

AN EXAMINATION OF THE KEY COMPONENTS OF NYSC COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICE IN SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA (1999-2014)

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ABSTRACT

This study examined key components of the cardinal Community Development Service (CDS) programmes of the National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) scheme in Nigeria, between 1999 and 2014. Primary and Secondary data were utilized. The multi-stage sampling technique was adopted in selecting nine Local Government Areas (LGAs) within Southwestern Nigeria for the study, while in-depth interviews and questionnaires were used for primary data collection. Secondary data were obtained from the internet, books, academic journals, newspapers, magazines and publications by NYSC-Nigeria. Appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis. The results obtained, revealed that sensitization of the public on fundamental human rights (76%), enhancement of educational standard in the host communities (86%), safety on public roads (73%), disaster management (60%) and provision of various basic amenities (67%), were the key the components of the NYSC CDS programme.

Key words: Youth Programme, Rural Development, National Youth Service Corps, Community Development Service

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INTRODUCTION

The position of youth policies and programmes appeared not to be nationalistic before independence, thus necessitating this study to take its departure from 1960 when successive administrations started directing various policies and schemes at the youths; which include Farm Settlement Schemes, Young Farmers Club, School-to-Land programme, National Directorate of Employment Programme, Poverty Alleviation Programmes among others. Most remarkably, in the spirit of post war reconstruction, rehabilitation, reconciliation, and to foster the spirit of oneness and selfless service to the diverse communities, the Gowon regime, in 1973, introduced the National Youth Service Corps Scheme (NYSC) (Agumagu *et al.*, 2006) - this scheme is the fulcrum around which this study revolves.

Broadly speaking, the objectives of the scheme as contained in section 1(3) of the enabling legislation are: to inculcate discipline in Nigerian youths by instigating in them a tradition of industry at work and of patriotic and loyal service to the Nation in any situation they may find

themselves; to raise the moral tone of our youths by giving them the opportunity to learn about higher ideals of national achievement and social and cultural improvement; to develop in our youths attitudes of mind, acquired through shared experience and suitable training, which will make them more amenable to mobilization in the national interest; to develop common ties among our youths and promote national unity by ensuring that: as far as possible youths are assigned to jobs in states other than their states of origin (*See, NYSC Act, Cap 84*).

Furtherance to the above-stated legislation, each group, assigned to work together, is as representative of the country as possible; the youths are exposed to the modes of living of the people in different parts of the country, with a view to removing prejudices, eliminating ignorance and confirming at first hand the many similarities among Nigerians of all ethnic groups; and other objectives include: to encourage members of the service corps to seek, at the end of their corps service, career employment all over the country, thus promoting the free movement of labor; to induce employers, partly through their experience



with service corps members, to employ more readily qualified Nigerians irrespective of their states of origin; and to enable Nigerian youths to acquire the spirit of self-reliance (See, *NYSC Act, Cap 84*).

In pursuance of the objectives of forging unity, integration and inter-ethnic understanding, corps members are posted to states other than their own and outside their cultural boundaries to ensure that the corps members (popularly called ‘corpors’) learn the ways of life of other Nigerians, and imbibe a more liberal outlook in preparation for their role as future leaders of this country (Enegwea and Umoden, 1993), thereby accelerating the pace of economic and social development. It is against this backdrop that this paper intends to examine the key component of NYSC community development service in Southwestern Nigeria between 1999 and 2014. The justification for choosing this period is NYSC scheme seems to have considerably enjoyed its operation under the 15 years old democratic rule.

The Youth Service Programme in Nigeria

Historically, the National Youth Service Programme in Nigeria, otherwise the National Youth Service Corps, was established by Decree 24 on 22 May 1973 “with a view to the proper encouragement and development of common ties among the youths of Nigeria and the promotion of national unity” (Adesope, 2007). Also, NYSC Scheme aims to “produce future leadership with positive national ethos that is vibrant, proud and committed to the unity and even development of Nigeria” (Nigerian Scholars, 2017). The programme inculcates discipline in Nigerian youths by instilling a tradition of industry at work and loyal service to Nigeria. The programme also seeks to engender morality and a sense of national interest among youth, encourage youth to develop skills for self-employment, contribute to the accelerated growth of the national economy, foster national unity and integration, confirm similarities between ethnic groups, and develop a sense of common destiny of the people of Nigeria (outlined in Decree No. 51 of 16 June 1993).

NYSC Scheme is a compulsory programme, engaging all graduates of universities and technical schools.

Lamidi, K.O., *IJCR* 2017; 6(3): 93 – 101

Participants engage in a three-week orientation and one year of service in fields such as agriculture, health, education and infrastructure (Heal Nigeria, 2009). The three-week orientation course involves physical training, lectures on national history and culture, lectures from professionals, skill acquisition and social activities. Following the orientation, Corps members are posted to their primary assignment which are often located in rural areas.

During their year of Community Development Service (CDS), Corps members identify the needs of their host community and mobilise community members to undertake a related project. Past projects have included the construction of bridges and health care centres, HIV sensitisation, and adult literacy campaigns (Agumagu *et al.*, 2006). At the conclusion of the service year, Corps members receive their final clearance letters from their employers, debrief on the past year, and participate in a “passing-out” (Nigeria Programme Verification Form 2013) ceremony, frequently presided over by the Executive Governor of the State. During the ceremony, outstanding participants receive State Honours Awards.

The National Governing Board is the highest policy-making body of NYSC Scheme and includes members from various government and non-government organizations (NYSC, 2014). The Director-General is the Chief Executive of NYSC Scheme and the Accounting Officer is responsible for day-to-day activities, implementation of policy and programme. The NYSC Scheme is housed under the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Youth Development.

The NYSC Community Development Service: An Outline

Community development service (CDS) is one of the four (4) Cardinal Programmes of NYSC in which corps members contribute positively to the development of their host communities throughout the period of national service. It is worthwhile mentioning that since its inception in 1973, the National Youth Service Corps has been making great contributions in the social, political and



economic transformation of the nation (NYSC, 2014). In recent times, the scheme has been in the vanguard of the nation's drive to correct the imbalance in our rural-urban development through the various community development programmes executed by corps members.

These programmes have revolutionized our communities in the areas of education, health care delivery, agriculture, communication, infrastructure, technology, economic empowerment, poverty eradication, social services and above all national consciousness and socio-cultural regeneration (Asiabaka, 2002). The objectives of community development service are to: impact positively on the improvement of rural community life; develop the spirit of entrepreneurship in the corps members; utilize the challenges which rural development poses and inculcate in the Nigerian Youth the ideals and capacities for leadership, endurance, selflessness, community service, national service, patriotism and creativity; expose corps members to diverse traditions and customs of the host communities; provide the forum for corps members to experiment with ideas and translate them into concrete achievements thereby relying less on foreign technology and encouraging the use of local raw materials in the execution of projects; harness the enormous talents and skills of corps members into an effective machinery of change in our rural communities; provide on-the-job training and experience for corps members; provide complementary service in our National development activities, by ensuring that our under-privileged population learn basic techniques for self-help through the appropriate technology concept being promoted by NYSC; instill in corps members the tradition of dignity of labour and productivity; and complement the activities of government at all levels in the stride towards national development (NYSC, 2014).

MATERIALS AND MEDTHOD

Sampling Technique: Multistage sampling technique will be employed for this study.

Study Design: At the first stage, South-western Nigeria was stratified into three axes, i.e Lagos/Ogun, Oyo/Osun and Ondo/Ekiti states due to their geographical closeness

and proximity. At the second stage, Ogun, Osun and Ondo states were purposively selected from the three axes respectively. The purpose of this selection is to ensure that each axis is being represented in the three states. At the third stage, one Local Government Area (LGA) will be selected from each of the three senatorial districts in the three selected states for the study using simple random sampling making a total of nine LGAs. At the fourth stage, Works and Community Development departments, NYSC Community Development Units (CDUs), traditional chiefs, NYSC Community Development Service (CDS) groups and Community Development Associations (CDAs) will be purposively selected in the nine LGAs. The choice of the two departments and other groups is based on their direct involvement in the development service at the community level.

Study Population: The study population of 1,620 comprises senior officers on Grsde level (GL) 12 and above in: Works (193), Community Development (201), NYSC CDUs (108), traditional chiefs (270), executive members of NYSC CDS groups (308) and executive members of CDAs (540). These respondents are targeted because they are considered to be knowledgeable and at a vantage position to give useful information on the role of the NYSC scheme in community development service. A sample fraction of 20% making 324 respondents will be selected for questionnaire administration from the study universe. In addition, interviews will be conducted in the three selected states for one Director in each of the ministries of Youth and Social Development; and Works; State Coordinator of NYSC; Chairman of the NYSC Governing Board; Chairman, House Committee on Community Development; and ALGON State Chairman, totaling 18 so as to complement information collected through questionnaire administration.

Data Collectons: Primary and secondary data were utilized for this study. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews and administration of questionnaire .

Statistical Analysis: Data collected was analyzed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics.

Lamidi, K.O., IJCR 2017; 6(3): 93 – 101

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presented data analysis and interpretation of the respondents' views on the key components of community development service of NYSC scheme. The Table 1A and 1B revealed the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents on each of the assertions set out to examine the key components of NYSC community development service and its values/responses were organized using likert scale of measurements, such as: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1). In addition, the mean value (\bar{X}) summarises the strength of the respondents for each of the statements, using a decision rule as thus: where ($\bar{X} > 2.5$), more respondents tended towards Agreement; and where ($\bar{X} < 2.5$), more respondents tended towards Disagreement.

As presented in Table 1, 146 (51.6%) of the respondents disagreed to the assertion that provision of medical services seems not to be a component of community development service adopted by NYSC Scheme ($\bar{X} = 2.49$). The interpretation of this distribution is that provision of medical services is, of course, one of the components of NYSC community development service. However, 137 (48.4%) of the respondents agreed with this negatively posited statement. This could be apparent on the supposition that the medical services seems not be adequately provided at the community level by NYSC corps members, thus implying the rationale behind the 48.4% agreement level with the adverse assertion.

However, 117 (41.3%) strongly agreed and 98 (34.6%) agreed to the statement that NYSC scheme engages in sensitization of the public on fundamental human rights. This indicates that sensitization of the public on fundamental human rights, among other issues, was acknowledged to be a notable component of NYSC community development service. This finding was further confirmed by ($\bar{X} = 3.06$) as it tended towards agreement with the set statement. As shown in Table 1, enhancement of the educational standard of the host communities was identified as a cardinal component of NYSC community development service as evidenced by 243 (85.9%) of the respondents' agreement with the set assertion that NYSC Scheme enhances the education standard of the host

community ($\bar{X} = 3.29$). It was also asserted that promoting arts and culture has not been tremendously efficient through the NYSC activities. In their response, 184 (65%) of the respondents agreed to this assertion, thus indicating that promotion of art and culture appears not to be practically engendered as a component of NYSC community development service, even though it is stated in the objective statements of the scheme ($\bar{X} = 2.70$).

However, 47 (16.6%) strongly disagreed and 112 (39.6%) disagreed that agro-allied activities remain cardinal to community development service of NYSC Scheme in host communities ($\bar{X} = 2.43$). This finding showed that the agricultural activities seem to be no longer on the frontline of NYSC community development service especially in recent time when most corps members did not cultivate the habit of agricultural extension services. Also, sustainable environment management suffers same neglect as a component of NYSC community development service. This was observed from the reactions of the respondents as 40 (14.1%) strongly disagreed and 124 (43.8%) disagreed to the assertion that sustainable environment management and regeneration remains significant to NYSC community development service. However, 119 (42.1%) of the respondents still recognized the role of NYSC community development service in environmental management. Nevertheless, the ($\bar{X} = 2.41$) still tended towards disagreement with this assertion, thereby impinging on the laudability of sustainable environmental management and regeneration as a component of NYSC community development service.

In addition, 207 (73.2%) of the respondents identified with the statement that NYSC scheme contributes to the public safety of our roads ($\bar{X} = 3.08$). This result was not a mere guess as its mean value indicates that more respondents tended towards agreement on the assertion. This implies that public safety of roads remains a component of NYSC community development service as witnessed in its constant practice by the corps members. Also, an aggregate of 227 (80.3%) of the respondents agreed that the actualisation of Millennium Development Goals is not strongly advocated by NYSC community development service ($\bar{X} = 3.03$).

Lamidi, K.O., IJCR 2017; 6(3): 93 – 101



TABLE 1A: The Key Components of Community Development Service as a Cardinal Programme of NYSC Scheme

VARIABLES	STRONGLY AGREE		AGREE		DISAGREE		STRONGLY DISAGREE		N = 283 \bar{X}
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Provision of medical services seems not to be a component of NYSC community development service	95	33.6	42	14.8	82	29.0	64	22.6	2.49
NYSC Scheme engages in sensitization of the public on fundamental human rights	117	41.3	98	34.6	36	12.7	32	11.3	3.06
NYSC Scheme enhances the education standard of the host community	125	41	118	41.7	36	12.7	4	1.4	3.29
Promoting arts and culture has not been tremendously efficient through the NYSC activities	57	20.1	127	44.9	57	20.1	42	14.8	2.70
Agro-allied activities remain cardinal to NYSC community development service	45	15.9	79	27.9	112	39.6	47	16.6	2.43
Sustainable environment management and regeneration remains significant to NYSC community development service	37	13.1	82	29.0	124	43.8	40	14.1	2.41
NYSC Scheme contributes to the public safety of our roads	106	37.5	101	35.7	69	24.4	7	2.5	3.08
Actualisation of MDGs is not strongly advocated by NYSC community development service	76	26.9	151	53.4	44	15.5	12	1	3.03

Source: Lamidi, 2015; NB: f = Frequency; % = Percentage; \bar{X} = Mean value; and N = Total Number of Respondents

Lamidi, K.O., IJCR 2017; 6(3): 93 – 101

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TABLE 1B: The Key Components of Community Development Service as a Cardinal Programme of NYSC Scheme

NYSC Scheme improves the living standard of the downtrodden	46	16.3	74	26.1	101	35.7	62	21.9	2.37
Disaster management is a fundamental community service rendered by NYSC Scheme	76	26.9	95	33.6	83	29.3	29	10.2	2.77
Eradicating corrupt behavior through anti-corruption campaign	109	38.5	119	42.0	43	15.2	12	1	3.15

Source: Lamidi, 2015; NB: f = Frequency; % = Percentage; \bar{X} = Mean value; and N = Total Number of Respondents

This indicates that the NYSC community development service has, but not prominently, keyed into the realization of Millennium Development Goals.

It was also asserted that improvement of the living standard of the downtrodden is one of the major components of NYSC community development service. Reacting to this, 62 (21.9%) strongly disagreed and 101 (35.7%) disagreed with this assertion. While 46 (16.3%) strongly agreed and 74 (26.1%) agreed to this same assertion. Importing from the analysis above, 57.6% of the respondents were on the disagreement level which was more than those on agreement level (42.4%) with the assertion (\bar{X} =2.37). This is therefore an indication that improvement of the living standard was although noted, but it has not been remarkably entrenched as an activity of NYSC community development service.

Disaster management was also examined as a component of NYSC community development service. Responding to this, an aggregate of 171 (60.5%) of the respondents agreed to this assertion (\bar{X} =2.77). This result implies that disaster management appears to be a slightly noticeable

component of NYSC community development service. In the same vein, it was moreover stated that eradicating corrupt behaviour through anti-corruption campaign of NYSC Scheme appears not to be effective community development service. This statement was agreed to, by 228 representing 80.5% of the respondents (\bar{X} =3.15). The implication of this finding is that anti-corruption campaign seems not to be a key component of NYSC community development service.

Generally, it was posited that NYSC scheme focuses on peoples' felt needs and basic amenities such as the provision of good roads, electricity, health clinics, markets, school buildings, and farm settlements among others. In their response, 189 (66.8%) of the respondents acknowledged that NYSC scheme via its community development service focuses almost on the above-listed basic amenities at varying degrees.

To this end, this study revealed that sensitization of the public on fundamental human rights (75.9%), enhancement of educational standard of the host communities (85.9%), public safety of our roads (73.2%),

Lamidi, K.O., IJCR 2017; 6(3): 93 – 101



disaster management (60.5%) and provision of various basic amenities (66.8%) were examined to be the key components of NYSC community development service

To complement the data gathered through questionnaire administration, some key personalities were interviewed. The interviewees provided a list of community development service embarked upon by the NYSC scheme, as itemized by one of the three State Coordinators interviewed, it cuts across the following areas: sensitization of the public, charity, health care outreach, road safety, provision of health care needs for the needy as well as child education development. Similarly, a Director in the Ministry of Youth and Social Development noted that NYSC scheme takes care of sensitization of the youth on social vices that could hinder social development by organizing seminars, symposiums and workshops wherein informations on academic career development and sex education are discussed so as to enhance uprightness and discipline as well as high concentration of the youth on self-actualization of their life desires.

It could also be transcribed from the response of a Chairman, House Committee on community development that the corps members engaged in the sensitization of the community members on salient communal issues and help in promoting better living standards for the members of the community.

It was also unanimously mentioned that provision of medical facilities and environmental management were, among others, components of community development service. However, the interview summary revealed that in recent times, education services delivery is thus leading component of NYSC community development service.

It was also gathered from the interview session that, sensitization of the public and provision of health care services were more popular than the other components because all the community development services available in the scheme appears not to be recognizable beyond the two (2) aforementioned components.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that sensitization of the public on fundamental human rights (76%), enhancement of educational standard of the host communities (86%), safety of public roads (73%), disaster management (60%) and provision of various basic amenities (67%) were marked to be the key components of NYSC community development service. However, 146 (51.6%) of the respondents disagreed to the assertion that provision of medical services seems not to be a component of community development service adopted by NYSC Scheme. The interpretation of this distribution is that provision of medical services is, of course, one of the components of NYSC community development service. This was corroborated in the empirical survey carried out by Agumagu and others in 2006 where they extolled the significance of community medical services rendered by the medical group of the NYSC scheme. Also, sensitization of the public on fundamental human rights, among other issues, was acknowledged to be a notable component of NYSC community development service, as evidenced by 75.9% agreement level. This finding cemented the position of Ademowo in 2007 as it x-rayed various re-orientation programmes geared towards sensitization of community residents on civic duties and responsibilities.

Most remarkably, enhancement of the educational standard of the host communities was identified as a cardinal component of NYSC community development service as evidenced by 85.9% agreement level. This finding fell in consonance with the study conducted by Ladele and Fadairo in 2008 on the accomplishment of the NYSC scheme, where it was revealed that NYSC scheme served as the avenue through which teachers were sourced for teaching most especially at the primary and secondary school levels in various communities, due to the fact that teachers on key subjects were in short-supply. Similarly, this study commended that public safety of roads remains a component of NYSC community development service as witnessed in its constant practice by the corps members. The essentiality of NYSC scheme in recent time was noted by Sanda (2009) where he eulogized the efforts of the



scheme aimed at ensuring safety of lives on the public roads through one of its CDS groups.

Disaster management was also noted as a component of NYSC community development service. This was said to be true from an interview response of one of the State coordinators in the study area where he asserted that emergency vanguard group was instituted as part of community development service geared towards managing disaster ranging from flooding, burning and damages, threats as well as acts of terrorism among others. Also, provision of various basic amenities was also a practical component of NYSC community development service as 66.8% maintained that NYSC scheme focuses on peoples' felt needs and basic amenities such as the provision of good roads, electricity, health clinics, markets, school buildings, and farm settlements among others. Adesope *et al.* (2012) accentuated to this finding that provision of basic amenities, though at vary degrees, was part of the recurring successes recorded by the NYSC scheme in Nigeria as a whole.

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Lamidi, K.O., IJCR 2017; 6(3): 93 – 101

100

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Lamidi, K.O., IJCR 2017; 6(3): 93 – 101

101

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