Youth Empowerment Programs and Socio-Economic Development in Gombe State: An Assessment of N-Teach 2016-2021

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Abstract

This study seeks to examine the role of the N-Teach Program on youth empowerment in Gombe state. The study used both the primary and secondary sources of data. At the end of the research, it was revealed that there is a strong relationship between N-Teach Program and youth and empowerment in the state. To improve on the achievements so far made, the study recommended that Government should put in place certain mechanisms that can regulate the activities of the bureaucrats and involve stakeholders in the implementation and monitoring of such the program.

Keywords: Youth, Youth Empowerment, N-Teach, Economic Development and Employment

Introduction

The youth are the greatest assets or target that any nation can have, and are also legitimately regarded as the future leaders. They are potentially the greatest investment for a country's development, because they serve as a good measure of the extent to which a country can reproduce as well as sustain itself. In developed countries especially the western countries, the government invests huge financial resources in human capital development, especially among the youthful age on the fact that the youth have sufficient energy, creative drives, and desire to change their world. The United Nations (2019) report shows that the global youth population in 2019 is estimated at 2 billion while sub- Saharan Africa youth population is placed at 211 million (2020,p 23) . Precisely, in Nigeria, the estimated population of the youth between the ages of 18-35 is 52.8 percent. By implication, 70 percent of Nigeria's populations are youth (Fayehum & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2020). With these statistics, therefore Nigeria stands the chance of harnessing the potentials of the youth considering their number.

 In an effort to take advantage of this population of youth in Nigeria, previous governments both military and civilian have adopted policy measures managing the youth by making efforts in reducing the rate of unemployment especially among them. As part of its intervention, governments introduced a good number of youth empowerment and skill acquisition Programs for the unemployed who fall within the youth age bracket. Some of the Programs are sponsored by government while others are sponsored by private organization signifying a collaborative among stakeholders. These areas includes Agriculture, vocational training, mechanic and artisan jobs in various fields of specialization supported by special training and workshops organized for the beneficiaries and complemented by financial intervention to support take-off after acquiring the knowledge. It was deliberately meant to keep them engage in livelihood and give them the opportunities to earn a meaningful living and contribute the economic and social development of Nigeria.

The efforts of the government towards youth failed to achieve its target goal despite all efforts. The National Bureau of Statistics (2020) reported that the youth unemployment rate was around 53.40 percent in 2020 while the figure continued to shoot up as of January 2021. The growing number of unemployed youths is accompanied with parallel escalation in criminal activities in the society, threatening the security of the whole country thereby impeding the development pace so far achieved. It is in realization of the growing dynamics of this problem that the Nigerian government through the N-Power policy introduced several programs and cutting across all tiers of government with a view to achieve wider coverage. Gombe state therefore is one of the states that attempted to make the best use of the programs by ensuring their take-off and supervising its implementation through proper evaluation mechanism, and among the programs is the N-Teach aimed at empowering the educated youth in the state by engaging them in service provision in schools. This research therefore, seeks to study this youth empowerment (N-Teach) and reduction in youth unemployment and economic empowerment of the group in Gombe State.

Methodology
The study generated data from primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include information gathered from a questionnaire administered across a sample of 384 respondents arrived at using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table sampling. The sample was drawn from the three senatorial district of the state where systematic method was used to select a local government from each zone, and proportionately the questionnaires were distributed based on the populations of the local governments as provided by the census figure, and a purposive technique was adopted to distribute the questionnaires which was based on the number of beneficiaries of the program in the selected local governments, and the figures are 130 for Akko local government in the Central Senatorial district, 74 questionnaires for Billiri local government in the South and 160 for Gombe local government in the North.
A total of 357 questionnaires were retrieved and the information was analyzed using Chi-square statistics to test the relationship between the N-Teach program and youth empowerment in the state.
The secondary sources on the other hand were gathered from existing literature on the topic from Books, Journals, Periodicals and Internet sources. The information here forms the basis for review of literature and a guide to understanding an existing unsolved gap.
Hypothesis
The study generated and attempts to test the following hypothesis:
Ho-There is no significant relationship between N-Teach and Youth Empowerment in Gombe State.
H1-There is a significant relationship between N-Teach and Youth Empowerment in Gombe State.

Youth Empowerment

In this part the review of relevant literature is to critically examine the views and issues concerning youth Empowerment in a global context. Zambrano (2007:75) notes that; "Youth Empowerment is an attractive and powerful concept and that, for precisely these reasons, it has been used internationally as a tool in the struggle against poverty and underdevelopment"." By implication youth empowerment had assumed a center-stage in government efforts to properly utilize youth in societal development. It is against this background that the commonwealth Youth Program document (2007, p. 17) observed that;

> Young people are empowered when they acknowledge that they have or can create choice, make an informed decision freely, take actions based on that decision and accept responsibility for the consequence of those actions. Empowering young people means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others.

Therefore, youth empowerment is primarily centered on the interest of the target participants emanating from independent initiative and willingness to learn certain trade that may be supportive to his future and beneficial to the country. This is by implication caring for the younger ones and creating an enabling environment for them to explore their God-given talents and other capabilities. The participation or empowering youth will led to self-reliance and make them to become independent (Pick & Somerville, 2007), and so long as they are willingly engage in economic activities their minds will shy away from social vices that may be a threat to the society. Stakeholders and social scientists exposes the benefits of youth empowerment at all levels of governance and even the international level because they had a general consensus that what let to poverty and underdevelopment is the absent of empowerment and the only solution to this is introducing a viable and sustainable program. empowerment simply mean social-action that promotes participation of people, organizations, and communities towards the goals of increased individual and community control, political efficacy, improved quality of community life, and social justice (Uzoh, 2015). The benefits associated with this therefore are comprehensive and cut across all social strata that can shape the actions and inactions of citizens. Therefore, empowerment remains as tools for human development that promote the life of the people.

Whitmore (1988, p. 63) viewed empowerment from the following; angles:

> Individuals are assumed to understand their own needs better than anyone else and therefore should have the power both to define and act upon people possess strengths upon which they can build; Empowerment is a lifelong endeavor and personal knowledge and experience are valid and useful in coping effectively.

The discussion is centered around the individual willingness to exploit his or her capabilities based on choice and interest therefore, people generally have interest in one profession or the other and excel in that direction if and when given the opportunity to do that. Furthermore, the conceptualization by the scholar is more comprehensive because the whole focus is on the individual. Individual strength and principles of division of labor is given emphasis based on personal knowledge and experience which serve as the driving force for engagement. And furthermore, the scholar is firm in believing that every individual possesses one or the other area of expertise that he or she may contribute to humanity. Youth empowerment programs can be very effective is these key areas are being taken into consideration.

Fried (2006, p. 46) corroborated the position with his assertion that empowerment is;

> an increase in the resources and capability accountability from the institutions that affect their lives. Empowerment is a social-action process that promotes participation of people, organizations, and

> communities toward the goals of increased individual and community control, political efficacy, improve quality of community life and social justice.

It is focused on resources accountability by government institutions that directly affect the lives of citizens. The scholar also held the position that empowerment is a social-action process that encourages and promotes collective participation in efforts to improve the quality of community life and social justice.

Furthermore, Rappaport, (2011, p. 79) pointed out that; "empowerment means our aim should be enhance the possibilities for people to control their own lives". People understand their own needs far better than anyone else and as a result should have the power both to define and act upon them. Hence, empowerment is applicable to individuals, organization and community. For instance, as an individual it can be in form of participation in community and organizations, as an organizational include collective decision making and shared leadership, at the community might include collective action to access government and other community resources. Outcome of empowerment for individuals include situation specific perceived control and resources mobilization skills, for organizational include development of organizational networks, organizational growth and policy leverage, and for the community includes evidence of pluralism, and existence of organizational coalitions, and accessible community resources. It is a process mechanism of individuals, organizations and communities to acquire or acquiring control over their lives (Rappaport, 1987). Empowerment is a collective responsibility of both individuals and community to design a mechanism of acquiring knowledge and control over their livelihood meaning that empowerment evolves in different contexts. Similarly, Zimmerman (1995, p. 56) believes that;

> empowerment can be defined as a social process in various dimensions that help people gain control over their own lives." It is a social process because it has to do with social programs that can enhance the standard of living of citizens of a country and inculcating into the youth the spirit of self-reliance.

It is a process of helping citizens out of social problems which can only be achieved through well-designed social program such as the ones designed and implemented by the Federal Government of Nigeria which cover a wider scope of professional endeavor. Empowerment is a process of empowering (i.e. ability to implement) individuals, whether for their own lives or within society and freedom of action on issues that occur in their environment (Page & Czuba, 1999). It is acquiring the ability to master something freely based on interest that may be beneficial to individual and society as a whole, and in this case emphasis is placed on freedom of choice which means that the introduction of several programs by the government was deliberate and intended so that there can be a leverage of flexibility. Buttressing the environmental element, Perkins and Zimmerman (1995, p. 23) viewed empowerment as "a process that links the well-being of individuals to a vast environment." This stresses the link between individual action and his surrounding environment especially how he impacted on it positively. Empowerment therefore is the individuals or groups who have the ability to determine their own success and will develop a "build" process that will help the public in controlling the factors affecting their lives (Cole, 2006). The individuals and the group are the ones that determine their own success, and initiating strategies that may lead to success of this venture chosen.

Wallerstein (1993) believed that; "Empowerment puts people at the center of the development process, and is a participatory approach to development focusing on bottom-up approach rather than top-down approach. Empowerment is generally seen as a key to quality life, increased human dignity, good governance, pro-poor growth, project effectiveness and improved service delivery". Empowerment is a technique that impacted meaningfully on community development. It is achieved through a thorough understanding of how each community is made up culturally, their political orientation so that quality of lives and dignity will be enhanced.

There is almost a general consensus among scholars and the political elites about the importance of empowerment program to shaping the future of youth and exploiting their potentials for national development. The opportunities and freedom of participation of people in a decision making in the government activities will enhance the life of the citizens in the state. The participation of youth into the government activities and their input of demand can influence the government policy and the outcome of such demand by the government will affect the lives of citizens positively. Empowerment is one of the policy or models for understanding the process and consequences of effort to exert control and influence over decision that affect one's life, organizational functioning, and the quality of community life (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995).

The N-Power Program as a Component of the Social Investment Programmes

In June 2016 the federal government of Nigeria introduced a programme tagged N-Power to address the issues of youth unemployment and help increase social development. The program targeted all unemployed graduates and non-graduates between the ages of 18 and 35, for a period of two years in all the states of the federation. The N-Power Programme, under the National Social Investment Program, is the Federal Government of Nigeria's direct intervention to tackle youth unemployment and re-energize public service delivery in four key sectors {Education, Agriculture, Health and Vocational Training}.

Buttressing the position of the federal government, the Sustainability In Action (2023:1) emphatically set the strategy of the whole program to; "Facilitate youths social, educational, economic, political, and psychological empowerment Provide technical support to youth in their social and economic development issues Link youths and development stakeholders Help youth to access and to take advantage of social and economic opportunities." In pursuance of the policy, in 2019 the federal government disclosed that they have spent a total of ₦279b since they started paying the scheme beneficiaries from December 2016 to June 2019. The scheme currently has six categories namely; N-Teach, N-Health, N-Agro, N-Build, N-Creative and N-Tech. N-Teach and N-Health are available to only graduates who must have completed the mandatory one year NYSC program, while N-Agro, N-Build, N-Creative and N-Tech is available to graduates and non-graduates (Izuchukwu, 2023).

The program is well-designed and comprehensive because it covers the basic areas that touched the lives of Nigerians and has the potentials to create jobs for the teaming youth in the country. So far from inception, 500,000 youth have benefited from the program in all the batches of its implementation (N-P0wer, 2023). This figure includes those that benefited from Gombe State in all the categories of the program.

The N-Power Teach according to Izuchukwu (2023 p. 3) is a;

> program helps improve basic education in Nigerian communities.
> Volunteers are deployed as teachers' assistants in primary schools

where they engage with students to foster relationships and build confidence while supporting their educational development.

Because of the importance and priority attached to education, the beneficiaries are engaged as assistants in primary schools to cover the gap in the requirement of such teachers. They equally serve as social mobilizers that attempt to change the thinking and perception of most Nigerian youth towards education.

Gombe state is fully active in the program and youth were engaged and deployed to some primary schools under the scheme to complement the services of career teachers in the respective schools. Theoretically the situation in the state is captured by Rappaport J., Zimmerman, Solomon and Swift Levine were they based their arguments on the need to humanize development policies and program; development theory recognizes power as a key element for bringing about effective social change; Empowerment as a concept is seen as freedom of choice and action that increase control over the resources and decisions that affect the life of an individual and the capabilities of the poor to undertake future self-help program through the concept of participation. It is a people oriented approach of making the community involved in the whole process rather than one with a focus on process and system which can exclude the community. It is in acknowledgement of this position that opined that; The programs proved the literature reviewed that skills acquisition is a measure to reduce the inequitable system that leaves certain population isolated, marginalized and without access to important resources Khalid, 2021). Nigeria   initiated different empowerment program have been introduced and designed especially for the youth to become self-reliance and to reduce poverty among them.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1 – Contingency Table

Variables	SD	D	NI	A	SA	RT
People Oriented	10	15	11	14	06	56
Good Implementation	14	20	13	20	11	78
Income Generation	12	34	10	60	09	123
Create Employment	20	28	12	30	10	100
CT	56	95	46	124	36	357

Source: Field work 2022

The table shows that ten (10) respondents strongly disagreed, while fifteen (15) respondents disagreed, eleven (11) on the other hand pretended they had no idea of the programme, fourteen (14) agreed that it is people oriented and six (6) strongly agreed. On the implementation of the programme fourteen strongly disagreed, twenty (20) of the respondents disagreed, thirteen (13) said they had no idea, twenty (20) on the other hand agreed and eleven (11) strongly agreed that the implementation of the programme was good. Respondent's reaction regarding the programme as a means of income generation among youth in the state, twelve (12) strongly disagreed, thirty four (34) disagreed while ten (10) no idea, sixty (60) agreed and nine (9)

strongly agreed. On means of creating employment, twenty (20) strongly disagreed, twenty eight (28) disagreed, twelve (12) had no idea, thirty (30) agreed and ten (10) disagreed. This frequency of respondents on the variables guide the research and provided a clear understanding of respondents as to how they ranked the policy from its initial level to its end goal. All the responses were used as the observed frequency which facilitates the calculation of the Chi-square for scientific testing of the hypothesis stated.

Table 2 – Chi-Square Table

Chi-Square Table

O	E	O – E	$(O - E)^2$	$\dfrac{(O - E)^2}{E}$
10	8.75	1.22	1.49	0.17
14	12.24	1.76	3.10	0.25
12	19.29	-7.29	53.14	2.75
20	15.69	4.31	18.58	1.18
15	14.90	0.1	0.01	0.00
20	20.76	-0.76	0.58	0.03
32	32.73	-0.73	0.53	0.02
28	26.61	1.39	1.93	0.07
11	7.22	3.78	14.29	1.98
13	10.05	2.95	8.70	0.87
10	15.85	-5.85	34.22	2.16
12	12.89	-0.89	0.79	0.06
14	19.45	-5.45	29.70	1.53
20	27.09	-7.09	50.27	1.86
60	42.72	17.28	298.60	6.99
30	34.73	-4.73	22.37	0.65
06	5.65	0.35	0.12	0.02
11	7.87	3.13	9.80	1.25
09	12.40	-3.4	11.56	0.93
10	10.08	-0.08	0.01	0.00
				$X^2=22.8$

$X^2 = 22.80$
df= (C-1) (R-1) = (5-1) (4-1)
 1 x 1 =1

Based on the information in table 1 above, the chi-square table presents the calculation of the statistics which helped in arriving at the expected frequency because the data is for Test of Independence leading to its conclusion where the result of the calculation arrived at was 22.8. Similarly, the degree of freedom (df) was calculated and the result is 1df at 5% margin of error which is 0.05 level of significance.

Table 3 – Table of Analysis

Frequency	N	$\bar{X}$	X^2 cal$_1$	df	Critical V.	C	Rank
People Oriented	357						
Good Implementation	357						
Income Generation	357	178.5	22.8	1	3.841	0.9	$
Create Employment	357						

The total number of questionnaires retrieved from respondents was 357 and the mean of the population stood at 178.5. The calculated chi-square is 22.8 and at 1 degree of freedom, the table value is 3.841. Furthermore, the level of association was calculated using contingency coefficient which is suitable for test of independence and the result is 0.9.

From the calculation above therefore, the calculated chi-square value which is 22.8 is greater than the table value which is 3.841 and therefore the study rejects the Null Hypothesis (H – H$_0$ # H$_1$), meaning that there is a significant relationship between the policy and youth empowerment in the state. Although based on the measure of association calculated which is 0.9 signifying that there is no strong relationship but that notwithstanding the policy had impacted significantly on youth empowerment in Gombe state.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusively therefore, one can draw a conclusion that introducing the policy in Gombe state means;

  i. That the policy is people oriented and has the capacity to address problems of youth not only in urban areas but even those in rural communities

  ii. The implementation of the program is considered to be good because by virtue of the trade it is meant for only those with educational qualification required, and are being sent to an area where their presence is noticed

iii. The youth that are enrolled in the program the take-home pay given to them is a source of income generation which invariably can reduce poverty among the youth in the state, and

iv. For those engaged in the policy it is a source of employment and a job is being created which can reduce the level of unemployment among youth in the state.

Finally therefore, majority of the respondent are of the opinion that the N-Teach Program has significantly impacted on Youth development and the general livelihood of the beneficiaries in Gombe State despite the fact that the majority of its citizens especially the youth are still unemployed.

The following recommendations were made to assist in improving the policy and to guide policy makers to improve on what is already on ground with a view to addressing the problems of youth in the society:

1. Government should introduce more policies similar to N-Tech and stakeholders should be given more roles to play so that all empowerment programs should be targeted at developing the youth and to reduce the rate of poverty among them.

2. More Youth in the community should be involved in the empowerment program with wider scope such as design and skills that will affect them positively in order to improve their income.

3. Government should be ensure that the intended beneficiaries of the program are identified and the targeted group are reached without diversion based on some primordial reasons, and

4. Governments have to initiate comprehensive methods of supervision on the program so as to ensure service delivery.

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