
Approaches to Promoting Responsible Living through Youth Empowerment in Plateau State Nigeria

B. G. LIDIMMA Ph.D

*Department of Technical Education,
Federal College of Education Pankshin,
Plateau State.*

E. B. ALUWONG

*Department of Agric. Science Education,
Federal College of Education Pankshin,
Plateau State.*

And

C. G. NYAPSON

*Department of Agric. Science Education,
Federal College of Education Pankshin,
Plateau State.*

Abstract

This study Sought to identify youth Empowerment programs/Schemes by past Administrations in Nigeria that has impacted positively on the youth, constraints/challenges faced by the schemes, and adopting ways of Improving those programmers /schemes towards promoting responsible living in Plateau State. 36 items developed from the literature were used to collect data from the respondents; sampling technique was randomly done, three experts validated the Instrument. A reliability Coefficient [r] of 0. 83 was obtained. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Most of the programmes/schemes initiated by the various past administration were short-lived therefore, not having much impact on the youth for responsible living. Therefore, if effective monitoring mechanism and readjustment of our present priorities are looked into, Nigeria will have a virile youth empowerment schemes/ programme that will promote responsible living.

Youths constitute a large proportion of Nigeria's population but despite their critical role in nation building, it is sad that the country has not invested seriously in youths thereby making them an army involved in unprofitable activities. National Youth Empowerment Submit (NYES,2015) with statistical report from the National Bureau of Statistics shows that over 70 percent of Nigerian Youths are unemployed

because they are not empowered financially, educationally, skillfully, morally, and agriculturally. The outcome of 2015 submit revealed that the more the youths are empowered, the less the crime rate in the society.

Youth empowerment is an attitudinal, structural and cultural process whereby young people gain the ability, authority and competency to make decision and implement change in their own lives and the lives of other people including youth and adults. Ademola (2013) stressed that youths constitute a large proportion of Nigeria's population. He further affirms that the youths form the engine room of the labor force and represent the future of any nation. It was further stated that a vision of prosperous, peaceful and technologically advanced society is therefore unrealizable in an environment where youths are not properly groomed and position. This is because the energy, skills and aspirations of youths are valuable assets that no country can afford to squander.

The Federal Government of Nigeria came up with graduate internship scheme (GIS) of Subsidy Re-investment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) expected to engage 50,000 graduates in 2013. The scheme was inaugurated, in October, 2012 to create an opportunity for graduates to be attached to firms where they could work for a year and enjoyed a monthly stipend of N 18,000, so as to reduce unemployment.

Unemployment is one of the problems facing the Nigeria society in general and plateau state in particular. Unemployment can be defined as the difference between the amounts of labour employed at a given wage and working lends and working conditions as well as the amount of labour not hired at these levels (Maigida, Saba and Namkare2013) .Ogwumike, (2001) also conceived unemployment as a situation whereby people who are willing to work at a prevailing rate are unable to find job. International labour organization (ILO, 2004) explained that an unemployed person is a member of the economically active population who is without work but is available for the jobs and those who have voluntarily resigned as a result of underpayment. Youth unemployment has been attributed partly to a mismatch between inadequate educational outcomes and skill demands. The educational system must provide the skills profiles required by the labour market to enhance the employability of young people. Youth unemployment in Nigeria has been increasing because most graduates seem to lack relevant marketable skills.

The Federal Government of Nigeria recently acknowledged that about 80 percent of Nigerian youths are unemployed while 10 percent are underemployed. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2010), the national unemployment rates for Nigeria between 2000and 2009 showed that unemployed persons constituted 31.1%, 13.6% in 2001, 12.% in 2002, 13.4% in 2004, 13.7% in 2006, 14.9% in 2001, 12.6% in 2002, 13.4% in 2004, 13.7% in 200, 14.9% in 2008 and 19.7% in 2009. With respect to age group, education and sex NBS (2010) data showed that the persons aged between 15 and 24 years had 41.6% were unemployed. For persons with primary education 14.8%were unemployed while those with post-secondary education had 21.3% unemployed. Nigeria had a population of 164.38 million in 2011. Out of this figure the labour force stood at 67.25 million out of which 51.18 million were employed and 16.07 million unemployed. Okories and Adeli (2013) said that, the

National Bureau of Statistics (2010) report showed that approximately 112.5 million (68%) out of 164 million Nigerians live in relative poverty conditions.

It is also worthy of note that Nigeria remains the only member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) that is categorized among the world's poorest twenty countries Adeolain Obize and Adama (2009). Also, that Nigeria ranked 54th with respect to human poverty index (HPI) making her the 20th poorest country in the world. This situation revealed that the increasing rate of crime such as armed robbery, advance fee fraud (419), corruption, prostitution, nepotism, drug trafficking, cultism and other social vices are definitely the products of persistent poverty in the country, which affects sustainable national development and responsible living among individuals and families. Previous governments in Nigeria made several attempts to alleviate the poverty situation in the country (Olize and Adamu 2009). For instance, the Gowon regime initiated the Udoji's commission to solve the problem of poor wage of civil servants in order to improve their standard of living. The next regime of Murtala/Obasanjo decided to attack the poverty situation through agriculture by initiating the popular operation feed the nation (OFN) program. It was re-packaged by the Shagari regime and metamorphosed into Green Revolution campaign. War Against Indiscipline WAI during Buhari/Idiagbon of 1984.

Perhaps, the regime with the widest approach to poverty reduction was the Babangida's regime. The regime introduced the Directorate of food, Roads and rural infrastructures (DFRRI) in 1986. This was followed by the national Directorate of Employment (NDE) in 1987 with four programmes: rural employment programme, special public work programme, small scale enterprise and vocational Skill development programme. The same year the better life program was launched, family support programme (FSP). The Peoples Bank followed closely in 1989. The community Bank was also introduced and lastly the oil mineral producing areas development commission (OMPADEC).

The immediate past government of Obasanjo also initiated her own programmes to eradicate poverty, the first attempt was the poverty alleviation program (PAP) in 2000 and was immediately replaced the following year by national poverty eradication programme (NAPEP). Intervention schemes such as; youth empowerment scheme (YES), Capacity Acquisition Programme (CAP) mandatory attachment programme (MAP). In Plateau State there was another program initiated by the former first Lady; wife of Dr Jonah David Jang tagged Women in Agricultural and Youth Empowerment (WAYE) foundation. Micro-credit schemes by Governor Uduaghan of Delta State. Despite these concerted efforts by previous regimes, youth empowerment seems to be declining as unemployment and poverty situation seems to be getting worse. Hence affecting responsible living among individuals and families.

The condition of youth in the labour market may be attributed to the fact that the formal labour market is still small. Youths are often at the end of the job queue because they lack adequate skills and experience as well as efficient social networks. Even though most of the programmes and schemes provided by government are good but if the skills and experience are not there it will be difficult to achieve the goals of youth empowerment. Salami (2011) highlighted a survey carried out by Kanyenze,

which revealed that 39 percent of unemployed youths have almost given up in searching for a job and 47.1 percent gave up because they found no opportunities in their areas. Even if the good programs and schemes the government initiated is available now many of them could have access to them which sometimes are withheld by people in authorities. Already upon all the effort made by government and NGO's it seems there are factors still militating against youth employment that make youths to be unemployed. Salami (2011) mentioned that some of these factors as population growth, adequate health care delivery infant mortality has reduced hence increases youth population. The resultant effect of this is that the growth of labour (supply) is test of outstripping the available jobs (demand). Others are rural unemployment and urban unemployment. Many young people migrate to urban areas to find a job with higher remuneration but jobs in urban areas are not easy to find. Salami said young people are at the disadvantages on the job market due to a combination of poor economic performance and limited availability of assets such as education, experience, health and finance. In fact most youth could not have access to the laudable programmes and schemes planned by government because of political and god atheism syndrome in Nigeria. Low level of education and skills mismatch human capital investments is critical for supplying skill workers but it appears there is a low level education of young people. Others are disease and illness

International Labour Organization (ILO, 2004), stated that by the year 2005, more than two million workers across the world will be out of job because of outdated skills. Poor quality of education and low transition is another factor. This has resulted in poor feedback between educational institution and private sector. The hope of the youth has to be in their creativity, empowerment skill acquisition and development among others. Acquiring the needed skills will make youth to be more creative, resourceful and less destructive (National youth empowerment summit, 2015). The transformation of Nigeria cannot be achieved without empowerment of the youth. However government can still intensify efforts on other areas such as finance, academic, moral discipline, agriculture and skill acquisition programmes. These were supported by youth futures initiative YFI [http://www.youthempowermentproject.org/index.phpOption=com. cont](http://www.youthempowermentproject.org/index.phpOption=com.cont) which said that youth empowerment should be grouped in to five: financial, academic, moral, agriculture and skills youth empowerment.

Financial youth empowerment: it is an innovative business plan competition aimed at job creation by encouraging and supporting aspiring entrepreneurial youths in Nigeria to develop and execute business ideas.

- Academic/educational youth empowerment: education is vital for poverty reduction and National building. Educational youth empowerment involves giving academic support to the youths of the nation (youth future initiative) <http://uzochukwumike.hubpages.com/trub/youth>. empowerment-types-of for academic/education. Youth empowerment to be more effective technical vocational education should not be left out. Other approaches, of improving youth empowerment are Moral youth empowerment: this aspect is to inculcate or instill in them the spirit of moral values of the society.

Agricultural youth empowerment exposes the youth to the value of land and natural treasure which will make the economy of the nation to grow very fast and robust. Skill acquisition for youth empowerment is geared towards training youths on skill development. Government can improve on that by establishing more vocational training institutions with proper funding and supports. Other ways that could be adopted and effectively addressed are: curriculum development. Curriculum should be centered on problem solving and to focus on technical and vocational education subjects that is students centered. Salami (2011) said young people should have access to education therefore government could also make provision to improve access to education. The youth empowerment is a sustainable development initiative targeted at youths in Nigeria to make them more economically and socially responsible and self-relevant in viable businesses, and vocational training for gainful work or self-reliance.

Statement of the Problem

Youths form the engine room of the labour force and represent the future of any nation. A vision of prosperous peaceful and technologically advanced society will be unrealizable in an environment where youths are not properly groomed and positioned. Also, Insecurity may be attributed largely to lack of youth empowerment that leads to unemployed youth. Federal government have come up with so many empowerment programmes and schemes to tackle unemployment including youth unemployment. But statistics showed that about 80% Nigerian youths are unemployed and 10% underemployed. It is also worthy of note that Nigeria remains the only member of the organization of petroleum exporting countries (OPEC) that is categorized among the World's poorest twenty countries.

Despite these concerted efforts, it appears that youth empowerment is on the declining stage as unemployment and poverty situation seems to be getting worse. This shows that there are challenges or constraints militating against youth empowerment in Nigeria. Some of the causes or constraints to youth empowerment could be over population growth that cause the growth (supply) outstripping the available job (demand). Others could be rural unemployment and urban unemployment. Low level of education and skill mismatch could be another critical issue. Poor quality education and low transition which has so high dropout of youths from school.

However the hope of youths lies in creativity, empowerment, skill acquisition, and development. Others are through financial youth empowerment, academic /education empowerment, moral empowerment, agricultural empowerment skill acquisition empowerment. Also curriculum development that centered on problem solving and technical vocational education should be encouraged. Youth should also have access to education, government could encourage public –private partnership and state government to develop its own innovative strategies for youth empowerment.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to find out approaches for promoting responsible living through Youth empowerment in Northern Senatorial district of Plateau State Nigeria. Specifically the study determined:

1. The impact of empowerment programmes/schemes by previous government in Nigeria in promoting responsible living of youths
2. Challenges militating against government empowerment programmes/schemes in promoting responsible living of youths
3. Ways of improving government empowerment programmes/schemes that will lead to responsible living of youths

Research Question

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the impact of empowerment programmes/schemes by previous government in Nigeria in promoting responsible living of youths?
2. What are the challenges of these empowerment programmes and scheme?
3. What are the ways of improving government empowerment programmes/scheme that will lead to responsible living of youths?

Methodology

The study was carried out in Northern senatorial district of Plateau state. This comprises of six Local government Areas: Jos North, Jos South, Bassa, Jos East, Barkin-Ladi and Riyom. Out of which Jos South and Jos North were used. Survey design was adopted for the study. The design was considered appropriate since it involves the use of questionnaires in gathering information from the respondents. The population of the study was 80 youths randomly selected from Jos North and Jos South L.G.A, 40 from each of the Local government areas respectively, making the total of 80 respondents

The population of the study was small and manageable and therefore the entire population was involved in the study. A 34 item questionnaire called promoting Responsible living through youth Empowerment in Northern senatorial District of Plateau state was developed from literature and used for data collection. The instrument was divided into three sections A, B, and C, with each section addressing a particular purpose of the study and appropriate research question.

Each of the sections of the questionnaire had response scales of strongly agree (SA) Agree (A) Disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD) with corresponding values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by three experts.

Cronbach alpha was used to establish the reliability of the instrument. And was trial tested, and the responses were computed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) Version 20 to obtain the reliability coefficient of 0.83

The copies of the instrument were distributed personally by the researchers. 80 copies of the instrument were retrieved from the respondents giving a return rate of 100 per cent. Data relating to research questions were analyzed using means and standard deviation to answer the research questions 1-3. The cut off point for taking decision on each item was 2.50 (using four points scale type) $4+3+2+1=10/4=2.50$. Any of the instruments whose mean response was less than the cutoff point of 2.50 was considered

as disagree where as any item whose response was 2.50 or above was interpreted as agree.

Results

Research Question 1

What are the impact of empowerment programmes/schemes that will lead to responsible living of youths?

Table 1:
Mean and Standard Deviation Response Scores of Youth Leaders on the Impact of Empowerment Programmes/ Schemes that will Lead to Responsible Living of Youths

S/no	Item Description	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	Udoji commission during Gowon's regime solved the problem of poor wage of civil servants which improved the standard of Living	2.93	0.689	Agree
2	Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) during Murtala/Obasanjo regime in 1977 attacked poverty through agriculture that reduces malnutrition	2.99	0.665	Agree
3	Green Revolution during Shagari's regime of 1980 solved the problem of malnutrition	2.51	0.636	Agree
4	War against Indiscipline(WAI) during Buhari/Idiagbon of 1984 improved patriotism and nationalism	3.10	0.773	Agree
5	Directorate of Food, Road and Rural infrastructure (DFRRI) during Babangida's regime of 1986 reduced poor standard of Living and increased small scale enterprises	2.66	0.572	Agree
6	National Directorate of Employment (NDE) during IBB of 1987 reduced economic poverty	2.63	0.582	Agree
7	Better Life Programme for Rural Women (BLP) during Babangida's regime of 1987 reduced economic poverty	2.38	0.582	Disagree
8	Peoples' Bank of Nigeria (PBN) during IBB regime in 1989 and Community Banks reduced economic poverty amongst adult and youth	2.25	0.563	Disagree
9	Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC) during Abacha's regime of 1996 reduced social poverty and poor standard of Living for Niger Deltans	2.35	0.576	Disagree
10	Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) of Obasanjo's regime of 2000 brought about human sustainable development	2.35	0.530	Disagree
11	Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) and National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) of Obasanjo's regime in 2001 reduced social and economic poverty among Nigerians	2.39	0.646	Disagree
12	Youth Empowerment Schemes provided skills acquisition, self-employment and uplifted economic status among youth	2.43	0.652	Disagree

13	Capacity Acquisition Programmes (CAP) mandatory attachment programmes and Credit Delivery Programmes (CDP) during Yar'adua/GoodLuck Jonathan's regime rescued youth from poverty	2.48	0.656	Disagree
14	National Economic Empowerment Development Strategies (NEEDS) by GoodLuck Jonathan empowered Nigerians to be stable economically	2.54	0.635	Agree
15	Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria increased the innovative spirit in the youth	2.48	0.656	Disagree
16	Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE - P) by GoodLuck Jonathan was effective in reducing unemployment and poverty amongst the Nigerian youth	2.46	0.711	Disagree
17	Youth Initiative for Sustainable Agriculture in Nigeria (YISA) boost the economic standard of Living of the youth	2.64	0.621	Agree
18	Graduate Internship Scheme by GoodLuck's regime in 2012 engaged over 50,000 graduates in 2013	2.60	0.628	Agree

N=80

Table 1 show that the youth leaders agreed on items 1 – 6, 14, and 17 – 18 as the roles by previous governments on youth empowerment programmes/schemes. The items had mean responses of more than 2.50 which is the decision point on a 4 point scale. The youth leaders however disagreed on items 7, 13 and 15 & 16 with mean score responses less than 2.50. The standard deviation score range is from 0.480 to 0.711. This shows that the responses of the youth leaders on the items were not divergent.

Research Question 2

What are the challenges of these empowerment programmes and schemes?

Table 2:

Mean and Standard Deviation Response Scores of Youth Leaders on the Challenges of Empowerment Programmes/Schemes

S/no	Item Description	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
19	Population growth could not allow most youths to have access to empowerment programmes/schemes	3.04	0.737	Agree
20	Rural unemployment increased because of employment in small scale agriculture with low income due to low productivity	3.11	0.595	Agree
21	Jobs in Urban areas are not easy to find because of rural-urban migration	3.35	0.597	Agree
22	Poor economic performance and Limited availability of assets such as education, experience, health and finance	3.46	0.550	Agree
23	Low Level of education and skill mismatch of young people	3.43	0.522	Agree
24	Poor quality education and low transition lead to lack of skills that affect the utilization of government programmes	3.48	0.503	Agree

N=80

Table 2 presents the data that shows that the youth leaders agreed on all items from 19 to 24. This is because none of the mean response is below 2.50 which is the lower limit of agreed on the 4-point scale. The standard deviation score range from 0.503 to 0.737. This shows that the responses of the youth leaders on the items were not divergent.

Research Question 3

What are the ways to be adopted to improve government empowerment programmes and schemes that will lead unemployed youths to be employed?

Table 3:
Mean and Standard Deviation Response Scores of Youth Leaders on the Ways to be Adopted to Improve Government Empowerment Programmes/Schemes that will Lead Unemployed Youth to be Employed

S/no	Item Description	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
25	Government should intensify efforts to improve on the existing empowerment programmes/schemes	3.53	0.551	Agree
26	Financial youth empowerment programmes aimed at job creation and supporting aspiring entrepreneurial youth in Nigeria should be encouraged	3.50	0.503	Agree
27	Academic/educational youth empowerment that gives academic support should be encouraged for nation building	3.49	0.503	Agree
28	Measures should be taken to inculcate moral values and empowerment in youth for healthy Living	3.49	0.503	Agree
29	Agricultural youth empowerment be encouraged to expose the youth to the values of Land and natural treasures.	3.51	0.528	Agree
30	Skills acquisition youth empowerment be encouraged to train youth on skill development by establishing more vocational training centres	3.55	0.501	Agree
31	Curriculum development should centre on problem solving and to focus on technical vocational education	3.65	0.480	Agree
32	Youth should have access to education because it will provide the skills required by the Labour market	3.64	0.484	Agree
33	Government should encourage public private partnership to overcome supply constraints in education	3.66	0.502	Agree
34	State governments should develop its own innovative strategies to empower young people	3.60	0.493	Agree

N=80

Table 3 shows that the youth leaders agreed on all items from 25 to 34. This is because none of the mean response is below 2.50 which is the lower limit of agreed on the 4-point scale. The standard deviation score range from 0.480 to 0.551. This shows that the responses of the youth leaders on the items were not divergent.

Discussion of Findings

Results of the study in table 1 shows that the roles of empowerment programmes/schemes set by previous governments in Nigeria to alleviate poverty by among youth include Udoji-Commission, which solved the problem of poor wage of

civil servants, operation feed the nation OFN attacked poverty through agriculture, Green Revolution solved the problem of malnutrition, war against indiscipline (WAI) improved patriotism and Nationalism Directorate of food, Road and Rural infrastructure DERRI reduced poor standard of living and increase small scale enterprises offers are National Economic Empowerment Strategies (NEEDS) which empowered Nigeria to be stable economically, youth initiative for sustainable Agriculture in Nigeria YISA, and Graduate internship.

The finding of the study agrees with the submission of Ademola (2013) who stated that to tackle insecurity attributed to youth unemployment, government has set up programmes/schemes including graduate internship scheme (GIS) of subsidy Re-Investment and empowerment programme (SURE-P), which created an opportunity for graduates to be attached to firms where they could work for a year and enjoyed a monthly stipend of N18,000. Also Ohize and Adamu (2009) stated that previous government in Nigeria made several attempts to alleviate the poverty situation by setting up most of these programmes/schemes. The result of the study on challenges of these empowerment programmes/schemes revealed that challenges facing these programmes/schemes include population growth, rural unemployment because of small scale agriculture with low income, and productivity, jobs are not easy to come by in Urban areas, poor economic performance and limited assets such as education, experience, health and finance. Others are low level of education and skill mismatch, and poor quality education. This is in line with the submission of ILO (2004) that youth unemployment has be attributed partly to a mismatch between inadequate educational outcomes and skill demand. Hence the educational system must provide the skills profile require by the labour market. Salami 2011 mention some of these factors as challenges militating against some of these government programmes/schemes to include population growth health care delivery, infant mortality, rural and urban unemployment.

The result of the study on what should be adopted to improve government programmes/schemes include: government should intensify efforts to improve on the existing empowerment programmes, academic, financial, agricultural and other youth empowerment programmes be should also be encouraged. Also skill acquisition centres should be encouraged to liaised with curriculum developers to centered more on problem solving and that youth should have access to education among others. This is in consonant with the submission of youth future initiative (YFI) <http://www.youthempowerment.project.org/index.php?> Which stated that youth empowerment be grouped into moral discipline, agriculture, and skill acquisition programmes.

Conclusion

Youth empowerment is an attitudinal, structural and cultural process whereby young people gain the ability, authority and agency to make decision and implement change in their own lives and the lives of other people including youths and adult. Therefore, to reduce unemployment rate of crime such as armed robbery, advance fee fraud (419), corruption, prostitution, nepotism, drug trafficking, cultism and other social vices

which are partly product of persistent poverty in the country, appropriate schemes should be put in place and adequately sustained with the requisite skills by the youths who are the beneficiaries.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

1. Government should intensify efforts on other areas such as financial, academic/educational empowerment programmes/schemes. Others are agricultural, moral and skill acquisition youth empowerment programme.
2. Government should encourage public private partnership to overcome supply constraints in education
3. State governments should develop its own innovative strategies to empower young people.

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