

Reverberations of National Directorate of Employment and Youth Empowerment in Anambra State Government System

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Abstract— This research work investigates the Reverberations of National Directorate of Employment and Youth Empowerment in Anambra State Government System: A Study of Onitsha South Local Government of Anambra state (2010 - 2015). The motivation for this study was to assess the impact of the activities of the national directorate of employment on youth empowerment. To this end, three specific objectives, research questions and hypotheses were raised to guide the study. Both extant and empirical literatures were reviewed. A system approach by David Easton was adopted as the theoretical framework. Cross sectional survey research design was used. The sample size of 399 was arrived at using Taro Yamani of [1964]. The generated data were analysed using descriptive statistics and hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient which was made possible through the use of the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Findings from the study reveal, among others, that the National directorate of employment programme on skill acquisition has an impact on youth empowerment in Onitsha South Local Government of Anambra State, Nigeria and that inadequate funding is a challenge to effective implementation of the National Directorate of Employment youth empowerment programme in Onitsha South local government. On the basis of the findings from the study, it was recommended, among others, that the scope of the skills acquisition programmes of the NDE should be expanded to include practical trainings, coaching, education, mentoring and hands on learning from the organized private sector and small scale entrepreneurs in the informal sector.

Index Terms— Acquisition Programmes, Empowerment Programme, NDEYE, PPMCC.

I. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country and the world's most populous black nation is blessed with an abundance of human and natural resources. However, the potentials of this great nation has not translated into visible realities as a result of several factors which are man-made. The consequences of our failure as a nation to fulfill our manifest destiny therefore, are many and can be evidenced in the prevalent cases of dilapidated infrastructure, poor service delivery, as well as in the high incidences of poverty and unemployment ravaging the length and breadth of the Nigerian society today

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(Oduwole, 2015)

Evidence abound of the devastating effects of unemployment in Nigeria. Every year thousands of young Nigerians graduate from various tertiary institutions of learning to join the almost hopeless and very competitive labour market. A cursory look at the Nigerian situation reveals that Nigerian streets are littered with youths engaged in informal economic activities like street hawking, commercial motorcycle riders and the likes, while others resort to one form of criminality or the other – the most common in recent times being internet fraud, popularly called yahoo yahoo. These are youths ordinarily would have found gainful employment in some enterprises; or who would have demonstrated their skills and resourcefulness if there are enabling environments and reliable management structures on ground.

Records from the National Population Commission (2014) indicate that youths under the age of 30 constitute over half of the approximately 180 million Nigerians. The National Bureau of Statistics (2017) also states that there were four million job losses in Nigeria between 2016 and 2017 and an accumulation of over seven million job losses from 2015 to date. According to Doreo (2013) unemployment rate in Nigeria is growing at the rate of 16 percent per year with the youth impacted the most and accounting for three times the general unemployment.

The International Labour Organisation (1982) opines that unemployment occurs when people are without jobs and they have sought work within the past five weeks. The unemployment rate is a measure of the prevalence of unemployment and it is calculated as a percentage by dividing the number of unemployed individuals by all individuals currently in the labour force. Unemployment in Nigeria is defined as the proportion of labour force that was available for work but did not work in the week preceding the survey period for at least 39 hours (Oduwole, 2015).

Unemployment in Nigeria, and most developing countries of the world, has been one of the most pressing social and economic problems facing the government of these countries. With the unemployment situation in Nigeria, hardly can one find a family in which nobody is unemployed, underemployed or threatened by unemployment and its socioeconomic effects. As the saying goes that an idle mind is the devil's workshop, unemployment can be said to be partly responsible for such social problems armed robbery, destitution, prostitution and other social vices. Indeed, today government all over the world are spending substantial

amount of resources to reduce unemployment by creating the needed enabling environment for the growth of the private sector and the informal sector because experience have shown that government alone cannot shoulder the responsibility of providing employment for all its citizens.

In the early decades after independence – especially before the period of the oil boom in Nigeria, government drive for job creation centered on agriculture in the believe that agriculture has the potential to engage a good number of people across various value chains from cultivation to harvesting, transportation, processing, branding and packaging, among others. The Agricultural Development Projects (ADPS) and Nigerian Agricultural and Co-operative Bank Limited (NACB) in 1973 aimed at promoting integrated rural development by providing facilities for intensive extension services of modern inputs and granting of small and medium term loans. Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) in 1976 aimed at restoring dignity to farming by encouraging individuals, schools, colleges and university to grow crops for food among other objectives and Green Revolution (GR) in 1980 aimed at boosting the agriculture and promoting rural development through such measures as the encouragement of agro-industries the construction of feeder roads and the provision of social amenities in the rural area.

Unfortunately, in 1985, the rate of unemployment rose to 8.5 percent which was considered high. Thus, as a result of the rising rate of unemployment and its possible consequences, the federal government of Nigerian set up a committee under the leadership Mrs. S.O Chukwuma in 1985 to design strategies to create mass employment opportunities. Based on the recommendation of the committee, the National Directorate of employment was established in November 1986, with the aim of curbing and reducing rate of unemployment in Nigeria.

Unemployment Rate in Nigeria averaged 10.63 percent from 2006 until 2017, reaching an all-time high of 19.70 percent in the fourth quarter of 2009 and a record low of 5.10 percent in the fourth quarter of 2010 (NBS, 2017). The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2017) added that the country's unemployment rate has risen from 13.3 per cent in the 2nd quarter to 13.9 per cent in the 3rd quarter of 2016. According to the report, the underemployment rate rose from 19.3 per cent in second quarter to 19.7 per cent in the third quarter in 2016. This means that there is an increasing number of those who are willing to work, able to work, and also qualified to work but cannot find jobs to do and earn a living.

A number of factors are responsible for the worrisome rate of unemployment in Nigeria, prominent among which are the lack of adequate policy and investment framework in the agricultural sector – and its value chains, the mining and industrial sector, as well as the manufacturing sector. These sectors have the potential to engage a sizeable proportion of the unemployed in productive economic activities and create additional pools of multiplier and side effects. Other factors, according to experts are the craze among the youths for nonexistent white collar jobs.

Government efforts at tackling unemployment have not yielded the desired results, an evidence of which is the

present worrisome state of unemployment in the Nigerian society, which has been described as a time bomb waiting to explode. The establishment of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) etc. are all testimonies to the fact that the issue of unemployment has continued to be at the front burner of our national discourse. The desire to avert this looming disaster necessitated our quest in this study to investigate National Directorial of Employment and youth empowerment in Onitsha south of Anambra state, Nigeria.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study is guided by the following questions

1. Does there exist a relationship between the NDE skill acquisition programme and youth empowerment in Onitsha South Local Government of Anambra State, Nigeria?
2. What is the nature of relationship that exists between the NDE Small Scale Industries programme and the establishment of Small Scale Industries in Onitsha South Local Government of Anambra State, Nigeria?
3. What are the challenges to effective implementation of the National Directorate of Employment programme of youth empowerment in Onitsha South local government?

III. CONCEPTUAL EXPLANATIONS

National Directorate of Employment

The National directorate of Employment is one of the Federal Government's effort towards encouraging the survival and development of small-scale business. The programme is especially changed with provision of skills and loans to enable young graduates establish their own business. The programme sparked off the highest number of small-scale business throughout the country. Under the programme, the small business owners enjoy low taxes, free technical advice and other support services provided by the federal government to enhance employment generation (Okenwa, 1999).

The Directorate, a scheduled organization with a well-established pension's scheme, was established by Act CAP 250 of the laws of the Federal Government of Nigeria. The Act was published in the Federal Government (Extra-ordinary) Gazette No. 61 of 20th October, 1989. The President in his 1987 budget speech had directed the new body to "concentrate its efforts on the re-activation of public works, promotion of direct labour, promotion of self-employment, organization of artisans into co-operatives, and encouragement of a culture of maintenance and repairs." To ensure effective implantation of the President's directive, a Board of Directors representing a cross section of all interest groups from industry, commerce, agriculture, finance, employers, labour and government was set-up to define policy and supervise operations.

According to Adebisi and Oni (2012), the philosophy of

the NDE itself, which emphasizes self-employment and self-reliance in preference to wage employment. This philosophy is pursued through policy planning and well-articulated programmes of Rural Employment Promotion (REP), Vocational Skills Development Programme (USD), Special Public Work Programme (SPWP) and The Small Scale Enterprises Programme (SSE). These programmes are set up across the nation in an effort to alleviate unemployment problems in the nation. The NDE does not leave the disabled work out of its programmes. The disabled work scheme is designed to enable the disabled acquire skills, produce marketable product that will keep them gainfully employed.

Actual training under the Small-Scale Industries and Graduate Employment Programme of the NDE started in May 1987 when the then Honourable Minister of Employment, Labour and Productivity invited all the Vice Chancellors and Rectors of the nation's universities and polytechnics to Lagos to discuss the institutionalization of EDP training in tertiary institutions. From that time on, NDE training has been recognized as prerequisite for participation in credit facilities extended by the government through selected banks. There have not been significant changes in terms of targeting, scope and coverage since the programme started in 1987. But one development has been a minor expansion of the target group in 1988 to include mature people and young school leavers.

The Objectives and Mandate of the NDE: The law establishing the National Directorate of Employment presents its mandate as follows: -

1. To design and implement programmes to combat mass unemployment
2. To articulate policies aimed at developing work programmes with labour intensive potential
3. To obtain and maintain a data bank on employment and vacancies in the country with a view to acting as a clearing house to link job seekers with vacancies in collaboration with other government agencies; and
4. To implement any other policies as may be laid down from time to time by the Board established under section 3 of its enabling act.

The NDE therefore derives its routine functions from this mandate. The main function is to combat mass unemployment through skills acquisition, self-employment and labour-intensive work scheme.

Programmes of NDE: This Board articulated four practical programmes nationwide, each operating as a separate department. These are:-

1. National Youth Employment and Vocational Skills Development Programme
2. Small Scale Industries and Graduate Employment Programme.
3. Agricultural Sector Employment Programme.
4. Special Public Works Programme.

These programmes are backed by the necessary administrative, monitoring and support personnel, thus enabling optimum use of resources and prompt response to the requirements of the public they serve. To effectively discharge its duties, the National Directorate of Employment

operates the following programs assigned to various departments in the organization.

Vocational Skills Development Programme Department: This programme emanated from the realization that the majority of the unemployed are youths who possess productive and marketable skills. Hence, the four main schemes of this programme are concerned with skills acquisition.

- **National Open Apprenticeship Scheme:** This is aimed at providing unemployed youths with basic skills that are needed in the economy. This is achieved by attaching them as apprentices to companies, ministries, parastatals and professional craftsmen and women. Some of them are given admission into vocational training institutions or centres to learn a trade. All participants in this scheme are required to register with the Federal Ministry of Employment, Labour and Productivity's local labour exchanges prior to being accepted as trainees. This formal registration enables accurate tracking of employment trends and labour statistics which is required for realistic national planning. Upon completion of their apprenticeships these participants will possess the necessary skills that are considered valuable by potential employers or enable those with entrepreneurial skills go into self-employment.

Approved training organizations and individual craftsmen are paid a fee for imparting their skills to the beneficiaries of this scheme. Each participant is paid a monthly stipend towards his or her maintenance whilst in training. Furthermore, under this programme, the various artisans in our cities and villages are being organized into Co-operative Societies to facilitate the provision of financial and other assistance from the Government and the organized private sector.

There is an Expanding Array of Skills being learned. Some examples are: Auto-mechanics, Electrical/Electronic maintenance, welding/foundry/metal fabrication, plumbing works, carpentry and joinery, leather works, photography, interior design, architectural draughtsman ship, printing, computer operations, catering / bakery / confectionery, hair-dressing/barbing, auxiliary nursing, typing and shorthand, tailoring/fashion designing, modeling etc.

Some Examples of Trainer Organizations are SCOA (Nigeria) Limited (auto-mechanics); Leventis Technical Limited (general maintenance skills); Lexmay Technical (air-condition repair and maintenance); Federal Ministry of Works (general technical services); Nigeria Telecommunications Limited (electrical/electronic); UTC Technical (general technical services); Continental Merchant Bank Limited (Banking operations); Vicy Tailoring, Lagos (sewing and Fashion design); Julius Berger; Lagos State transport Corporation, among others. The NDE is currently in partnership with over 500 trainers nationwide and is continuously scouting for more organizations to join the team.

- **Waste to Wealth Scheme:** This scheme is created to encourage the conversion of hitherto neglected raw

materials and other scrap and waste materials into useful, marketable products. For example, by sheer inventiveness, it is possible to use snail shells, corals, cane materials, coconut shells and other scrap materials to make furniture items, house décor objects, ashtrays, apparels, containers, toys, and other functional items. Apart from crating employment opportunities for those concerned, this scheme will help in developing a culture of inventiveness and self-reliance in resource use, thereby curtailing wastefulness and importation of items that can be produced locally. The period of orientation is two weeks. After training, the participants are given small loans or set-up on their own. Participants can establish on individual basis or operate together as cooperatives.

- **Schools on Wheels Scheme:** The Directorate has recognized that there are few companies in the rural areas capable of offering apprenticeships, and therefore the danger of encouraging urban migration via the Open Apprenticeship Scheme. To avert this and give equal opportunity to the rural youths, the Directorate developed the “Schools on Wheels” Scheme. This involves taking fully equipped mobile vocational training facilities to the rural areas. This scheme will create a pool of artisans who will become a cornerstone of rural employment and development.
- **Disabled Work Scheme:** The Directorate has initiated schemes to bring the disabled into the main stream of the gainfully employed by providing them with special facilities. This is to enable them acquire appropriate skills and training which will lead to self-employment or gainful employment. Many disabled people lack only ambulatory capability but usually possess full mental and manual dexterity. They can therefore be trained in high technology and information management skills such as assembly of electronic equipment and computer operations.

It is believed that training through skills acquisition programme will enhance the sustainability of the youth in different fields of trade. This is possible when the culture of creative ideas is instilled in youth to make them productive and self-reliant members of the society.

Youth Empowerment

A good starting point to our understanding of the concept – Youth Empowerment, will be to first, explain who a youth is. A youth is an individual that is at a transitory stage of development from childhood to adulthood. Youth-hood can be defined as that phase or period of life in which one passes from childhood to maturity. Maturity on the other hand refers to a situation whereby one becomes fully developed. In Nigeria, the youth usually fall into the 18 –35 years age bracket, that is, both genders (male and female) (Abdullahi, 2008). Abdullahi’s definition agrees with the National Youth Policy conceptualization of youth as defined in the Nigeria context. Generally, youths are one of the greatest assets that any nation can have and therefore, need to be developed and empowered. They serve as a good measure of the extent to

which a country can reproduce as well as sustain itself and investment in the youths is an investment for a country’s long term development.

Youth empowerment, on the otherhand, involves different ways through which the youth could be enabled to achieve their economic and social goals and improve on the three major indicators of development namely life sustenance, self-esteem and freedom. Life sustenance is concerned with the provision of basic needs, while self-esteem and freedom have to do with the feeling of self-respect and independence and liberty from the three evils of want, ignorance and squalor (Okoye, 2014). These three core components are interrelated, for lack of self- esteem and freedom result from low levels of life sustenance and both lack of self-esteem and economic imprisonment become links in a circular, self-perpetuating chain of poverty by producing a sense of fatalism and acceptance of the established order - the accommodation of poverty (Galbraith in Ejumudo, 2013).

Youth empowerment figuratively refers to the ability of an individual to make choices regarding his or her life and the wherewithal to support those choices – financially or otherwise. It enhances the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices regarding their lives and transform those choices into desired actions and outcome. If a person or group is empowered, they possess the capacity to make and follow it through – providing whatever it will take - to translate their choices into desired results. Psychologically, youth empowerment can be said to be an attitudinal, structural and cultural process whereby young people gain the ability, authority and agency to make decisions and implement change in their own lives and those of other people.

According to Jimba (2006), youth empowerment involves different ways the youth can be facilitated to cause positive changes in their life style. He maintained that youth empowerment can also be seen as a means of exposing the youths into skills or training that make them productive. This involves enabling individuals to be able to provide goods and services that will yield them economic benefits. Basically, the creation of wealth and employment will lead to poverty reduction and increase in welfare status of individuals in the country. In line with the above view, Ogbé (1996) stated that wealth creation acquired through youth empowerment is expected to reverse the structural weakness and imbalance in the economy by providing strategic focus and direction and inculcating in the youths the right ethics, discipline, values, hard work, honesty, respect, humility among others.

In the views of Ogundowolo (1998), youth empowerment is to prepare and equip the youth with appropriate skills that can be beneficial to them in future. He maintained that ideal skill acquisition is capable of ensuring value re-orientation among the youth and transforming them into creators of wealth and employment instead of seekers.

Over the years, various regimes came up with programmes for youth empowerment and skills acquisition for self-reliance and sustainable livelihood. At this point, it is observed that despite all governmental efforts at youth empowerment, through some of her institutions like the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and Ministry of Women and Youth Development, the Nigerian Youth still

command high position in the statistics of unemployment and poverty.

National Directorate of Employment Programme on Skill Acquisition

The worldwide economic depression of the early 80's caused a rapid deterioration in Nigeria's economy. Industrial output shrank to an all-time low and commercial activities were consequently reduced, leading to the loss of employment opportunity for millions of Nigerians. By the end of 1985, the unemployment situation in Nigeria had reached desperate and alarming proportions. In the urban areas, where the educated tend to congregate, the unemployment rate was especially high, running to over 10 per cent. In the rural areas, it was no less severe. The youths and graduates were the hardest hit. Of all unemployed Nigerians (ranging upwards of 3 million at the time) three quarters were under 25 years of age. With growing joblessness there was growing despondency among youths and their parents. On 26th March 1986, the then President, General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, appointed a committee to deliberate on strategies for dealing with mass unemployment under the auspices of the Federal Ministry of Employment, Labour and Productivity. The report of the Chukwuma Committee, as it became popularly known, was approved by the Federal Government in October, 1986. Based on its recommendations, the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was established on November 22, 1986 and its initial core programmes were formally launched on 30th January, 1987, by the Chief of General Staff, Vice Admiral Augustus Aikhomu, on behalf of the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

According to Adepegba (2010), the NDE has registered a good number of unemployed youths who applied for its skill acquisition and job training scheme. It was proposed that the beneficiaries will be attached to master craftsmen in various vocations for the duration of their training. This training was geared towards empowering the beneficiaries to become self-reliant and employed. However, the NDE has only recorded limited success because the infrastructure that will aid successful business are not yet there. That is why government at all level should work together to make necessary changes in policy formulation and implementation that will reduce unemployment as a serious danger to the overall wellbeing of the country and work to reduce the high unemployment.

To achieve the policy objective of eradicating unemployment and empowering the youths, accurate data is necessary. The NDE is the quest for timely reliable and policy – relevant statistics that could enhance employment programme planning embarked on the registration of employed person in all 774 local government areas of the federation in April, 2002. The exercise was carried out to provide information and data for the NDE and other stakeholders for employment programme planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (www.nde.gov.ng).

According to Heckman et al (1987) labour force surveys have shown that the rate of unemployment is significantly higher in urban areas. This is because rural areas usually have

more self-employed workers whether in family farms or non-agricultural enterprises. This situation of rural areas is known as disguised unemployment. Youths on the street, deprived of legitimate means of livelihood, grow up in a culture that encourages criminal behaviour (Cligunta 2002). Some of these unemployed youths survive engaging in various activities such petty trading casual work, borrowing, stealing, prostitution, thuggery and other illegal activities, while others have taken to drugs such as marijuana and the likes. Bennel (200) argues that urban societies are becoming increasingly criminalized especially with the proliferation of youth gangs. Several studies have also shown that majority of prison inmates are youth aged 30 years and below. Also, delinquency, crime and drug abuse are on the increase among youths.

The reports of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS 2000) and the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2012) show that the unemployment rate in sub-Sahara Africa is about 80 per cent of the total population. Adebayo (1999) unemployment could be caused by factors that are related to supply or demand in the labour market. The supply factor includes growth in urban force arising from rural-urban migration, rapid population growth rate, inadequate school curriculum, and lack of employable skills. On the demand side, the most important factor is the low level of aggregates demand arising from low income, low investment and low productivity. Since the demand for labour is derived, a decrease in the demand for the goods and services produced by labour will definitely result into unemployment.

According to the ILO publication of 2018, youth development and empowerment are vital stages in life for building the human capital that allows young people to escape poverty and lead better and possibly have a more fulfilling life. The human capital formed in youth is thus an important determinant of long term growth that a nation can invest in. Hence, making sure that youths are well prepared for their future is enormously important to the course of poverty reduction and growth. More than half of Africa's population is aged less than 21 years and two-thirds less than 30 years. In all African countries, the median age of the population is 20 years or less, that is, half or more of the population are under 21 years of age and up to one fifth between 15 and 24. Countries vary considerably in their definition of youth and childhood. The UN considers individual under the age group of 15 – 24 as youths. In Uganda, for example, youth is from 12 to 30 years, while in Nigeria, it is between 18 and 35 years.

The increase in the number of youths in secondary and tertiary institutions is a positive development. However, labour markets in many countries are presently unable to accommodate the expanding pool of the educated but largely unskilled young graduates. It is estimated that about 400 million new jobs would be needed to absorb today's youth. Due to this decline in jobs and the rise in the number of those unemployed, young people are forced to embrace the informal sector. Factors which readily come to mind when analyzing the worsening unemployment crises in Nigeria are usually traced to the long period of instability in the socio

economic and political dimensions that led to the problems imposed on the economy, the nation and the workers.

Okoli and Onah (2002) emphasized that various factors militated against the successful implementation of the objectives of those programmes. According to them, shortage of qualified and experienced personnel that could help translate the government objective, into action was a serious problem, also corruption, inadequate involvement of rural people in the programme, poor funding among other were problems that led to their failure. Furthermore, (Onah 2006) stressed that poor feasibility studies and lack of political will led to the problem of programme sustainability as well as weak implementation guidelines. Okigbo (1991) also points out the problem arising from the concept of labour force. In most countries, particularly Nigeria people below the age of 15 years and those above the of 55 who are actively engaged in economic activities are usually excluded from labour statistical surveys. All these factors have the tendency to result in underestimation of unemployment thereby making international comparison very difficult.

Factors such as the preponderance of full housewives (but who are willing to be engaged in paid job) and unpaid family workers also contribute significantly to the underestimation of unemployment. World bank (1998) posits that although there seems to be conveyance of this concept, its applications have been bedeviled with series of problems across countries. First most published unemployment rates are recorded open unemployment and people's attitude on this varies from country to country. While this may be high in developed countries and where government is committed to resolving unemployment problems. It is likely to be very low in countries with the opposite attributes.

National Directorate of Employment and funding for Small Scale Businesses

Due to high cost of materials and equipment needed for the training and pilot resettlement of some trained persons, the NDE requires adequate funds to effectively implement its programmes. It is however worrisome to note that annual budgeting allocation for the execution of employment programmes have dwindled in recent years. Generally, the amount approved for the execution of empowerment programmes, which includes vocational business training enterprise creation etc. falls below 20 per cent of actual requirement (www.nde.gov.ng).

Furthermore, the allocations have hardly taken cognizance of the economy, for example, as at 1986-1988, it cost a conservative amount of N250,000.00 to train and assist a graduate to establish an enterprise. Today it would cost the directorate about N400,000.00 to do so. If one takes into account that about 130,000 graduates comes out from tertiary institutions and about one million from secondary and other schools annually. In recent years, it becomes obvious that the budgeting requirements to make reasonable impact have not been attained. The poor funding situation has therefore not permitted the Directorate to create maximum impact in the labour market. The NDE can do more and would definitely do better if given sufficient funds.

Despite government's efforts to generate youth empowerment through the activities of the NDE, the labour

market still shows that unemployment in Nigeria is still far from abating reasonably due to the unfavourable macro-economic environment. For a country like Nigeria, with a population of close to 200 million, the rate of GDP growth that would provide reasonable employment opportunities for all should be about 8 per cent. Unfortunately, the GDP has arranged 2.5 per cent for more than a decade. The unemployment problem in Nigeria remain persistent and even growing by the day with a labour force of approximately 3 million persons (mostly youths) annually moving into the job market. To meet the challenge, an annual target to create one million direct jobs and at least 2 million indirect jobs through multiplier effect would be desirable over a long period in order to bring the problem of the socially and politically acceptable levels, (www.nde.gov.ng).

Challenges to Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

Unemployment and poverty among the youths in Nigeria, which are indicators of lack of empowerment has remained on the increase owing to five major factors: structural, cultural, lack of political will, skewed budgetary allocation and poorly coordinated intervention programmes.

➤ **Structural Factors:** Structural inhibitors in the growth of unemployment have its origin in the Nigerian education policies since independence in 1960. Between then and now Nigeria has introduced and implemented not less than three different educational policies. These are the 7:5:2:3; the 6:3:3:4, and now the 9:3:3:4 (elementary, secondary and university). There is now a clamour for the re-introduction of Higher School Certificate (HSC) program which was a two-year post-secondary programme that prepared students for university education. This reaction followed the very poor performance of secondary school leavers (87% failure rate) in the West African Examination Council (WAEC) in 2010. One of the major problems of past education policies stems from the fact that new policies are not allowed to run their full course before they are changed. What this means is that some of the past policies may not have been well conceived before implementation.

➤ **Cultural Factors and Get Rich Quick Syndrome:** Culturally, many youths and their parents believe that the only sure route to success is pursuing career in the elitist professions such as medicine, law and engineering regardless of whether they have the aptitude, interest or resources. This mindset is fuelled further by loss of the age old value system which tied dignity of labour to wealth. People still perceive artisans and craftsmen as social outcasts who should remain permanently at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder. Society now seen to worship wealth (regardless of the source) and churches, mosques and the communities reward some of these questionable acquisitions with Kinghood and chieftaincy titles respectively. A visit to a typical auto-mechanic garage in Nigeria will show that unlike what used to be the practice whereby a master

auto-mechanic had 3 to 7 apprentices under his tutelage, one will be lucky to find one or two learning the trade. Others will opt out after 3 to 6 months to start riding motorcycle taxi, (Okada) to start making money, while the few who remain do not stay long enough to acquire the skills to be proficient in the trade. Some of the Nigeria legislators encourage this behaviour by donating motorcycles to youths in their constituencies under the nebulous name of “Youth Empowerment.” It is doubtful if Nigeria will still have artisans and technicians in another 20 to 30 years.

- **Lack of Political Will:** The neglect of vocational/technical education has been robbing the nation of the potential contributions of its graduates to national growth and economic development. The inability of policy makers to make rational and informed decisions continue to affect the rate of progress of the Nigerian Nation. As Dike (2009) has noted, the underdevelopment status of Nigeria could be linked to the neglect of its educational institutions. Although science and technology has been a part of Nigeria’s National Policy on Primary education (NPE), implementation has always been the major problem. Consequently, the society lacks competent artisans such as bricklayers, carpenters, printers, auto mechanics, laboratory and pharmacy technicians and so on.
- **Skewed Budgetary Allocations:** After China and India, Nigeria is the fastest growing economy in the world with a growth rate of 7.2 percent (Yusuf, 2012). This figure is expected to increase to double digit growth typical of the Asian tiger economies. This growth rate is being achieved despite the energy challenges, financial crisis and global economic meltdown.

Although Nigeria’s economy is projected to continue growing, the poverty situation is likely to get worse as the gap between the rich and the poor continue to widen. One reason that may be attributed to this is perennial defective leadership, corruption and poorly articulated policy implementations. For example, the federal government’s share of distributable revenue is 54 percent, states 25 percent and local government 19 percent. Out of the share accruing to the Federal Government, only about 20-30 per cent goes to capital expenditure, while the rest go to recurrent and overhead. It can be argued that there is an inverse relationship between income and capital expansion. Therefore, by committing more resources to infrastructure you indirectly impact on incremental incomes of the citizenry.

- **Poorly Coordinated Intervention Programmes:** As nations advance into the 21st century, governments are shrinking and shedding the toga of major employer of labour. However, the rate of reduction varies from country to country but dictated by what is perceived as political and social consequences. This partly explains why in most developing countries the government is the major employer of labour. The NEEDS document (2004) states that

“Human development without employment”. Omoruyi and Osunde, (2004), argue that the problems of mass unemployment, low productivity, high inflation and poverty will depend on how speedily government is able to develop the millions of its labour force into a knowledgeable and skilled people needed for the required change.

Skills acquisition as a veritable vehicle to promote employment generation has been a part of the policy thrust of past Nigerian governments. However, most intervention programmes have been poorly coordinated and in some cases either overlap or contradict one another. Beginning with the Directorate of Food Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Family Support Programme (FSP), National Economic Empowerment Development Strategies (NEEDS), SEEDS and even the establishment of People Bank of Nigeria (PBN) are some of the intervention programmes that were intended to promote employment generation. Most of the past intervention programmes were implemented on ad-hoc basis; poorly coordinated and marred by corruption and inefficiency. Consequently, rather than reduce unemployment, the reverse seems to be the case.

The Nigerian Living Standard Survey (NLSS, 2006) estimated the poverty level at 54 per cent, implying that approximately 75 million Nigerians were unemployed. This figure is expected to be higher when lay-offs and outright closures due to the global economic meltdown since 2008 are considered. Government effort at promoting skill acquisition through the establishment of vocational training institutions have also not yielded the desired result, even though Omoruyi and Osunde, (2004) note that more vocational skills training centers are being established. Although more vocational training institutions are being established the youths are not motivated to take advantage of opportunities associated with vocational education due to some of the above reasons. For example, it is common to find many Nigerian legislators donate motorcycles and pepper grinding machines to youths in their constituencies under the name of “youth empowerment.”

System Approach Theory

The study adopted a system approach developed by David Easton in 1964 and the theory explains the existence of different parts which perform different functions in such a way that each part interacts and inter-depend on the other parts. The system approach to the analysis of the organization by David Easton sees an organization as a system of interrelated parts, each to which makes a contribution to the survival of the whole and each of which depends on other parts of the system for its own needs. There is hierarchical arrangement in the system as the parts or subsystems are made up of other smaller parts. In system approach system cannot be altered without affecting other parts.

The merit of this theory is in its holistic approach to the issues of organizations and society. However, the theory has a major drawback in the fact that it assumes that every organizational and societal setting can be interpreted using the system approach. Also, it does not address situations where we have systems within a system like in the case of

autonomous organizations operating within an industry.

However, the application of this theory is that National Directorate of Employment as a Federal Government Organization that has been charged with the responsibility of ensuring youth empowerment in Nigeria. It is therefore, a system in itself and at the same time requires supports of other agencies of government and society, which often form the subsystems that inter-depend and inter-relates between the Directorate and immediate environment; government and society's action. Considering the elements of system theory such as the inputs, the conversion process, the output as well as the feedback and the environments, the organization under study, receives inputs such as unemployed persons (trainees), trainers, funding and so on, converts or transforms such as skills acquisition and managerial skills and send them as outputs such as graduates of skills programmes or empowered persons to the environment and the NDE as well as receives feedback from the external environment.

IV. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. The NDE skill acquisition programme has no significant relationship with youth empowerment in Onitsha South Local Government of Anambra State, Nigeria (P value = $0.011 < 0.05$, $r = 0.411$).
2. The NDE Small Scale Industries programme has no significant relationship with the establishment of Small Scale Industries in Onitsha South Local Government of Anambra State, Nigeria (P value = $0.064 > 0.05$, $r = -0.558$).
3. Inadequate funding is a challenge to effective implementation of the National Directorate of Employment youth empowerment programme in Onitsha South local government (P value = $0.003 < 0.05$, $r = 0.503$).

V. CONCLUSION

After collecting the responses and crunching the numbers, the researcher can reasonably deduce that the impact of National directorate of employment in her drive for youth empowerment is positive, albeit moderately as the results from two of the research questions are in support of a positive correlation. However, it must be stated here that youth unemployment remains the major obstacle to national development. This is because owing to the fact that Nigeria has a youth population where over 60 percent are less than 30 years of age – a fact that was acknowledged by Nigeria's president, Muhammadu Buhari during his visit to the United Kingdom in April 2018. It therefore behooves on the government to fashion out modalities to address the issues of poor funding and paucity / inaccuracy of data in order to effectively reposition the National Directorate of Employment for better effectiveness. However, on our part, we proffer the following recommendations.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the researcher recommended the following;

1. Though the study has acknowledged the modest efforts of NDE in the task of youth empowerment, we recommend that the scope of the skills acquisition programmes of the NDE should be expanded to include practical trainings, coaching, education, mentoring and hands on learning from the organized private sector and small scale entrepreneurs in the informal sector. This will help to bridge the gap between knowledge and practice. In the Nigerian social and economic milieu, acquiring skills is no longer enough. The participant must understand market trends, customers' preferences, and other relevant information needed to penetrate the market. This knowledge is better experienced through practice than taught in a classroom setting.
2. In view of the findings from the test of the second hypothesis, we recommend an inter-agency collaboration between the National Directorate of Employment and other government agencies like the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), local government among other in order to share data and information for better efficiency and effectiveness.
3. Government should increase the allocation of funds and resources to the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) to foster its effective execution of its primary objectives.

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