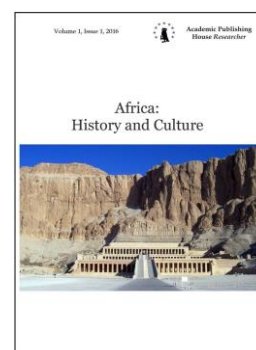


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Origin and Trajectory of National Youth Service Programme in Africa: An Exploratory Review

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Abstract

This paper explored the origin and trajectory of the National Youth Service Programme in Africa with a view to understanding its visions as well as intended benefits. It attempted to conceptualise the National Youth Service using the four most commonly found programme models of National Youth Service in a bid to clarifying the dimensional intents of the scheme across countries in Africa. This paper also depicted the trajectory by discussing the growing attention to National Youth Service in Sub-Saharan Africa; re-envisioned and emerging programmes in the continent; National Youth Service programme goals and the focus on youth employability in Africa; as well as, understanding the scale of National Youth Service in Africa vis-à-vis its institutional arrangement and access to funding. Secondary data were fittingly utilized for this paper. It, however, provided a synopsis of the current trends of the National Youth Service Programme in Africa. It also concluded that National Youth Service Programme in respective African countries must continue to exhibit the vision, the integrity and the commitment which have taken the scheme from its humble beginnings to the echelon of being an important national institution in the development of state-building across nations in Africa.

Keywords: Emerging Programmes in Africa, National Youth Service, Regional Development, Voluntary Service Schemes.

1. Introduction

In many African states, the human endowment is a conglomeration of different ethnic groups (Asiabaka, 2002). It has an estimated population (World Bank, 2005) with dynamic youth below 30 years of age, constituting up to 80 % of the population and of a similar percentage of the labour force (Adesope, 2007; Asiabaka, 2002). Hence, the importance of youth in development at any level is without a doubt. With reference to the Global Conference on National Youth Service Report, the benefit of the youth service scheme cannot be undermined in the face of its potential developmental drive in the life of a nation-state. However, the outcomes/results of the programme depend on structure, the input of the youths themselves, service attitude towards scheme, observation, and understanding of the youth in service. It was also revealed that the evaluation of Youth programmes in countries where the scheme recorded success on the value of service rendered by participants equates to, or seems greater than the cost of the Scheme. Also, the scheme has reposed experiences and benefits on the participants, such as opportunities for career assessment, self-esteemed and increased consciousness of the needs of others (Okafor, Essien, 1994).

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In spite of these explicated virtues of the programme, there seem to be some indications of ineffectiveness in social peace, rural transformation and development in key spheres of the economy; thereby leading to their opinion for an outright cancellation of the programme owing to its high cost of governance in African countries. It is therefore important to put the programme in perspectives with the aim of ensuring its consistent relevance to the constantly changing needs of the society; hence, this paper.

2. Towards Conceptualising National Youth Service Programme

According to the National Youth Development Agency, National Youth Service is a service programme which mainly facilitates continuing and effective ways of reconstructing society by developing the capacities and capabilities of the youth through community service and learning. This concept is central to the development process in any society. As described by Kingston (2015: 87), “National Youth Service is a platform for empowering youths through core Values; steering participants toward national service; and facilitating career development through exposure to specific career options, as well as assisting in the improvement of academic qualifications”.

More elaborately, National Youth Service, as explained by Marenin (1990) and Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP) (2010), is a public programme instituted by government to imbibe a culture of service by assisting youth to contribute constructively in nation-building; social unity; understanding their role in preferment of civic awareness, loyalty and national building; developing the need skills, expertise and knowledge of youth to make the adulthood feasible; enabling their experience for employability, and further academic learning opportunities; harnessing unexploited human resources and actualizing the delivery of the nation’s development objectives especially to remote communities. Remarkably, this description lends credence to the cardinal objectives of the National Youth Service Scheme in Nigeria. As rightly observed by Israel and Nogueira-Sanca (2011), National Youth Service can be exemplified in every province and in most countries of the world. The magnitude and latitude of such programme differ widely, depending upon variables such as their structural context, the financing, and the expected outcomes of their sponsoring agencies. National Youth Service is explicated by their populations and their intended effects.

ICP (2010) identified the four (4) programme models of National Youth Service:

a. In-School Service Learning for Secondary School Students - this model is tied to teaching exercise in schools with the intent to meet the educational needs of the communities. It is a model that can be said to be mandatory across districts and counties so as to optimize human and capital development. Surprisingly, this model is expected to be put in place in all African countries. However, contrary to the case, as it is seen to be most feasible in Europe and America. A good example is found in primary schools in New York; and it is, in recent time, being emulated Asia and Latin America.

b. Mandatory Community Service for University Graduates - this is career development-oriented for the youth participants upon the completion of their academic programme at the Universities and other tertiary institutions. It encourages the spirit of commitment to community building. The process aims at harnessing the acquired knowledge of the graduate participants to support community-based projects. The model of mandatory community service is of two-fold benefits: it, on one hand, fosters development through human resources; on the other hand, participants gain an increased understanding of the societal value and heighten their chances of getting employment due to service experiences garnered during the course of the scheme. A common feat of the model is that it is usually coordinated by a government framework. This model of national youth service is development-driven. It is a populist agenda which is, most often, being put in place by countries that are just coming out of wars or crises in Africa. A good case is that of Nigeria. The establishment of NYSC in Nigeria came three years after the civil war of 1967-1970. This was not different from that of Ghana and Somalia.

c. National Youth Service (Population-Wide) - This model emphasizes getting some educated youths across the country to assist in the actualization of pre-established criteria. It is more often than not, a mandatory or supportive initiative by the government. This, in a way, provides room for youth engagement in community service, sometimes with a stipend to garner their momentum in the course of the programme. Its activities mainly centers focus on the provision of social services

such as healthcare, teaching and emergency management (ICP, 2010). This is a common model for most institutionalised youth service programmes across the Africa continent.

d. *Service Programme for Out-Of-School Unemployed Youth* – These programmes, at first, train and empower the youth with needed skills and techniques to carry out development services to rural communities; thus providing the easy access to livelihood opportunities or more formal education and vocational training (ICP, 2010). The model appears to be a new focus of youth civic engagement by sub-units of governments across Africa Countries. State governments of some federations in Africa have organized youth service programme targeted at those who are out of school and not employed. This model seems attractive to harsh economic situations. It can also be addressed as social welfare strategy.

National Youth Service Programme in Africa: Its Origin and Trajectory

As an emerging number of third-world countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America achieved independence, an organization of youth service programme became incumbent in a bid to support developmental drive across key sectors of their economies. Susan Stroud, from Innovations for Civic Participation, has provided a detailed discourse about youth service programme in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, on which this section is based (Kaye, 2003; ICP, 2010). In Africa, the issue of national youth service came to the frontline during the period of colonial independence, especially 1960s and 1970s. Still, at present, numerous programmes persist with momentous changes since the beginning, as it is currently in Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. While, others have been withdrawn, just like Botswana and Tanzania (Progressive Policy Institute, 2005).

The main theme of most African national youth service schemes precipitates on the mobilization of youth for national development. This is with a view to providing youth with opportunities to be active and economically viable through investing their skills, energy and time. Service programmes in Africa provide young people with opportunities to become actively involved in the process of nation-building. These youth participants are, in some clans, called Volunteers. On the shores of Africa, one of the significant benefits of these programmes is that it provides an avenue for disenchanted youth to make a possible impact to their communal environment, influence the policies' directions, civic value engagement I of their nation-states, most times with the hope to empower the less fortunate members of their communities (Berman, 2006).

In many places, the programmes have also assisted the downtrodden to address the basic needs that could not be met themselves due to the lack of economic wherewithal. Civic responsiveness was one of the prominent rationale(s) for the introduction of youth service programmes across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Specifically, in this continent, the coordinating institution(s) of youth service schemes vary from one country to another. In most Islamised nations, such as Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestine, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen, for example, Non-Governmental Organisations and International agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and tertiary institutions work in partnership with the national government but taking a major lead in delivering youth service programme. In countries of the Middle East, such as Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Bahrain, youth service initiatives are, in most cases, sponsored by the national government, with complementary roles played by civil groups, academic communities, and international agencies.

Just like other countries, the policy context of youth scheme is often facilitated by youth civic participation (Kaye, 2003; Young, 2004; Berman, 2006; ICP, 2010; USAID, 2011). While an overview of the current changes in the MENA regions such as youth-led revolution and other youth movements is beyond the space of this study. It is, however, important to note that the youth dimension to civic engagement and service in the MENA is taking a rapid shift to reformation and societal restructuring as an essential part of the youth civic engagement processes. Examples of these youth-led revolutions are abounded, as discussed in a 2010 report by Innovations in Civic Participation entitled Youth Civic Participation in Action. This includes Alashanek ya Balady Association, an Egyptian youth-led Community Service Organization established in 2005 with family-based development, changing social stereotypes and governance inclusion (ICP, 2010).

In Jordan, the community-based Jordan Youth Innovative Forum consisted of more than 1,500 volunteers, with the aim to facilitate greater youth involvement and incorporation into the

development process in the national dialogue. In Kuwait, international agencies, such as the International Monetary Fund and United Nations Children's Fund, have organized a series of symposiums on socio-economic issues for youth entrepreneurship. In the same vein, the same trend could be pinpointed in Lebanon, where the Department of Social Affairs recruited youth to engage in the local development drive, with the support of local groups (ICP, 2010). In the Western part of Africa, the dynamics of youth service programme appear to be slightly different from that of the Northern part of Africa. The establishment of youth service scheme could be dated back to the early 60s after the liberation from colonial rule. In many instances, the programmes were used to attract agile youth with military orientations into the nation-building processes (Perold et al., 2007). Some literature acclaimed that there was a strong political purpose behind the organizational agenda, part of which was to bring about the reconciliation of the defected spheres of the national economic life. While, on the negative instance, Lestimes (2010) exposed that the formation of the youth programmes in some countries was structured towards resisting social critics and political opponents of government actions and policies.

Over the years, some National Youth programmes have been operating on similar objectives for social restructuring. While instances have been cited in some countries who have reinvented the usefulness of the programmes to some other vital sectors of the economy. Sherraden (2001) claimed that a reasonable number of such programmes have been put in place within the last decade. In most cases, the rationale behind the re-direction of the youth scheme revolves around government intent, concern and public benefits specifically on the ever-expanding youth population in most West African countries. Other programmes have resisted the political frustrations, while some have experienced changes owing to the changes in social, political and economic spheres (Billig, 2006; Sherraden, 2001).

A survey of existing literature gives a detailed insight of the outline of National Youth Service country and regional programmes vis-à-vis the launching, re-launching and closing up of the programmes, in some African countries. For instance, as presented in www.icicp.org, see details: 1. Tanzania National Youth Service 1963/2012 Original programme was established in 1963 but closed in 1994 due to a lack of funds (Balile, 2012). A new iteration of its programme was launched in 2012; 2. Zambia National Service 1963/2005 Originally established a programme in 1963 but closed in the 80s. A new programme was launched in 2005; 3. Kenya Kenya National Youth Service 1964; 4. Malawi Young Pioneers (MYP) 1971/2013 Original programme was closed in 1993 due to the politicisation of the group. In 2013 the president announced the re- launch of the programme; 5. Ghana National Service Scheme 1973; 6. Nigeria National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) 1973; 7. Botswana Tirelo Setshaba 1980 Disbanded in 2000 for economic reasons; 8. The Gambia National Youth Service Scheme 1996; 9. Senegal Senegalese National Civic Service 1997; 10. Namibia National Youth Service 1999; 11. Zimbabwe National Youth Service 2001; 12. South Africa National Youth Service 2004; 13. Burkina Faso National Volunteer Programme of Burkina Faso 2005 14. Liberia National Youth Volunteer Service Programme 2007; 15. Cote d'Ivoire National Civic Service Programme 2007; 16. Niger National Volunteer Programme 2007 Disbanded in 2011 due to a lack of funds; 17. Mali National Center for Promotion of Volunteering 2009; 18. Lesotho National Youth Volunteer Corps Project (LNYVCP) 2010, and there was a Lesotho Youth Service (LYS) in the 1970s and 1980s that was disbanded; 19. ECOWAS Youth Volunteer Programme 2010; 20. Togo Promotion Programme of National Volunteering in Togo 2011; 21. AU The African Youth Volunteer Corps 2011; 22. Cape Verde National Programme of Volunteering (PNV) of Cape Verde 2012 *Ministerio de Juventude, Emprego e Desenvolvimento dos Recursos Humanos* (2013); and, 23. Rwanda *Urugerero* 2013, Rwembeho and Mbonyinshuti [2013] (Balile, 2012; ICP, 2010; Lestimes, 2010; Obadare, 2005; Rankopo n.d.; Tibiri, 2013; United Nations, 2010).

Longest Standing National Youth Service Programmes in the Continent

The identified long-standing National Youth Service programmes are Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya. This becomes evident in the number of years in which the programmes have been in existence in the three (3) respective countries, with an aggregate total of 150 years (Kenya – 54, Nigeria – 48 and Ghana – 48). The establishment of the Kenya National Youth Service was in 1964. The programme has, at one time to the other, oscillated between being a voluntary and compulsory programme over the period of its fifty- year existence. In 2014, Kenya's Senate passed a law to

make the service scheme to be compulsory for secondary school graduate. This is to engender an increase in the participants as against the low rates experience. The legislation was however facilitated by the need for vocational skills in the labour market. Just like in other African countries, this programme has stimulated in- depth training and compulsory service (Boniface, 2013).

Both Ghana and Nigeria had started their national programmes in the same year 1973. Though, the NYSC in Nigeria had the programme set up with intention of promoting social unity, ethnic integration and structural development by the skillful university graduates after the end of her civil war in 1970 (ICP, 2010). Currently, the scheme is tending towards the development of skills for self-employment (ICP, 2010). The Ghana National Service Scheme (NSS), on the other hand, is, since inception, instituted for youth and national development. Similarly, the Ghana NSS aims the programme to develop the most pressing sectors by the educated Ghanaians (ICP, 2010). Nevertheless, growing attention has been noticeable on National Youth Service in Africa from the mid-twentieth century. This is evident in the incessant increase in the number of youth service programme across the Gambia and Senegal on the African landscape. The Gambia established its programme to improve moral value system with development orientation for entrepreneurial traits. Almost with a similar objective, Senegal began a national civic service. In the late twentieth century, Namibia followed suit (Shah, 2003). Furthermore, in the early 21st Century, of the National Youth service programmes were established by Zimbabwe and South Africa. In 2001, Zimbabwe's programme was instituted for the social integration of youth from civic and professional life with a high emphasis on entrepreneurial skills development. In 2004, the version of National Youth service programme can be likened as an anti-apartheid struggle. The programme focus aims at countering the apartheid legacies that excluded many African youths the mainstream economy, especially an adequate education (International Labour Organization, ILO, 2007).

New, Re-envisioned and Emerging Programmes in the Continent in the 21st Century

In this century, at least, the launching of a new programme has become a tradition in each year within the continent with the exception of 2006 and 2008. In 2005, Burkina Faso began her programme called National Volunteer Programme with the mission of improving youth's employability. Also, Zambia re-launched, having closed its earlier, the programme though this time around to only accommodate the secondary school graduates who are yet to get admission into universities. The programme also targets at eliminating the issue of street living by the youths. The focus of the programme was however redirected in the year 2012 to facilitate youth skills development (Anon, 2012).

In 2007, after the ten (10) years horrifying civil war, Liberia launched the National Youth Volunteer Service Programme to provide a platform for the youths to make an impact on national economic development. In the same year, Cote d'Ivoire set up a National Youth Service Programme for rehabilitation purpose to re-integrate former rebels and fighters into viable economic sectors of the economy. Also in 2007, Niger started a National Volunteer Programme with dual missions of human resources development and poverty reduction. The programme was discontinued in 2011 owing to a lack of finance. However, it was reported that Niger is currently considering re-launching a national volunteer center (Tibiri, 2013). In 2009, Mali instituted a scheme which is voluntarily spirited; which is called a National Center for Promotion of Volunteering with the broad objective to promote the orientation of youth volunteering and civic values and increase the youth employability. In 2010, Lesotho re-started an envisioned National Youth Volunteer Corps Project owing to the closure of its first Youth Service which was launched in the 1970s; but it ended in 1980s. The newly established programme is geared towards the mobilization of young people to support the government's development aims (UN Volunteers, 2010).

In 2011, Togo started the promotion Programme of National Volunteering in Togo to improve civic engagement; and contribute its quota to the youth employability (Anon, 2013a). In 2012, the National Programme of Volunteering of Cape Verde was established with the sole aim of encouraging the inclusion of young, women and most vulnerable in the socio-economic development processes of the country". Also, it was noted that Tanzania in 2012 had a new iteration of national service for secondary school graduates as a tool for entrenching social unity (Balile, 2012). In 2013, Rwanda launched a new programme in her local parlance, called

Urugerero. This is with the purpose of instilling a sense of self-sustenance and patriotism amongst youth participants. This idea was derived from an ancient practice of individuals leaving their immediate families and wards for state and community assignments (Anon, 2013b; Nsanzimana, 2013). In addition, ten countries across the continent are, in recent times, developing National Youth Service programmes. For example, Burundi was about to launch a National Volunteer Programme, aiming at addressing the crisis of youth unemployment with the support of UNDP/UN Volunteers (Galtieri, 2013).

More remarkably, the International agency began a partnership effort with some African countries in the 21st Century. For instance, UN Volunteers was set up in Mozambique in order to camp issues on poverty and strengthening civil society groups. Also, there was a collaborative effort between the UN Volunteers and the Government of Sierra Leone for the purpose of job creation for the unemployed youths. This was affirmed during a course of Interview with Dr Ernest Bai Koroma (Anon, 2013d). Furthermore, Sudan orchestrated her National youth programme towards the reduction of youth unemployment (Wudu, 2012). The programme has a time-line of one-year for high school graduates, focusing on skills development. This was noted to be a complementary task of Defence Ministry of the country. This programme had been ratified by the Legislative house, having sent a team to understudy the Ghana National Service. The government of Uganda also followed the same suit by understudying the various National youth programmes across the countries in the Continent (Nambi, 2013).

The trajectory in Africa is almost similar. Just the way it is in other continents, Malawi had earlier established the National youth programme in 1971 but was forced to closure in 1993 due to the insinuation of the scheme as a private army by then-dictator Kamuzu Hastings Banda (Lestimes, 2010). While re-launching the programme in the 21st Century, President Joyce Banda stated that she anticipated that the programme would tend to galvanize meaningful participation of young people in Malawi's socio-economic transition" (Anon, 2013c).

The Government of Chad and the Democratic Republic of Congo have engaged in discussions with UN Volunteers about establishing a programme (Galtieri, 2013). Somalia had a very good example of agitation for the launching of National Youth Service so as to bring about youth participation at the community level as well as the acquisition of needed human resources skills into the labour market. In all respects, a multi-task stakeholders conference was held on the ADB's Human Capital Development Strategy attended by participants from the seven IGAD member states (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and Uganda) to work toward revising National Youth Service schemes to "instil a sense of purpose in life and patriotism amongst the youth" (See, www.icip.org).

Regional Voluntary Service Schemes and National Youth Service Programme Goals in Africa

The identified regional blocs in Africa swiftly embrace the establishment of the National Youth Service Programme as a veritable tool for development in key sectors of the economy. A careful review of other works shows that it is seen as a platform for the achievement of communal relations, peacebuilding and regional integration (World Bank, 2010). This is noticeable in the establishment of the African Youth Volunteer Corps. At the regional stratum, the eastern part of Africa is setting the pace on the establishment of East Africa Youth Peace Corps. This was borne out of the speech of Raila Odinga amidst other sectoral luminaries. This, in the end, gave birth to Africa Conference on Volunteer Action for Peace and Development (<http://acvapg.org/>). In total, forty-nine (49) countries have established the National Youth Service Programme. From the analysis, 13 countries have discontinued the youth service programmes; out of which 7 countries are strategising for the re-establishment of the youth service programmes in their respective countries.

The design and structure of National Youth Service programmes in Africa are mostly occasioned by the socio-economic needs of the young people in the respective countries. This reflected the various visions and missions behind the establishment of youth service programmes across the continent of Africa. A common feature among the countries with active youth programme is the commitment to the development of their youth, enhancement of youth employability and provision of economic opportunities. This is reflected in their stated goals and objectives. For instance, the youth service programme in the following countries such as Namibia,

Senegal, South Africa, Mali, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, and Lesotho tended towards youth employability. A good example of youth service programme with the main motive of youth skills development abounds in Zimbabwe and Nigeria (Obadare, 2005). The governments of Gambia, Zambia and Burkina Faso had a dual purpose of youth entrepreneurship and employability (Ashford, 2007). For example, Burkina Faso targets supporting young people to find a job or establish a business on their own. In Zambia, the youth service programme aimed at equipping youth with needed skills for entrepreneurship and employment. These common traits, youth employability, youth development and economic opportunities, underscore the prospects for National Youth Service to support youth to improve their entrepreneurial skills and proficiencies as well as other forms of capital (e.g. social and financial).

The scale and Institutional Arrangement of National Youth Service Programmes

A report on some surveyed literature revealed the National Youth Service Programmes were difficult and inconsistent (Israel, Nogueira-Sanca, 2011). Hence, it was discerned that most of the countries organized the programme on an annual basis. Data from Burkina Faso showed that the National youth service programme of the country had impacted on an approximate of 4,000 participants since its founding in 2008. While data from Nigeria and Liberia revealed huge participants with an estimate of thousands of youth beneficiaries on a yearly basis (Israel, Nogueira-Sanca, 2011). From the available data, it was observed that the number of youth participants ranges 26, as evident in Mali, to as high as 150, 000 youth participants in Nigeria. On record, it was Ghana was seen as the second country with the highest number of youth participants on the Continent, with 80, 000. South Africa was rated third on the number of the country with a high level of youth participants. It is important to stress that available data did not provide a breakdown analysis on the gender of the participants; thus it was difficult to approximate annual participation rates according to gender. The dearth of data hinders the quantitative analysis of the youth service programme vis-à-vis its contribution to youth development, employability, economic opportunities and community development efforts in the continent of Africa.

It was noted that the majority of the National Youth Service Programmes are managed by the relevant Ministry in charge of youth and social development. Examples are however cited in some countries in which the office of the President takes charge of the control of the youth service programme. For instance, the Prime Minister is in charge of the youth service programme in Cote d'Ivoire. Of course, this is taking a slight difference from the presidential control. In another way, there is also an example of Inter-ministerial control in Zambia, in which the Ministry of Defence coordinates their National youth service in partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sport.

Access to Funding

The main sources of funding for National Youth Service programmes in Africa are from the federation account. However, bilateral relations could be discerned on the financing issues. Operations of the youth service programmes in Africa are capital-intensive. Spending indicators of the programmes show that the operating costs range from thousands of US Dollars to millions of US dollars on an annual basis. From the available data, The Ghana NSS has the largest annual budget ranging from US \$ 113-115 million (See, www.icicp.org). On the second rating, Kenya was spending about US \$ 80 million. While Nigeria had a budget of approximately US \$ 32 million on the third level. Thus, it becomes astonishing that the number of youth participants in Kenya is far less than that of Ghana and Nigeria. This implies that the beneficiaries of the youth service programme in Kenya enjoy a good package from the coordinating institutions. Furthermore, the government was the sole sponsor of the National Youth Service Programme in Zambia; while many other countries have diversified their funding pool by exploring various financial sources. Supports from families and social groups are however observed in Senegal and Zimbabwe towards the programme. For example, the youth participants in Senegal are posted to places where their relatives and family members are based so as to draw needed support and logistics for the success of the programme. In Zimbabwe, the emergency costs of the programme are borne by the parents or guardians, as well as corporate entities.

Also, it is important to put on record that Zimbabwe is not the only country to draw on private resources. Examples abound in countries where the government claims the sole funding of the youth service programme. For instance, Gambia and Nigeria have both, at one time or the

other, partnered with financial institutions and other regulatory agencies to support key sectors of the economy. Currently, Nigeria is partnering with its agencies, such as NAFDAC, NDLEA, NCC, NHIS among other corporate entities. More notably, the Bank of Agriculture and Bank of Industry has made provisions for small grants with a view to promoting entrepreneurship (Toju, 2012). Specifically, Gambia has been collaborating with local and international agencies on the provision of financial assistance for corps members who are willing to start a business venture. Also, Ghana and South Africa also partnered with the private sector. In addition to the dual sectoral support, Ghana has a number of income-generating business set-ups that range from catering to borehole drilling to bottling water to the sale of agricultural products from NSS-operated farms. Similarly, Namibia generates revenue from the sale of farm produce in their youth service scheme. Similar features of the above-mentioned programmes could be comprehensively discerned in Kenya. The scheme, however, enjoys financial support from foreign countries (Israel, Nogueira-Sanca, 2011).

Programme Duration and Current Trends in African National Youth Service Programme

There is a fixed duration for all surveyed programmes in this study. Time schedules of the programme in Africa are within the period of 24 months (two years), with a majority of the programme ranging from 12-18 months. A good example of programme flexibility could be obtained in Nigeria and Zambia. Most of the service projects are scheduled for 12 months. While most youth service programmes in Africa extends beyond 12 months due to its multi-task nature.

Most youth service programmes in Africa have age criterion for the youth participants. Most of the countries start the minimum age of the participants at 18 years of age; and there are exceptions in Namibia, Gambia, and Zambia where they allow more younger participants. On the other hand, the upper age limit in most countries ranges between 18-35 years old. For example, the upper age limit in most West African countries oscillates between 30-35 years. Explicitly, Mali, Nigeria, the Gambia and Zambia set the upper age limit at 30 years; and Cote d'Ivoire, Namibia, Senegal, South Africa and Zimbabwe have theirs at 35 years. In contrary to the above, Burkina Faso has no specified upper age limit; while Kenya does not enrol youth participants above 22 years. The programme in Cape Verde has no starting age or upper age limit, with special reference youth and women.

Furthermore, the qualification standard differs across the countries in Africa. According to a survey by the United Nations in 2010, most countries have set university graduation as a qualification standard. For example, participants in the programme are expected to enrol upon graduation from the Universities in Liberia, Lesotho, Ghana, and Nigeria. Kenya, on the other hand, places a premium on secondary school graduates. In Namibia, there is a need for formal school certification before participants could be given service opportunities on technical trades. For example, Burkina Faso and Senegal only observed the trajectory of the educational levels of participants. In Burkina Faso, many participants have, at least two years, post-secondary education (Burkina Faso Programme Verification Form 2013). In Senegal, the programme had a history of secondary school graduates involvement; but, in recent times, there has been increasing participation of first and second degrees certificate holders in the youth service programme.

Some countries employed the quota system as a strategy to ensure diverse coverage representation. For example in the Gambia, the quota system is used to spread the involvement of participants across the regions of the country. This provides an avenue for equal selection of young people across all ethnic divides. Few countries provide preferences for young people from exposed socio- economic backgrounds. Considering the vulnerability level in Zambia, young people see the youth service programme as an avenue through which they can acquire skills and courses of their choice. The programme was mainly targeted at vulnerable young people. In additional dimension, the Kenya Programme creates a special reference for orphans and youth from the disabled background. A special case is noticeable in South-Africa in which 'school drop-out' and youth in conflict are put on rehabilitation scheme under the youth service programme in the country. The current studies provided understanding on the scale of National Youth Service in Africa and explained the institutional arrangement of National Youth Service which is coordinated by the relevant Youth Ministry in their countries, but with a slightly different approach in some countries

wherein the Ministry of Defence, Office of the President or Prime Minister is in charge of the programme (Israel, Nogueira-Sanca, 2011).

On the issue of programme funding, literature revealed that the primary source of funding for the National Youth Service programme is national government coffers; while some countries have partnered private institutions and some depend solely on them. Furthermore, the duration of National Youth Service programme varies between 12-24 months; and those programmes remain either mandatory or compulsory most especially with a specific age range of 18-35 years for the scheme participants, just as what is obtainable in NYSC Scheme of Nigeria (Balile, 2012; ICP, 2010; Lestimes, 2010; Rankopo n.d.; Tibiri, 2013; UN 2010).

Conclusion

In conclusion, although the National Youth Service Programme has surely come to stay, there is no doubt that it faces a decade of tremendous promises and of daunting challenges (Udende, Salau, 2013). On its lies the civic hope of national unity, of patriotism, and of a generation of Africans unstained by the evils of tribalism, religious bigotry, and indiscipline. The extent to which the Youth Scheme achieves its objectives will be determined by how it remains faithful to its original mandate while adapting itself too prevailing realities. Its fortunes will depend, not only on the resources made available to it, but also on the imaginative use of these resources, its ability to raise additional revenues and significant roles of youth in development. In the final analysis, the organizers of the National Youth Service Programme in respective African countries must continue to exhibit the vision, the integrity and the commitment which have taken the scheme from its humble beginnings to the echelon of being an important national institution in the development of state-building across nations in Africa.

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