-sufficiency. Therefore, considerable number of youths are graduating from school without employment, financial strength and required skills to start their own businesses.

The national environment in terms of political will as well as the economy have not helped to promote desirable growth of SMEs. An absence of adequate structures in the nation has been the constraints of business activities. Epileptic power supply, or total outage of light, lack of good road network and unavailability of water supply have been the bedrock of constraints affecting the growth of SMEs in the nation. Religion and ethnic crises in the country have not aided the development of SMEs. This is so clear in the North-Eastern part of the nation where a lot of youths have relocated to the Southern part of the nation due to Boko Haram insurgency. Inability to secure loan has also hindered so many graduates with potential vocational skills to thrive. Access to loan from governmental agencies has been nepotised, therefore those that need financial start-up for their business activities could not secure it.

It is evident from the work of Emanuel and Muhammed (2009) that Nigeria has experienced several programmes and policies geared towards reducing the poverty rate of the nation from past administrations. However, despite the intervention programmes introduced by the government, the poverty rate of the country has not reduced. Economic summit group in Nigeria while evaluating the government of the then president Olusegun Obasanjo revealed that his administration has not reduced the poverty rate of the country. It is against this depressing effort of the government in their action to combat poverty in the country that Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) intervene to complement government's effort. Based on the findings of this research work, it is revealed that the non-governmental organizations can contribute their quota in reducing the poverty rate of the country. Based on these efforts by the governments, it becomes imperative to assess the performance of the intervention programmes vis-à-vis its acceptability and challenges. However, individual young people, youth groups and

communities seem not to experience this intervention programmes the same way due to differences such as race, political class and affiliation, gender, culture and physical health status. It is against this backdrop that this study examined the instrumentality of government policy intervention programmes of Ogun State, its acceptability and challenges.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Responsiveness of government towards issues that bother on socio-economic empowerment of the citizens particularly the youth in terms of drastic reduction in unemployment and social vices is a key determinant of good governance. Youth empowerment is a means of encouraging youths to do great things for themselves and also to make great impact on their society by creating enabling environment, which will help young people to make important and vital decisions of life by themselves. In an attempt to empower the youths, most governments have embarked on policy intervention programmes that support youth empowerment and self-reliance. This has resulted to establishment of Small and Medium Enterprises in many ways. Based on the foregoing, the Nigerian government and Ogun state government in particular, over the years, have not been insensitive to the problem. The governments have launched a number of intervention programmes towards youth empowerment. The goal of these intervention programmes is to solve the issue of unemployment among the Nigerian youth. However, the establishment and implementation of these intervention programmes by the government seems to have generated lots of diversities. For some, the number of intervention programmes is effective in their own rights and the increasing level of unemployment could probably be attributed to population explosion and the number of school leavers that are turned out on yearly basis without corresponding job placement. Others think that the beneficiaries of the intervention programmes are one-dimensional in efficacy; they favour some categories of youth that run along gender and educational lines. Yet others are of the view that the various government intervention programmes have failed in their objectives of solving the constraints of lack of employment among youth in the country. Therefore, an attempt to assess the available government policy intervention programmes, determine the distribution of the intervention programmes and ascertain the extent to which these have been embraced by the youth and other challenges associated with it becomes imperative.

a) *Research Questions*

1. What are the available government policy intervention programmes in Ogun State?
2. What is youths' acceptability of the government policy intervention programmes?

3. What challenges are being encountered in the course of running the policy intervention programmes?

IV. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the qualitative research design using narrative approach. The design gives room for collecting qualitative data, analyse and interpret the overall results to determine their relatedness. Sequel to this, the researchers were able to have an in-depth assessment and analysis of government intervention programmes for the purpose of describing and interpreting the existing conditions. The population of the study consisted of male and female youths beneficiaries within the age range of 18 to 35 years in Ogun State. The choice of the youth's age bracket was

informed by the classification of the National Population Commission in 2013. The research was conducted in two Local Government Areas each selected from the three senatorial districts of Ogun state, namely: Abeokuta South and Abeokuta North in the Ogun Central Senatorial district; Ijebu Ode and Ijebu East in the Ogun East Senatorial district; Egbado North and Egbado South in the Ogun West Senatorial district. The multistage sampling procedure and simple random sampling technique were adopted. The sample frame was drawn at 0.05 significance level using Sample Size Calculator, a scientific software developed for determining the actual sample for a study and to reflect the population as precisely as needed. The distribution of the selected Local Government Areas and their Senatorial Districts is presented in Table 1.

Table1: Distribution of Local Government Areas by Senatorial Districts

Senatorial District	Local Government Areas	Decision and Reason
Ogun East	Ijebu-Ode Shagamu Remo North Ikenne Odoogbolu Ijebu East Ijebu North-East Ijebu Waterside	Selected-Proximity& Convenience Selected-Proximity& Convenience Not Selected Not Selected Not Selected Not Selected Not Selected Not Selected
Ogun West	Yewa North Yewa South ImekoAfon Ado-Odo Ota Ipokia	Selected-Proximity& Convenience Not Selected Not Selected Selected-Proximity& Convenience Not Selected
Ogun Central	Abeokuta North Abeokuta South Ewekoro Ifo-Ota Odeeda Obafemi-Owode Oke-Ogun	Not Selected Selected-Proximity& Convenience Not Selected Not Selected Not Selected Selected-Proximity& Convenience Not Selected

Source: Ogun Website, 2018

A self-designed instrument titled: Government Intervention Programme and Challenges Assessment (GIPCA) for Focus Group Discussion was designed to generate responses on questions relating to government intervention programme. To ascertain the credibility (reliability) of the instrument, it was subjected to member check, a measure of qualitative instrument with which credibility is determined. The instrument was administered on the targeted respondents (Focus Discussion Group). Data collected were analyzed using narrative approach.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

A content analysis of GIP-FGDG was done to aid the findings of this study. A focus group consisting of 60 participating youths from six Local Government Areas in Ogun State were involved in the discussion.

Two government officers were also engaged in the interview conducted. Each of the research questions was thrown open for discussion in the Focus Group and to interview the Desk Officers. The findings are presented as follow:

What are the available government intervention programmes in Ogun State? To answer this question, participants' responses were analyzed using content analysis. The results and findings are presented as follow:

The intervention programmes were in the areas of sport of different kinds, education development and job creation via voluntary teachers' corps scheme for Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) degree holders, rural school-study for the Graduates, agriculture and agro allied matters, painting and decorations, clothing and textiles, adire and batik

making, works and services via Ogun Road Maintenance Agency (OGROMA). Others include construction services (building of low cost housing scheme and the likes)'.

From the interaction with the Ogun State youths who were beneficiaries of the VTCS in the selected Local Government areas, it was gathered that there were a lot of government intervention programmes.

What is the level of youth acceptability of the government intervention programme? To answer this, participants' responses were analyzed via content analysis. The results are presented as follow:

In this programme, we youths were exposed to a programme tagged VTCS with the intent of practicing our profession. To us, this is one of the wonderful intervention programmes that we cannot forget so soon. This programme was all about giving opportunity to us as youths to engage in voluntary teaching scheme with payment of stipend to keep our body and soul together and to enable us meet the basic needs. The other interesting aspect of this programme was that Ogun State government injected us into the Teaching Service Commission at exact after the one-year voluntary service.

It was established from the Focus Group Discussion with the Ogun State youths together with researcher personal observation that, larger percentages of the youths were well disposed to the government intervention programme because of their inherent empowerment prospects. Of major interest to the researcher was the aspect of voluntary teachers' corps scheme employed by Ogun State as an intervention programme to empower the youths. They said further:

Ogun State government had gone a long way to reduce unemployment among us and we the youths will forever remain grateful for this in Ogun State. Considering the large number of those of us given the job, 4,500 out of 6,000 that applied, it was indeed a welcome gesture. We would be readily available to accept more of this anytime such is introduced to us.

What are the challenges faced by the government in executing the intervention programme? To answer this, participants' responses were analyzed via content analysis. The results are presented as follow:

One of the challenges was that the youths who came out for the programme were much more than the vacancies available. At the initial stage, government of Ogun offered 4,500 out of the 6,000 that applied. To accommodate more of the youth, the Ogun State government further created the Rural School-Study scheme again which absorbed 1,000 into the schools system. However, when we look at the other intervention programmes having to do with skills acquisition, it became a herculean task

seeing all of them through. The materials and the resources available could not go round, to the extent that the resources and materials available for the programme were overstretched.

The youths further in their discussion said:

We only pray for these programmes not to be terminated hence, we would begin to experience discomfort about the tendency of discontinuity of the programme. Moreover, post training equipment available was far lesser than the number of the youth that came for the programme. If adequate measure was not taken by the government in Ogun State, the programme would amount to white elephant project that would yield little or no result.

To us the officials our greatest challenge was in the use of politics. Many times, the political party leaders will come with long lists of names that may not even physically exist just to create ghost worker syndrome. Some of our colleagues were even threatened of losing their jobs. Another challenge was the fact that some gainfully employed youths still showed up pretending not to have a job anywhere. Most annoying thing was the use of fake identities (names, addresses, phone numbers, and the likes). Since we don't know them all, how do we identify them? This caused us to insist on presentation of reference letters from their Baales, Olorituns, Community Leaders and the Kabiyesis. Another embarrassing thing was the loss of confidence in us as officials-in-charge of the programme; even some of our colleagues thought we were trading those opportunities for personal gains.

From the interaction with Ogun State youths in the selected Local Government areas through Focus Group Discussion Guide, it was gathered that Ogun State faced enormous challenges while executing this intervention programme. Corroborating this were the officials interviewed who said:

To aid better discussion, efforts were made in this section to discuss the findings in line with the questions raised to guide the study. The discussion however was done drawing from literature, comments, observations, policy documents and arguments that either support or against the findings of this study. The discussion of findings is presented under related subheadings.

a) *Available Government Policy Intervention Programme in Ogun State*

This study found that there were series of government intervention programmes in Ogun State. Intervention in the area of sport of different kinds, contributions to education development and job creation via voluntary teachers' service scheme, agriculture, painting and decorations, clothing and textiles, works (Ogun Road Maintenance Agency), construction (building of low cost housing and the likes),

adire and batik making among others. This is in line with the Nigerian National Youth Policy, 2001 to effectively empower young people (between the ages of 18 to 35); by formulating National Policy on Youth Development. Here, emphases on Government Policy Intervention Programmes were equally made by Nigeria's constitution as:

- Various governments at all levels in Nigeria should work seriously to ensure that youth unemployment suffering is brought to bearable level. The 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in section 16 (2), stated that employment benefits should be provided for all citizens. The 1989 constitution reiterated the same provision in section 17 (2)d. Section (3)a of the 1999 constitution also has same provision. Based on the above statement, in these constitutions, there is an indication of government's intentions to see that the unemployed citizens are being taken care of. Akukwe (1992) also supports the findings that it is the responsibility of the federal, state and local governments to provide welfare to all the segments of her citizens. This is by providing wise laws, good policy guidelines, sufficient funds, and direct service.

b) *Level of Youth Acceptability of the Government Policy Intervention Programme*

It was gathered that a larger percentage of the youth were well disposed to the government intervention programme because of the inherent empowerment prospects. Of major interest to the researchers was the aspect of Voluntary Teachers' Corps Scheme employed by Ogun State as an intervention programme to empower the youth. In this programme the youths were exposed to a programme called VTCS, which gave them opportunities to engage in voluntary teaching with stipend to keep body and soul together. The most interesting aspect of this programme was that Ogun State government injected the youth engaged in the scheme as full staff after the one-year voluntary service. In the same vein, Ogun State youths further their discussion by appraising the intervention programme of Ogun State government that the programme had gone a long way to reduce unemployment among the youth in Ogun State.

However, the youths are faced with difficulties such as poverty, unemployment and funding needed to move the country forward are lagging. Resultantly, in Nigeria today millions of graduates are without employment, some have tried their efforts to secure employment for years but all proved abortive. This has led to increase in crime rate as the unemployed youth see these as alternative for survival in a complex society to engage in crime such as prostitution, pipeline vandalisation, armed robbery, oil bunkering and car snatching among the unemployed youths. This condition is militating against the development of an

individual in the country thus, there is need for self-sufficiency via youth and women vocational training and empowerment. Hence, women and youth empowerment is seen as vital instrument for self-reliance and means to eradicate poverty and social vices and for individual to live a fulfilling life in the country. Investment in youth and women in form of vocational training and empowerment will aid the growth and development of the nation in a long term. Therefore, ensuring that the youth are engaged in vocational training is imperative for nation growth and reduction of poverty.

c) *Challenges Faced by the Government in Executing the Intervention Programme*

It was gathered that Ogun State faced enormous challenges while executing this intervention programme. One of the challenges was that the youth that came out for the programme were much more than the vacancies, materials and the resources available to the extent that the resources and materials available for the programme were overstretched. The youth further in their discussion established their discomfort about the tendency of discontinuity of the programme. They concluded that if adequate measure was not taken by the government in Ogun State, the programme would amount to white elephant project that would yield little or no result. This is in line with Patrerson (2006) who said Youth programme has several functions. One youth programme constraints is to consolidate society's obligation with the desire to let the youth take responsibilities for themselves. Young people are reliant on the adults for their material success and also for their spiritual growth. Hence, it is imperative that youth isn't related to reliance and adulthood with independence. There is a common reliance between youngsters and grown-ups.

United Nations Group (UNG) 2003, also supported the fact that there is no known single meaning to the word youth policy, it is used in different way by different people. This implies that the condition of youth is very imperative in all sector of the national economy. The development of government policy on youth programme can be viewed as influence to this vectorisation, where the desire was to make a widespread perception based on the individual state of each young person and to enable collaboration among diverse divisions.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study concluded that the intervention programme in Ogun State affected the youth positively because it created jobs for them and gave ways for skills acquisition. Ogun State youths had a wide acceptance for the programme because they were well disposed to it. However, Ogun State government faced series of challenges while executing the programme because resources available for the programme could

not cater for the avalanche of youths that came out for the programme. Moreover, politicization of the programme appeared quite obvious fired by series of pranks by some youths.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper recommended that Ogun State government should sustain the intervention programmes so that the youths in Ogun State would continue to benefit from the programme. Ogun State should reorient the youths in the State to see good things in the government intervention programme. Also, Ogun State government should invest more resources in the programme so that it would be able to accommodate more of the youth in the state.

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