

Graduates' Unemployment Reduction In Nigeria: A Study Of Nysc's Skill Acquisition And Entrepreneurship Development (Saed) Programme

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Abstract: *Unemployment is one of the developmental problems bedevilling the world in this twenty-first century although the upsurge is more pronounced in the developing nations. In Africa and Nigeria in particular, youth unemployment is a very daunting challenge in the labour market, and constitutes a serious threat to national development. It appears to be shooting up the sky as many of the youths portrays lack of the skills and entrepreneurship competencies that will empower them to self-employment. The introduction of youth entrepreneurship programmes and youths' participation in the programmes has not really alleviated the situation, hence this study. This research examined graduates' unemployment reduction in Nigeria, using the NYSC's Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) Programme as a case in point. The study reveals that corps members are aware, appreciates and participates in the in-camp training. However, there seems to be a very sharp decline in participation between the in-camp and post camp segments of the programme as very few participates in the post-camp exercise (where the real or main skill acquisition training is expected to take place). The reduction in number in the post-camp training is occasioned by some evidenced challenges ranging from unconducive training/seminar venues, attitude of trainers, inadequate time etc. and leads to loss of interest in the programme. This is coupled with the fact that the post camp training attracts payment, and the NYSC is not actually involved in the negotiation of the terms of engagement of the corps members with the trainers in the post-camp training. More still, training centres does not exist in all the Local Government Areas especially in the remote ones. Against this backdrop, the study recommends inter-alia that for effective and efficient skill acquisition and participation of corps members both in the in-camp and post-camp training exercise, motivations such as adequate sensitization, availability of conducive training environment, quality lectures/trainings, availability of skill acquisition centre, smooth accessibility to credit facilities etc. should be made available.*

Keywords: Graduates' Unemployment, NYSC, Skill Acquisition, Entrepreneurship Development, Nigeria

1. INTRODUCTION

Graduate unemployment has remained a major challenge to the developmental process of the Nigerian economy despite the myriads of entrepreneurship programmes being introduced. It appears to be shooting up the sky as many of the youths portrays lack of the skills and entrepreneurship competencies that will empower them to self-employment. As at 2012 when the SAED programme was introduced, a survey by the National Bureau of Statistics show that persons aged 15-64 constituted 56.3% of the unemployed. As that same year, graduate unemployment rate was put at 13.3% but increased to 23.7% in 2016 and degenerated to 27.5% in 2017 and 29.8% in 2018 (NBS 2018, The NBS Labour Force Statistics 2010 -2018 has been included as an appendix). The introduction of youth entrepreneurship programmes and youths' participation in the programmes has not really alleviated the situation. Asoegwu and Dim (2016) had argued that the trend is getting worse as most of the interventionist programmes has not been able to stem the rising tide of graduate unemployment in particular and youth unemployment in general. As more of these programmes are introduced, the number of unemployed youths keeps increasing. It is glaring that unemployment widens as the year goes. It further suggests that the intervention programmes have not really generated employment as it should.

Employment from classical economics angle implies work or occupation in which one is engaged and is paid. The payment aids such one to be able to take care of his/her needs and necessities. However, participation in the SAED programme does not seem to afford the participants this privilege. Employment in the context of the SAED programme entails self-employment which manifests in establishment of business enterprises. The establishment of business enterprise requires funding. The difficulties associated with the process of acquiring credit facilities is an inhibiting factor in this regard. In Anambra State, from 2013 to 2016 only 41 persons benefited from loan, grant, aid and support associated with the process. 21 of such were aid/grant and support while 20 were loans (SAED Branch NYSC Anambra State 2018). When this number is compared to the 450 participants who actually completed the post camp training, it means that the process needs a review.

The need for self-employment become imperative as most of these graduates graduated from school without the needed skill or competencies that would enable them function in today's emerging society. The question is whether these programmes have been able or are capable of equipping them with these highly needed skills and competencies. Put differently, are the policies and

programmes designed and executed in a way that would actually engender skills acquisition and youth entrepreneurship development? It is glaring that the role of skills acquisition in the creation of employment among the youths in general and the graduates in particular may not be overemphasized. Thus, there is need to investigate the extent to which participation in these programmes helped these youths acquire skills, develop entrepreneurial competencies, and even become self-employed.

The introduction of the Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development programme by the NYSC scheme was seen by many as an institutional approach to youth entrepreneurship development and a deviation from earlier methods. Thus it evoked much expectation of effectiveness. However, after these years of operation, the seeming inability of the programme to engender youth entrepreneurship development has led to worries and calls to re-examine the content of the programme and its competence to actualize a successful youth entrepreneurship development. People are beginning to question whether the scheme possesses the requisite facilities, structures and even expertise to undertake the programme. By extension, there are questions as to the relevance of the NYSC scheme itself and the need to continue the SAED programme (Onaive 2016).

Others have expressed worry over the depth and capability of programme to actualize vocational skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development in view of NYSC's constant expression of lack of fund. In essence, will the programme be able to provide needed facilities and trainers to train and enhance the emergence of corps entrepreneurs in the face of dwindling funding?

Adewusi and Adisa (2018) have equally observed that on the side of the corps members there seems to be a growing discontentment about the programme. How psychologically prepared and committed are the graduates to the programme. As the years go by, lesser number of corps members are emerging as entrepreneurs. There is a likely low morale on the side of the corps members as to the need to even engage in the programme. There is already the emergence of such slogan as SAED is a scam among the corps members (Onaive 2016). This kind of opinion could have two likely consequences;

1. The corps members may not even get involved in the programme.
2. The corps members may get involved but without commitment. The second situation seems to be prevalent in the programme.

Some are also not participating as a result of agentic (personal) factors while some are exhibiting skepticism as a result of what Ukeje (1996) termed the Nigerian factor which ensures that things will not work well. A combination of these factors has resulted to reducing number of participation and in some cases, participation without focus or commitment.

For instance, in Anambra state which is our focus state, while there was progressive increase annually in number of corps members' participation from 2012 to 2014, there was a continuous decline annually in number of corps members' participation from 2015 to 2018. This decline is a problem.

With this seeming decline in participation, how would vast number of the corps member acquire the vocational skills that would make them self-employed? The cardinal aim of introducing the programme is to mitigate the issue of graduate unemployment. If the programme is not effecting a reduction in young graduates' unemployment, the implication is that many will still be without jobs after many years of graduation. Consequently, these unemployed youths out of frustrations and wrong intentions will join and form groups that will cause problems in the country (Gbagolo and Eze 2014).

Furthermore, since the programme operates in a socio-political and economic environment, it is needful to equally examine how supportive or otherwise the environment is towards the programme. Bysebutz and Barney (1997) have emphasized on the role of government in enhancing entrepreneurship development by creating supportive environment. Mgbemena (2015) has lamented the lack of government funding of the programme and the inconsistency of collaborating agencies towards meeting their obligations of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed. This study interrogates the effect of these factors on the success of the SAED programme.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Entrepreneurship Development

Joseph Massie (1998) observed that because of the diversity of approaches of the study of entrepreneurship, there is difficulty in defining just what entrepreneurship is and identifying just who is an entrepreneur. Therefore, there are different opinions on the emergence and nature of entrepreneurship. However, these opinions may be classified into three categories.

Economist View: Entrepreneur and entrepreneurship have been a point of interest to economists as early as 1755. The term entrepreneur seems to have been introduced into economics by Cantillon, a French economist and author but was first accorded prominence by Say. It represents a merchant, adventurer and employer. According to the economists, entrepreneurship and economic growth will take place in those situations where particular economic conditions are most favourable and will be highly in decline where inhibitive economic conditions abound. To them, economic incentives are the main driving force for the entrepreneurial activities.

In the view of Scumpeter (1934,) an entrepreneur is one who is an innovator and someone who creatively destructs. By implication a free market system that allows experimentation without costs will favour entrepreneurship. Say (1940) opined that a free market where forces of demand and supply encourages reward for risks and innovation without government control will undoubtedly be a drive for entrepreneurship among individuals/

Papanek and Harris (2002) believes that a well-developed market and efficient economic policies fosters entrepreneurship. To them, economic incentives are the main factor that paves way for entrepreneurial activities. Lack of entrepreneurship is due to various kinds of market imperfections and inefficient economic policies. These market imperfections and inefficient policies tends to be inhibitions that deter economic adventure.

However, it is glaring that this perspective tends to neglect the individual angle or factor of entrepreneurship. Even in the face of economic incentives, individuals will thrive differently in entrepreneurship endeavours. Also in some instances market imperfections are outcome of the eventful interaction of demand and supply and not necessarily an outcome of a thought out policy.

Sociologists View: The main proponents of this view are Weber, Cocharan and Hoselitz. To them, entrepreneurship is inhibited by the social systems which deny opportunities for creative facilities. The forces of custom, values, the rigidity of status and the district of new ideas and of the exercise of intellectual curiosity, combine to create an atmosphere inimical to experiment and innovations. Sociologists argue that entrepreneurship is mostly likely to emerge under a specific social culture. According to Weber religious beliefs produce intensive exertion in occupational pursuits, systematic ordering of means to an end and the accumulation of assets. It is those beliefs which general allow a drive for entrepreneurship growth. Hoselitze suggests that culturally marginal groups promote entrepreneurship. According to Stokes, socio-cultural values channels economic action. Thus, where those socio cultural values are rigid and inhibitive, entrepreneurship development is restricted and even eroded.

The concept of rigidity of social systems which this view tends to advance does not seem to tally with the dynamism of present global system. Societal restrictions are becoming less in the present globalism. Rather an individual's ability to identify opportunities and utilize it becomes the major driving force. Globally, governments, corporate organizations and international organizations are creating enabling platform for entrepreneurship development. Most of these platforms are in developing nations and yet entrepreneurship development has been in a very low ebb.

Psychologist View: Among scholars who have stressed on the psychological aspects as contributing to entrepreneurial success are Joseph Schumpeter, McClelland, Hagen and Kunkal. Schumpeter believes that entrepreneurs are primarily motivated by an atavistic will to power, and will to find a private kingdom or will to conquer. According to McClelland it is the high need for achievement which drives people towards entrepreneurial activities. This achievement motive is inculcated through child rearing practices which stress standards of excellence, material warmth, self-reliance training and low father dominance. Individuals with high achievement motive tend to take keen interest in situations of high risk, desire for responsibility and a desire for a concrete measure of task performance. Hagen considers withdrawal of status respect as the trigger mechanism for changes in personality formation. Status withdrawal is the perception on the part of the members of social group that their purposes and values in life are not respected by groups in the society whom they respect. Hagen identified four types of events that coven produces status withdrawal (a) displacement by force (b) denigration of value symbols (c) inconsistency of status symbols with a changing distribution of economic power and (d) non acceptance of expected status on migration to a new society.

According to psychologists, entrepreneurship is most likely to emerge when a society has sufficient supply of individuals possessing particular psychological characteristics.

The main characteristics are:

- An institutional capacity to see things in a new way (vision)
- Energy of will and mind to overcome fixed habits of thought
- An urge to do something
- To fulfil a dream
- The capacity to withstand social opposition and
- The high need for achievement.

The emphasis of this view on the individual is appreciable but it failed to place emphasis on the role of the political and economic factors in entrepreneurship development. Each of the view point above is incomplete. Entrepreneurship is influenced by multitude of factors, and therefore, no single factor by itself can generate entrepreneurship. Thus, entrepreneurship is the outcome of complex and varying combination of socio-economic, psychological and other factors.

Entrepreneurship has traditionally been defined as the process of designing, launching and running a new business, which typically begins as a small business such as a startup company, offering a product, process or service for sale or hire. Scott and Venkatran (2000) defined it as the capacity and willingness to develop, organize and manage a business venture along with any of its risks in order to make profit. The emphasis on capacity according to Assah (2002) implies that definition of entrepreneurship has expanded to include issues of entrepreneurship development which explains how necessary skills and enablement for effective entrepreneurship are acquired.

The term entrepreneurship development has been defined in various ways (Ndechukwu 2001, Mcoliver 1998, Ameashi 2006). However, referring to the productive transformation of an entrepreneurship, a single thread runs through all of them: the

ability to identify business opportunities, the ability to be able to harness the necessary resources and use opportunities identified, the ability and willingness to initiate and sustain appropriate actions towards the actualization of business objectives.

Osemeke (2012) emphasized on enhancement of entrepreneurial skills and knowledge through structured training and institution building programmes. To him, entrepreneurship development aims to enlarge the base of entrepreneurs in order to hasten the pace of which new ventures are created, with the major aim of accelerating employment generation and economic development. Essentially, the acquisition of skills will enable an entrepreneur to function appropriately and adequately in terms of:

- Attaining present result based on previous decisions and planning for the future, based on present circumstances.
- Maintaining and developing the organized capability which makes achievement possible.
- Coordinating the specialist functions that should enable a firm, perform the technical task in marketing, personnel, research and development, manufacturing, finance and control, especially in the face of challenging technology and dynamic industry trend.

To perform these functions, Osemeke (Opcit) argues that the entrepreneurship development process and procedures must entrench certain skills – conceptual skill, human skills, and technical skills which will transform the entrepreneur into a taskmaster, mediator and motivator. In addition, the process must also provide appropriate legal framework, economic incentives and support for the anticipated entrepreneurial ventures. This view point did not seem to lay emphasis on the constraints in the entrepreneurship process.

Ndubuisi (2004) buttressing on the constraints of entrepreneurship development in developing nations identified the following as hindrance.

- Arbitrary challenges in the administration of law by the government which spreads the element of uncertainty among the entrepreneurs.
- Lack of insufficient infrastructures and high cost of production.
- Market imperfections, which deny potential entrepreneurs the resources they need for organizing new entrepreneurs.
- High risk involved in new enterprises
- Low status of business in the eyes of the public.
- Restrictive effects of customs and traditions.

Unfortunately, he did not recognize the role of Entrepreneurship Development Programmes in terms of quality and content of trainings. Shepherd and Douglas (1997) in Akanwa and Akpanabia (2012) observed that entrepreneurship development is the ability to envision and chart a course of a new business venture by combining information from functional disciplines and from the external environment in the context of the extraordinary uncertainty and ambiguity which faces new business venture.

In the same vein Tijani – Alawiye (2004) defines entrepreneurship development as the process of adding to the stock of existing small, medium and big enterprises available to a country by creating and promoting many capable entrepreneurs who can successfully run innovative enterprises, nurture them to grow and sustain them, with a view to achieving broad socio-economic development goals. It is also the process of bringing together creative and innovative ideas and copying the management and organizational skill in order to combine people, money and resources to meet an identified need and thereby creating wealth. While this view emphasizes on the promotion of capable entrepreneurs, it did not capture the processes or the challenges of organizations involved.

Empirical Review

A study conducted by the National Institute of Small Industry Extension Training (NISJET 2012) India established a link between positive mindset and successful skills acquisition and entrepreneurship development. In a survey among small business firms in Pradesh in 2012, among 300 entrepreneurs, they observed that those that convinced themselves of the workability of various articulated government skills acquisition and entrepreneurship programmes made tremendous progress. They concluded that the trust in the programme ignited an inner push and will to succeed. They recommended that skills acquisition programmes should be attractive and convincing.

However, the concept of positive mindset is ambiguous as one's view point could be influenced by varying factors. The success of the programme may equally be a product of the will to succeed and not necessarily as a result of belief in the process by participants.

Mohammed and Obeleagu-Nzelibe (2014) critically examined the extent of skill required by entrepreneurs for the enhancement of the performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), find solutions to the problems facing SME's in Nigeria and identify option strategies needed to enhance entrepreneurship. The study used simple t-test and survey methodology through questionnaire (administered) as an instrument of primary data collection from stratified random sample of 250 owners and employees of SME's in major industrial cities in Nigeria. They concluded that many people that engage in skills acquisition trainings do not get to the level that could guarantee effective entrepreneurship endeavours. While some of the programmes are brief, some participants could not complete as result of some dissuading factors. The study did not explicitly indicate whose fault it

is that made trainings not to get to the level that is expect. There is need then to evaluate these dissuading factors, find out why the programmes are brief and importantly its impact on entrepreneurship development.

Ajibola et al (2014) in their study of operation, problems and prospects of youth employment programmes in Oyo State observed that the successes of entrepreneurship programmes is highly inhibited by unstable attendance, lack of interest and impatience on the side of participants coupled with poor sensitization and ineffective monitoring and supervisory mechanism on the side of the organizers. As a result, the quality of skills is insufficient and cannot lead to a meaningful entrepreneurship venture. This is a dilemma as some of these programmes are politically motivated and lacks organizational framework. Most of them is embedded with deception which usually spikes off impatience and unstable attendance. This is an aspect that the study tends to ignore.

Ofilu (2014) in his analysis of the challenges facing entrepreneurship in Nigeria, opined that topmost among the factors militating against entrepreneurship development in Nigeria is the issue of delivery shortfalls arising from poor funding. The work noted the inability of government to provide adequate marked out fund for entrepreneurship development programmes makes much of the programmes to be shabby in outlook. The implication is that it becomes very difficult to convince people that the organizers of the programme meant business. However, when adequate funds are engaged, the twin element of maladministration and embezzlement does not allow such funds to be utilized for what it is meant for. He concluded that this to a large extent results to the people not taking government programmes serious. I feel that over reliance on government funding is the bane of entrepreneurship development.

Adewusi and Adisa (2018) observed that some people have the notion that skill acquisition programmes have become avenue for extortion of money from unemployed youths. In their study of the skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development programme among corps members in Ibadan, they observed that intermittent demand for one form of payment or the other within the training sessions is a major setback in the quest for youth entrepreneurship development in Nigeria. Conducting a study among 45 corps members in Ibadan, the Oyo state capital utilizing indepth interviews, they observed that a key factor that increases dissatisfaction to participate in the programme is the constant demand for payment by trainers. The corps members had to make certain payments for materials during the in -camp trainings and have to solely bore the cost of the post trainings. Most of them cannot afford such money and as a result had to back out half way. Equally, some had to opt for skills trainings with mediocre who charges lower rates. All these results to non-acquisition of skill or in most cases emergence of mediocre. In furtherance of this those that managed to conclude the trainings could not afford the capital to startup their own business. They concluded that these factors pose real threat to emergence of entrepreneurs and effective entrepreneurship development. I feel that in as much as charges are supposed to be minimal, it is note-worthy to say that one that needs a skill should be ready to make some sacrifices. This still brings up the issue of the readiness of the youths to even acquire the skills.

Ayegba and Omale (2016) in their work “A study of factors affecting Entrepreneurial Development in Nigeria”, underscored the psychological impediments of constant postponement or even outright termination of trainings as a result of epileptic power supply. They argued that this poses a great constraint to effective entrepreneurship training and development in the country and called for urgent intervention by the government in the power sector if the hope for effective skill is to be attained or realized. I agree that issue of power supply poses a great threat.

Usman (2013) in her work “Entrepreneurship Education and Training of Women Entrepreneurs in Gombe state observed that low level of understanding of programme intent creates a psychological gap in the participants. This leads to low level of interest by existing students and poses a great challenge to entrepreneurship development in Nigeria. She suggested that training curriculum must possess adequate sensitization to educate and arouse the interest of participants, and the courses must be reduced to the cognitive level of participants if meaningful result is to be achieved. Our concern is what could now be the impediment to graduates who seem to understand the policy intent. It seems that the issue goes beyond understanding of policy intent.

Arogundade (2014) argued that entrepreneurship development programmes must be extended over a reasonable timeline to convince the people that it was meant to bring empowerment. Citing examples of youth entrepreneurship programmes in Ogun State during the regime of Otunba Gbenga Daniels, he lamented the situations where and when such programmes lasted for just two days. One then wondered how such programmes could engender skill acquisition and subsequent entrepreneurship. He opined that effective entrepreneurship programme must provide for enough time for learning and chances for practical performance. I believe that it also bothers on the issue of politicization of the process.

Okenwa and Oraka (2017) in the work challenges and prospects of Entrepreneurship Training and Development in Nigeria identified challenges facing entrepreneurship development in the country. Utilizing survey design, the study administered questionnaire to a sample of 135 respondents in Awka South LGA of Anambra State. Data obtained was analyzed with mean and standard deviation. The study found out among others that most of the business men still do not recognize the need to acquire skills that can improve their competence and managerial knowledge. This lack of competence and managerial skill affects entrepreneurship development. I am inclined to support this view as business culture in Nigeria seems not to emphasize on the necessity of education in the sphere.

In his study of entrepreneurship development in the suburbs of Tema region in Ghana, Kwabena (2012) emphasized on the motivational aspect of vocational skills acquisition programmes. He observed that the establishment of skills acquisition centres in the suburbs created high level of interest and in-depth participation in the apprenticeship model of skill acquisition

programme in Tema region. The result is emergence of competent artisans and craftsmen in the region which led to stimulation of wide range of economic activities within the region. However, the study did not emphasize on the training process which is at the center of skills acquisition. The existence of skills centres alone cannot explain the success story. The issue of funding, trainings, personality traits of participants are fundamental elements of the entrepreneurship process. The study tends to relegate these factors.

All the above views portray a growing concern on the implication of psychological disposition-attitude of participants and eventual participation in the programme. Lamentably, while some participants in skills acquisition programmes are not convinced of the capacity of the programmes to alleviate their plight, some do not even attempt to engage in the first place. Literatures on the concept of entrepreneurship development are suggestive of the fact that effective entrepreneurship development requires confidence in the competence of the programme and a strong will to succeed by intending entrepreneurs.

3. ANALYSIS OF STATISTICS OF CORPS MEMBERS' PARTICIPATION IN THE SAED PROGRAMME IN ANAMBRA STATE

The SAED Programme was introduced on 29th March 2012 and was first carried out in the Batch A 2012 orientation exercise. As at 2015, over 500,000 corps members have participated in the programme; out of which about 1600 of them have been able to establish business across the country (NYSC News, 42nd Anniversary Edition, JAFMA 36, 2015). By 2017, the number of participants rose to over 1,000,000, while business establishment increased to above 2000 (Dan Abia 2017). As at the 2012 orientation exercise, the programme had the initial hiccups being in its introductory stage and as such participation was minimal. However, by 2013, the initial set backs were gradually addressed and the programme could be said to operate in full force.

In Anambra State which the study focuses its analysis, the SAED programme has vigorously been carried out since its inception. A table indicating number of corps members posted to the state and number that participated in the SAED programme from 2013 – 2018 is presented below;

Table 1: IN CAMP TRAINING IN ANAMBRA STATE (2012 – 2018)

YEAR	BATCH	TOTAL NO REGISTERED		TOTAL	TOTAL NO THAT PARTICIPATED IN SAED IN CAMP TRAINING		TOTAL
		Male	Female		Male	Female	
2012	Batch A	908	1413	2321	718	1182	1900
	Batch B	1421	1011	2432	1205	998	2203
	Total	2329	2124	4753	1923	2180	4103
2013	Batch A	1008	881	1889	967	845	1812
	Batch B	1109	976	2085	1081	939	2020
	Batch C	989	943	1931	94	914	1860
	Total	3106	2800	5905	2142	2698	5692
2014	Batch A	876	785	1661	848	755	1603
	Batch B	1950	892	2842	923	853	1776
	Batch C	1246	1167	2413	1206	1108	2314
	Total	4072	2844	6916	2977	2716	5693
2015	Batch A	1257	1424	2681	1206	1394	2600
	Batch B	2568	2041	4609	2527	1993	4520
	Total	3825	3465	7290	3733	3387	7120
2016	Batch A	1828	2148	3976	1494	1796	3290
	Batch B	2256	2667	4923	1585	1974	3557
	Total	4084	4815	8899	3077	3077	6847
2017	Batch A	2504	2762	5266	1979	1874	3853
	Batch B	1515	2087	3602	675	1452	2127
	Total	4019	4849	8868	2654	3326	5980
2018	Batch A	1583	1926	3509	1181	1326	2507
	Batch B	2302	2562	4864	1624	1508	3132
	Total	3885	4488	8373	2805	2934	6639

Source: SAED Branch; NYSC Anambra State Secretariat 2018

Equally, a table indicating the number of corps members that participated and completed the post camp training is presented below (the details of the post camp trainers has been attached as an appendix):

Table 2: POST CAMP TRAINING IN ANAMBRA STATE (2013 – 2017)

S/N	SKILL AREA	YEAR/NO OF PARTICIPANTS					TOTAL
		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	
1.	Agro Allied	27	24	28	17	26	122
2.	Automobile	6	9	7	11	8	41
3.	Construction	–	2	3	6	13	24
4.	Cosmetology	56	70	66	50	79	321
5.	Culture & Tourism	64	77	86	80	119	326
6.	Education	–	–	5	11	8	24
7.	Environment	2	9	9	13	10	43
8.	Film & photography	8	11	17	28	41	105
9.	Information Communication Technology	23	20	32	37	59	181
10.	Food processing	12	26	21	32	39	130
11.	Beautification	–	4	6	5	11	26
12.	Power and energy	9	7	16	21	26	79
13.	Total	207	249	296	301	452	1505

Source: SAED branch, NYSC Anambra State 2018

Furthermore, a summarized/abridged table showing the number of corps members that participated in the in camp training and number that completed the post camp training indicating its difference and percentage

Table 3: PERCENTAGE RATIO OF IN-CAMP TO POST CAMP SAED TRAINING

S/N	YEAR	IN-CAMP TRAINING	POST CAMP TRAINING	DIFFERENCE	PERCENTAGE RATIO
	2013	5692	207	5485	3.6%
	2014	5693	249	5444	4.4%
	2015	7120	296	6824	4.2%
	2016	6847	301	6566	4.4%

Source: SAED branch, NYSC Anambra State, Awka 2017

Furthermore, a table showing the number of business enterprises setup by corps members that participated in the SAED programme within the period is presented below:

Table 4: NUMBER OF RECORDED BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENT INDICATING NATURE OF BUSINESS ESTABLISHED

S/N	SKILL AREA	YEAR/NO OF PARTICIPANTS				TOTAL
		2013	2014	2015	2016	
1.	Agro Allied	4	11	28	33	76
2.	Automobile	–	–	2	4	6
3.	Construction	1	–	–	2	3
4.	Cosmetology	6	14	11	23	54
5.	Culture & Tourism	9	21	30	25	85
6.	Education	–	–	1	2	3
7.	Environment	–	2	–	5	7
8.	Film & photography	2	6	11	10	28
9.	Information Communication Technology	4	11	17	21	53
10.	Food processing	5	8	6	16	35
11.	Beautification	–	–	3	5	11

12.	Power and energy	–	2	4	3	9
14.	Total	30	75	113	149	357

Source: SAED Branch, NYSC Secretariat, Anambra State 2017

From the table above, a total of 357 business ventures were recorded to have been established by participants of the SAED programme from 2013 – 2016. However, the scope and size of such business was not ascertained.

A very critical aspect of the SAED programme especially as it relates to establishment of business ventures is the issue of funding and accessibility to such funding.

The table below presents a list of loan, grant, aid etc indicating year, amount, and institution issuing such.

Table 5: LIST OF RECIPIENTS OF LOANS, GRANTS, AIDS, SUPPORT ETC, INDICATING YEAR, AMOUNT AND ISSUING ORGANIZATION

S/N	YEAR	NATURE OF CREDIT FACILITY	NO OF RECEIPIENTS	ISSUING ORGANIZATION
1.	2013	Loan Grants/Aid Support	5 1 –	Bank of Industry/Bank of Agriculture/CBN
2.	2014	Loan Grants/Aid Support	3 3 2	Bank of Industry/CBN NYSC Foundation
3.	2015	Loan Grants/Aid Support	6 7 –	Bank of Industry/Bank of Agriculture, CBN, SMEDAN
4.	2016	Loan Grants/Aid Support	6 3 5	CBN/BOI CBN, NYSC Foundation/Hope Alive Foundation
TOTAL			41	

Source: SAED Branch, NYSC secretariat, Anambra State 2017

From the table, a total of 41 recipients benefitted from various sources of credit facility to facilitate their entrepreneurship endeavours. The amount received varied from N250,000, N300,000, N500,000, N750,000 and N1,000,000 (Source SAED Branch NYSC Anambra State, 2017). From the above data presented, it is glaring that the average corps members are aware of the NYSC Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED). Equally, majority of them have either participated or are participating in the programme as the respondents were of the opinion that the programme is of good intention.

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

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

More still, training centres does not exist in all the Local Government Areas especially in the remote ones. The greed and exploitative tendencies of the trainers could also an inhibiting factor. All these factors combined or separately could account for the low number recorded in the post camp training. This in turn will have a negative impact on the programme. This is not encouraging, and leads to the question of how willing are the corps members will be to continue in the programme. It raises the fundamental question of motivation to participate.

It is important to note that components of effective motivation include adequate sensitization, availability of conducive training environment, quality lectures/trainings, availability of skill acquisition centre, smooth accessibility to credit facilities etc. How well or otherwise, these are provided for and coordinated will undoubtedly influence the level of interest, participation and success of the programme. Going by the respondents, it is glaring that operators of the scheme has not really provided these enabling environment. The NYSC has constantly lamented the inadequacy of fund to effectively run the programme.

Unfortunately, too, almost two-third of the NYSC orientation camp are not permanent camps implying that they are using (borrowed) secondary schools or centres for the purpose of orientation course exercise (NYSC News: JAFMA 36 2015). The implication is that most of the facilities needed for effective camping are not available. Some of these camps lack lecture venues, and as such lectures holds in the open field either under the sun or in the rain. No seats are available and participants rent chairs from vendors either with money or depositing of their ID Cards.

In some instances, they are meant to sit for long period of time in the In-camp trainings. As it stands now, NYSC does not seem to have a notable skill acquisition centre in any camp or area in any state of the federation except the one being constructed in Jigawa state orientation camp by Access bank PLC. They are only operating with identified (and possibly registered trainers) training centres and trainers who in mostly cases decides the terms of engagement independently with the corps member. In most instances, they charge exorbitant amounts which in turn discourage most of the corps members.

The issue of access to fund for even those who completed the post camp training is also a grey area. In the case of availability of credit facilities, the NYSC have signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with some financial agencies. However, accessibility to such fund has not been easy. Corps members most times do not get much support from the NYSC in the application and accessibility of this fund especially if it is done within the time when such participant is an ex-corps member. This brings a lot of frustration.

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

One of the cardinal objectives of the SAED programme is to create a change in value perception in the corps members from the quest for white collar jobs towards vocational skill acquisition and self-employment. For this to occur, participants need to be convinced from the onset that the programme is real and workable. This requires enhanced and sustainable motivation. This becomes needful considering the fact that in 2016 and 2017, there is a clear indication that the number of in-camp training participants is dropping. For instance, in 2015, a total of 7290 corps members was registered out which 6847 participated in the In-camp training (with just a difference of 170). But in 2016, out of 8899 registered corps members, 6847 participated in the In-camp (a difference of 2052) while in 2017, out of 8868 registered in camp, 6036 participated in the In-camp training (a difference of 2832). This trend is discouraging and calls for an urgent effort by the NYSC.

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

Based on the forgoing, it is expedient to evaluate the operation of the programme and how far it is addressing youth entrepreneurship development in Nigeria. It is noteworthy to point out that increase in self-employment and reduction of youth unemployment is the foremost reason for the introduction of the programme. Furthermore, the presentation of number of recorded business establishment by participants of the SAED programme in Anambra State indicated that a total of 357 businesses were established from 2013 to 2016. Majority of the business endeavours are in agro allied, cosmetology, culture and tourism and ICT. Within this period (2013 – 2016) a total of 25,352 participated in In-camp training, while 1053 completed the post camp training. Although the number of business establishment represents about 35% of those that completed post camp training, when it is compared to the number that participated in In-camp training (25,352) or the number of corps members actually registered (29,010), it is only representing a meagre fraction. In essence, it does not really portray a significant impact on unemployment. It therefore becomes necessary to evaluate the factors that could have led to decline in participation or more importantly the inhibitions against establishment of business enterprise by even those that completed the post camp training. A key element in this regard is funding. The NYSC management has categorically stated that it lacks the requisite fund to run the programme talk less of providing credit for participants. As a way out they entered into partnership with some stakeholders through memoranda of understanding. Notable among them are Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Bank of Industry (BOI), Bank of Agriculture (BOA), Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), NYSC Foundation, Hope Alive Foundation etc. These agencies are to provide fund/credit facilities for intending entrepreneurs who have participated in the SAED programme.

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

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the cardinal objectives of the SAED programme is to create a change in value perception in the corps members from the quest for white collar jobs towards vocational skill acquisition and self-employment. For this to occur, participants need to be convinced from the onset that the programme is real and workable. This requires enhanced and sustainable motivation. Against this backdrop the research examined graduates' unemployment reduction in Nigeria, using the NYSC's Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) Programme as a case in point. The study reveals that corps members are aware, appreciate and participate in the in-camp training. However, there seems to be a very sharp decline in participation between the in-camp and post camp segments of the programme as very few participates in the post-camp exercise (where the real or main skill acquisition training is expected to take place). The reduction in number in the post-camp training is occasioned by some evidenced challenges ranging from uncondusive training/seminar venues, attitude of trainers, inadequate time etc. and leads to loss of interest in the programme. This is coupled with the fact that the post camp training attracts payment, and the NYSC is not actually involved in the negotiation of the terms of engagement of the corps members with the trainers in the post-camp training. More still, training centres does not exist in all the Local Government Areas especially in the remote ones. In line with the foregoing, the study recommends that for effective and efficient skill acquisition and participation of corps members both in the in-camp and post-camp training exercise, motivations such as adequate sensitization, availability of conducive training environment, quality lectures/trainings, availability of skill acquisition centre, smooth accessibility to credit facilities etc. should be made available. Similarly, adequate monitoring and coordination is *sine qua non* for effective and efficient skill acquisition by corps members.

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