AN ASSESSMENT OF POVERTY REDUCTION POLICY:
IMPLICATION OF THE N-POWER PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study is on An Assessment of Poverty Alleviation Policy; Implication of the   N-Power Programme Nigeria. The N-Power Programme is a social intervention programme that captures the youth between the ages of 18 to 35 years. The Federal Government of Nigeria under President Muhammadu Buhari knows the negative effect of poverty and thus decided through his N-Power Scheme to minimize or deal with poverty using the youth empowerment programme which is popularly known as the N-Power. This study adopted Social Contract Theory as bases for analysis and discussion. It relied on secondary method of data collection where textbooks, journals, papers, newspapers and the internet provided the source of information. There is no doubt that the N-Power has been able to cushion the effect of poverty among the youths because the N-Power Programme captured both graduate and non-graduate applicants, however, as good as the Programme in alleviating poverty, there are challenges associated with it and it is based on this challenges that the presenters by way of suggestions to deal with the challenges recommended that government should improve on the funding of N-Power to accommodate more Nigerians, because mere limiting the beneficiaries to youths of the age of 18 to 35 years is not good for social contract especially considering the fact that poverty has no age limit as it cut across etc.

Keywords: Policy, Planning, Programme, Poverty Reduction, N-power.

1. Introduction

Countries all over the world are making effort to provide a good and quality life to its citizens. This is because of the negative effects of poverty in various countries all over the globe. In Africa, poverty account for almost 60 percent of the social rives that have made Africa a continent with the highest incidence of insecurity and terrorism, no wonder most countries in

Africa make a deliberate attempt in dealing with or reducing the issue of poverty, hunger and starvation.

There is no country in Africa that can boast of eliminating poverty from its country. This is why in Nigeria, the issue of poverty is not treated with levity especially considering the negative effects poverty can have on the social-political and economic life of Nigeria. Various regimes and administrations in Nigeria try to invent a particular policy programme and plans for dealing issue of poverty in Nigeria is a creation of class and no society that is divided along class can develop where there is an increase in poverty. Poverty is the creation of some elements and where poverty dictates an economy quantitative and qualitative transformation becomes a mirage.

The Poverty Reduction Policy of the Federal Government of Nigeria has been conceived at various times both under the military regime and civilian administration, policies have been created, but it is the role of this paper to access the Poverty reduction policy even as it affects the N-power programme of President Muhammadu Buhari's administration on Poverty reduction and reduction even as it affects the current reality; even though poverty is not limited to Nigeria. Poverty is a global phenomenon that does not benefit the system whichever way you look at it.

Objectives

The objective for which this paper is carried out are;

i. to examine the Poverty reduction policy of the Nigerian state as it affects dealing with issues of poverty in recent times.

ii. to assess how the Poverty reduction Programme influences the N-Power programme of President Muhammadu Buhari.

And by the end of this paper, present reasonable recommendations by way of suggestions that will help deal with the challenges that would have been raised during discussion and analysis

Methodology

The methodology here pertains to the method of data gathering. The secondary method is used in arriving at data used in providing an explanation in this paper. Under the secondary sources,

this paper relied on published and unpublished materials from the textbooks worldwide-web, papers and newspaper publications for the purpose of achieving in-depth explanation and analysis.

2. Conceptual Clarification and Analysis

For the purpose of this paper, the concept that will be clarified are policy, planning, programme, Poverty reduction and N-power.

i. Policy

This is a set of government directives that are intended to shape decisions and actions of individuals, organizations and government agencies through legislation, executive orders, judicial rulings or pronouncement, guidelines and regulations, rulemaking agency memos, signing statements, agency circulars and other types of official statements. The importance of policy in government business is very germane because policy serves as a direction for the achievement of objectives. Policy within the content of this study is a situation when a government official pronounces an official statement showing government intention and describing the highlights of such decision as the case of the N-Power policy Amdii (1973:23).

ii. Planning

Planning is a process by which manager analyses present conditions to determine ways of reaching a desired future state. Planning is a process of putting all the cards on the table with the view of making decisions that will help in reaching an organisational goal. Again, planning is the process by which an individual or organisation decides in advance on some future course of action Omrari (2002:68). One of the greatest challenges of planning is that most individuals both private and the public do not plan even when they plan the whole "ingredients" required to achieve a progressive purpose are not duly considered thereby creating a gap that would make the plan not to be successful.

iii. Programme

This can be seen as a government intention of action meant to achieve a specific result like the N-power programme of the Buhari administration in Nigeria designed to reduce poverty to achieve a crime-free Nigeria. Again, programme is government plan of action Nwachukwu (2015:15).

iv. Poverty reduction

Poverty reduction is all the methods, ways or techniques employed by government and non-government organisation or wealthy individuals to reduce or eradicate poverty from a collectivity. Poverty reduction in best approach is an exercise in raising people's capabilities or enhancing freedom Oviasuyi (2020:7)

v. N-Power

N-Power is one of the social intervention strategies of the Buhari Administration, it is an integrative programme set by the government that provides a platform where most Nigerians can access skills acquisition and development. At this time, however, the initial modular programmes in N-Power are designed for Nigerian citizens between the ages of 18 and 35 Akujuru and Enyioko (2019:2)**.**

Conceptualisation of N-Power Programme

N-Power aspires to provide a platform where most Nigerians can access skills acquisition and development. At this time, however, the initial modular programmes in N-Power are designed for Nigerian citizens between the ages of 18 and 35. One needs to meet the minimum requirements (if any) for the respective programme Aderonmu (2017:33). Generally, the selection is based: On one's expression of a genuine interest in whichever area one decides; passing the relevant tests; willingness to push beyond comfort zone; and ability to show a flair to develop all the skills you need to be the best you can be (Aderonmu, 2017). While there are fixed requirements along the way, we will be relying on you to take ownership of the process and take the lead in shaping your route, by making the most of the training that you will receive Ali (2006:21). For the purposes of N-Power, Graduate means any post-tertiary qualification including an Ordinary National Diploma (OND) or Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) or as may be specified by the programme (Obadan, 200). The key N-Power Programmes include N-Power Agro, N-Power Tax, N-Power Build, N-Power Creative, N-Power Health, N- Power Teach, N-Power Tech Hardware and N-Power Tech Software Asawo (2016:42).

The N-Power Volunteer Corps is the post-tertiary engagement initiative for Nigerians between 18 and 35. It is a paid volunteering programme of a 2-year duration. The graduates will undertake their primary tasks in identified public services within their proximate communities Egware (2007:48). All N-Power Volunteers are entitled to computing devices that will contain

information necessary for their specific engagement, as well as information for their continuous training and development. In 2016, the Federal Government engaged 200,000 N-Power Volunteers. In 2017, the Federal Government is enlisting 300,000 more Bennel (2017:60). The June 2017 Application is only open to the Graduate Category- the N-Power Volunteer Corps. N-Power volunteers provide teaching, instructional, and advisory solutions in 4 key areas (Bennel, 2017).

Skills and knowledge are the driving forces of economic growth and social development. Despite the current high level of unemployment, harnessing Nigeria's young demography through appropriate skill development efforts provides an opportunity to achieve inclusion and productivity within the country. Large-scale skill development is the main policy thrust of the N-Power Programme Enyioko (2006:16).

N-Power is also linked to the Federal Government's policies in the economic, empowerment and social development arenas Federal Ministry of Youth Development (2009:22). N-Power addresses the challenge of youth unemployment by providing a structure for large-scale and relevant work skills acquisition and development while linking its core and outcomes to fixing inadequate public services and stimulating the larger economy. The modular programmes under N-Power will ensure that each participant will learn and practice most of what is necessary to find or create work. The N-Power Volunteer Corp involves a massive deployment of 500,000 trained graduates who will assist to improve the inadequacies in our public services in education, health and civic education. Some of these graduates will also help in actualising Nigeria's economic and strategic aspirations of achieving food security and self sufficiency (Federal Ministry of Youth Development, 2009:23).

N-Power is also a platform for diversifying the economy. N-Power is preparing young Nigerians for a knowledge economy where equipped with world-class skills and certification, they become innovators and movers in the domestic and global markets. Nigeria will have a pool of software developers, hardware service professionals, animators, graphic artists, building services professionals, artisans and others. N-Power also focuses on providing our non-graduates with relevant technical and business skills that enhance their work outlook and livelihood (Federal Ministry of Youth Development, 2009).

The N-Power Programme

Skills and knowledge are the driving forces of economic growth and social development of any great nation. Despite the current high level of unemployment, harnessing Nigeria's young demography through appropriate skill development efforts provides an opportunity to achieve inclusion and productivity within the country. Large-scale skill development is the main policy thrust of the N-Power Programme Obadan (2017:37).

N-Power is a youth empowerment scheme sponsored by the Federal Government of Nigeria. N-Power addresses the challenge of youth unemployment by providing a structure for large-scale and relevant work skills acquisition and development while linking its core and outcomes to fixing inadequate public services and stimulating the larger economy Akujuru and Enyioko (2019:44).

N-Power aspires to provide a platform where most Nigerians can access skills acquisition and development. N-Power is designed for Nigerian citizens between the ages of 18 and 35. The modular programmes under N-Power will ensure that each participant will learn and practice most of what is necessary to find or create work Akujuru and Enyioko (2019:48).

The N-Power Programmes

The N-Power programmes are broadly categorized into two broad categories, N-Power Graduate Categories and N-Power Non-Graduate Categories Akujuru and Enyioko (2019:41).

N-Power Graduate Categories

The N-Power Graduate category also known as N-Power Volunteer Corps is the post-tertiary engagement initiative for Nigerians between 18 and 35. It is a paid volunteering programme of a 2-year duration. The graduates will undertake their primary tasks in identified public services within their proximate communities Akujuru and Enyioko (2019:50).

All N-Power Volunteers are entitled to computing devices that will contain information necessary for their specific engagement, as well as information for their continuous training and development. N-Power volunteers will provide teaching, instructional, and advisory solutions in 4 key areas which include Akujuru and Enyioko (2019:47);

i. N-Power Agro: N-Power Agro Volunteers will provide advisory services to farmers across the country. They will disseminate the knowledge that has been aggregated by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in the area of extension services Akujuru and Enyioko (2019:44).

ii. N-Power Health: N-Power Health Volunteers will help improve and promote preventive healthcare in their communities to vulnerable members of society including pregnant women and children and to families and individuals Akujuru and Enyioko (2019:44).

iii. N-Power Teach: N-Power Teach Volunteers will help improve basic education delivery in Nigeria. N-Power Teach Volunteers will be deployed as teacher assistants in primary schools around Nigeria Akujuru and Enyioko (2019:44).

iv. N-Power Tax: N-Power volunteers will be selected to work as Community Tax Liaison Officers to work in their states of residence with the state's tax authorities. The N-Power community tax liaison officers will have responsibilities which will include answering online inquiries, customer management, and creating awareness of tax compliance Akujuru and Enyioko (2019:44).

N-Power Non-Graduate Categories

The N-Power Non-Graduate category is designed to train and empower non-graduates with skills that they can use for the betterment of themselves and the economy at large. The programme offers training and certification programme for all successful candidates Akujuru and Enyioko (2019:48).

The N-Power Non-Graduate category will provide training and certifications in 2 key areas which include;

i. N-Power Knowledge: The N-Power Knowledge programme is the Federal Government's first step towards diversifying to a knowledge economy. This programme will work alongside the planned eight innovation hubs across the country to provide incubation and acceleration of the technology and creative industries. The programme is a 'Training to Jobs' initiative, essentially ensuring that participants can get engaged in the marketplace in an outsourcing capacity, as freelancers, as employees, and as entrepreneurs Akujuru and Enyioko (2019:48).

ii. N-Power Build: N-Power Build is an accelerated training and certification (Skills to Job) programme that will engage and train 75,000 young unemployed Nigerians in order to build a new crop of a skilled and highly competent workforce of technicians, artisans and service professionals Akujuru and Enyioko (2019:48).

3. Theoretical Analysis

The Social Contract Theory of the State

The theory of the social contract presents the State as a product of the mutual agreement of men, created with a definite purpose to sever certain social needs. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), John Locke (1632-1704) and Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) are regarded as the main exponents of the social contract theory of origin of State. Some later thinkers such as Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), John Rawls (1921-2002) and Robert Nozick (1938) made use of this theory to elaborate their own systems of thought (Gauba, 2003:181).

The social contract theory of the origin of the State implies that men, at a time in history, lived or would have lived without any recognized civil law (ie without the State). This stage or life pattern of men (when they lived without any form of organized civil law) is described as the 'state of nature. The state of nature denotes how men lived or would have lived without the authority of civil law, State or political control. At this stage, there is no industry and no systemic production. Men lived not only close to nature but they had to depend on the bounty of nature for their survival Shaapera (2019:14).

From the standpoint of social contract theory, it is not out of place for the government to provide succour to its citizens especially those between the ages of 18 to 35 years and this age bracket is mostly youths who have volunteered to sacrifice all necessities to the government for the purpose of the government taking care of them. So, the N-Power programme is one of the responsibilities of the Buhari's Administration to the youths of Nigeria as part of his contract.

4. Body of Work

The Influence of Poverty reduction Programme on N-Power

The alleviation of poverty is universally accepted as a primary development objective. Poverty is a vicious circle which keeps the poor in a state of destitution. The concept of poverty which

reflects its numerous visible attributes is multi-dimensional in nature. Poverty according to Na'Allah (2004) and Kwaghe (2006) is multi-dimensional, because it affects many aspects of the human condition, including physical, moral and psychological. For many societies, poverty is a concrete phenomenon and can easily be identified Akujuru and Enyioko (2019:39). It is also relative because the population that may be classified as poor in a developed economy could be regarded as materially well off in the least developed countries. Each society as pointed out by Kwaghe (2006) defined poverty in its own terms. Conventional measures of poverty count the number of people below the poverty line and define the poverty rate as the proportion of total population below the poverty line Akujuru and Enyioko (2019:48). Poverty, according to him, is, therefore a normative concept and setting the poverty level requires a judgment about social norms. Irrespective of how poverty is defined, the poor have been described as those who could not obtain adequate income, find a stable job, own property or maintain healthy conditions (Obadan, 2017).

They also lack adequate levels of education and cannot satisfy their basic needs (Sancho, 1996). Thus, the poor are often illiterate, poor in health and have short life spans (Farmanesh et al, 2005). They have no access to the basic necessities of life. They are unable to meet both social and economic obligations, lack skills and gainful empowerment, have fewer economic assets and sometimes lack self-esteem Akujuru and Enyioko (2019:49). The poor according to Farmanesh et al (2005) are those with income below the poverty line, who lack access to basic services, practical contacts and other forms of support. The people isolated in rural areas and the marginal urban zones where essential infrastructure is lacking. The preceding definitions indicated that perceptions about poverty have not only evolved historically but also vary tremendously from culture to culture. The criteria for distinguishing the poor from the non-poor tend to reflect national or societal normative concepts and priorities. And as countries or societies become wealthier, their perceptions of acceptable deprivation change (Kwaghe, 2006) Akujuru and Enyioko (2019:45).

Challenges of N-Power

There are five challenges noticeable in the N-Power Programme of the present administration and they are;

i.   Insufficient information: This is one of the challenges bedevilling the N-Power Programme, beneficiaries are not provided with adequate information on the criteria guiding the application into the programme Akujuru and Enyioko (2019:39).

ii.   Non-payment of stipend to participants as at when due: This is another huge challenge facing the N-Power Programme, beneficiaries put in their time and sometimes their money to make up for their assignment given to them while the programme is on but at the end of the day, money to be paid to them as stipends are diverted even when they are paid, the are not paid as when due Akujuru and Enyioko (2019:43).

iii.   Bribery and corruption: This are another challenge that has added minus to the programme as cases of bribery and corruption of N-Power officials are common on the programme and this has created loss of confidence by the Nigeria youth on the N-Power progamme Akujuru and Enyioko (2019:41).

iv.   Wrong Bank Verification Number (BVN): This is another challenge that is militating against the N-Power programme due to negligence and / or illiteracy, beneficiaries of the N-Power programme supply wrong BVN which make it almost impossible for the N-Power programme to make payment to the account as stipends Akujuru and Enyioko (2019:47).

v.   Overbearing hands of politicians in the Programme: Political elites sees the N-Power programmed as an avenue for political settlement, their interest becomes overbearing as those under poverty which the programme is suppose to capture are neglected due to the influence of politicians Akujuru and Enyioko (2019:39).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

There is no nation that is immune to poverty but the level of poverty varies from one country to another. In Nigeria, the level of poverty is high, according to the National Bureau of Statistics, the rate of poverty is put at 33 per cent, one of the highest in the world. The Federal Government of Nigeria through it social contract under President Muhammadu Buhari has been able to provide palliative to cushion poverty through the N-Power Programme, assessing the N-Power programme this paper has led to the discovery that the N-Power programme is not an

"uhuru" after all, considering the challenges associated with it, it is base on the challenges highlighted above that is paper by way of suggestions makes the following recommendations;

i. Government should improve on the funding of N-Power to accommodate more Nigerians because merely limiting the beneficiaries to youths of the age of 18 to 35 years is not good for social contract especially considering the fact that poverty has no age limit as it cut across.

ii. There should be an upgrade from the mere filling of forms to more concrete way of assessing the beneficiary that is void of the third party, as this will eliminate any form of bribery and corruption currently bedevilling the N-Power Programme as there are too many complain bordering on corruption.

iii. Even though it is suggested that government should improve on the scope of the N-Power Programme to cover those before 18 years and those above 35 years, the government should make legislation guiding the N-Power Programme with the intent of eliminating the overbearing interest of politicians who may want to hijack the programme for their self-interest.

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