

The YouWiN Entrepreneurship Programme and National Development in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

While so many attempts have been made by the Nigerian state to engage its teeming unemployed youths in public and private services, the Youth Enterprise With Innovation in Nigeria (YouWiN) is yet another employment generation strategy of the government but this time with the aim of igniting the entrepreneurship potentials of the Nigerian youth population to enable them create jobs for themselves. This work attempts to review this laudable initiative weighing its strengths and weaknesses and the philosophy behind its conception. Exploring the utilitarian theory of ethical conduct alongside the felicific and ethical calculus to appraise the rationale behind the programme, and taking cognisance of predominant infrastructural deficit in the country, the study concludes that the YouWiN idea though sounding noble, was actually a miscalculation in view of the near absence of those social amenities that should have aided the achievement of the long-term objectives of the policy.

Keywords: *YouWiN, entrepreneurship, national development, utilitarianism, Nigeria*

INTRODUCTION

It is an irrefutable fact that there exist a great relationship between the employment level and national development in any country. The more gainfully employed the citizens of a nation are, the better the state of their economy. Every national political leader knows therefore that the wellbeing of their state is indubitably connected to the economic engagements of the people. But the challenge posed by the high rate of unemployment in Nigeria is the concern of this piece. The challenge is so enormous that the entire socio-political economy is negatively affected by this lack of job opportunities. Socio-politically, vices are so rampant that political jobbers easily harvest on youths' idleness and degenerated value system to unleash violence on both fellow politicians and the nation at large. On the economic front, the country is not faring better as the National Income or Gross Domestic Product hardly projects the hardship being passed through by the bulk of the Nigerian masses who only manage to survive with less than one United State's dollar per day. In attempting to address this unemployment challenge together with its attendant problems, successive Nigerian governments since the return of democracy in 1999 have enacted

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policies and implemented programmes that they thought capable of ameliorating the lots of the populace. While the President Obasanjo's regime started the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in 2001 aiming at reduction of absolute poverty, with goals which include training of youths in vocational trades as well as creating employments (Wohlmuth, Alabi and Burger, 2008), Yar'Adua's administration continued this battle against unemployment and poverty by maintaining most of the agencies that were set up for this cause. His government is also credited with the efforts at initiating the famous amnesty programme in the Niger Delta which saw unemployed irate youths being granted state pardon and given various kinds of formal education including skill acquisition training to render them useful both to themselves and their communities.

Following the inadequacies of the foregoing attempts at addressing the unemployment situation and the zeal to set the nation on the path of development, President Jonathan's economic team launched the Youth Enterprise With Innovation in Nigeria (YouWiN) Initiative with the intent that it will create thousands of jobs with great multiplier effects. This study is a post-mortem on this seeming novel project which is aimed at empowering the Nigerian youth towards the ultimate goal of achieving national development. The Utilitarian philosophy and theory as espoused by Bentham and Mills will guide the course of this review just as information and facts shall be derived from governmental achieves and compared with actualities.

Considering the lingering unemployment problem in Nigeria with the attendant developmental challenges it has posed, any step that would lead to the creation of additional job would no doubt be welcomed by any reasonable person. This is why various efforts at seeking to address employment cum developmental challenges of the country such as the institution of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Small and Medium Enterprises Development of Nigeria (SMEDAN) and National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) at various stages in the annals of the nation have often been greeted by citizens enthusiasms as well as scholarly appraisals. The You Win programme which is one of the latest entrants among these developmental strategies have as at the time of this discourse only had scanty literature and barely any critique on it.

This study therefore attempts to determine the successes or otherwise of this entrepreneurship programme hence, a major research question of this piece is Can the Nigerian Federal Government's YouWiN project tackle the country's high unemployment rate? To make this review process as comprehensive as possible, it is imperative to first and foremost carry out a conceptual clarification as well as establish an analytical framework to chart a direction for the work. The utilitarian theory of ethical conduct would best help to determine both the worthiness or otherwise as well as success or failure of the YouWiN governmental initiative to reduce unemployment and poverty in Nigeria. As a principle, it is of the view that the yardstick for evaluating the reasonableness or otherwise of any particular governmental policy lies in the level of happiness or sadness it accords to the greatest number of the citizenry. As a theory, it opines that what is useful is good, and consequently, that the ethical value of conduct is determined by the utility of its results. The term utilitarianism is more specifically applied to the proposition that the supreme objective of

moral action is the achievement of the greatest happiness for the greatest number. This objective is also considered the aim of all legislation and is the ultimate criterion of all social institutions (Bentham, 2009). Burt (1939) documents that Scottish-born philosopher and economist, James Mill (1773-1836) worked closely with British philosopher-economist Jeremy Bentham to flesh out Bentham's theory of utilitarianism. The utilitarian doctrine held that the function of government should be to secure the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. Mill argues that a democratic government is best suited to achieve this utilitarian goal. Burt (1939) notes that the influence of the utilitarians and the writings of the above mentioned scholars were in part responsible for the passage of Britain's Reform Bill of 1832 - a legislation which extended suffrage to more people in Britain and consequently giving greater power to the middle class.

Governmental policies are therefore supposed to engender national development like those experienced across Europe in the 19th century as exemplified by that of Britain enunciated above. But national development does not only involve electoral reform as depicted in the reform bill of 1832. It rather entails both socio-political and economic progress of any particular society. It connotes emergence from rudimentary state, structure or system to a well grown one of vigour and action. Development scholars like Seers (1969) have made efforts to establish some indices which can be used to determine whether or not there is development. He opines that any situation of development must be one in which poverty, unemployment and inequality is declining.

For Seers (1969), if any or all of these central issue(s) is or are growing worse, then it will be wrong to call the outcome development even if per capita income is doubled. In relation to a nation (which is a community of people living in a defined territory and organised under a single government), development or national development implies the emergence of a state from primitive stage through progressive advancement in sustained socio-political and economic growth and stability to improved standards of living for the citizenry (Idowu, 2002). With this insight, we can therefore categorically agree that the indices or elements of National development encompass not only economic development but including the political and the social.

On the political front, national development would encompass political mobilisation that results in greater social participation in political activities not leaving out political integration which of course is the capacity of a political entity to effectively cater for a greater part of the interests within it. Economic development as a subset of national development means positive changes in the production, distribution and qualitative and quantitative consumption capacities of a nation (Onamah, 2005). This of course is expressed in the poverty, unemployment and inequality levels of a country. Development in the Social arena is determined by assessing what is happening to the social material and immaterial facilities that are supposed to enhance the well-being of the masses. These are education and technology, health, transportation and communication infrastructures and services. It is imperative at this juncture to consider the entrepreneurship, national development nexus. Entrepreneurship which is simply the capacity and willingness to undertake a productive venture with all attendant risks while seeking profit as reward (Odiji, 2014), is

no doubt linked with firms that qualify as small businesses. This implies that entrepreneurship has to do with virtually all aspects of small or new business management. As this businesses grow with their multiplier effects felt at the macroeconomic level, so it translates to national development. This is the experience of most of the countries being referred today as the Asian tigers. Being very much aware that its people are unemployed and living in abject poverty, scholars and policy makers alike have respectively either recommended or proposed and formulated or implemented policies and programmes that are aimed at boosting entrepreneurship in Nigeria with the attendant objective of addressing the problems of unemployment and the poverty it breeds.

Ogundele and Abiola (2012) buttress this point when they note that the hope of any meaningful development that will produce great and dynamic economy in Nigeria in all aspects of its people's endeavours lies in rigorous and massive entrepreneurship education and development. But as noted earlier, various attempts have been made in the past to address this developmental challenge (addressing the general level of unemployment) but none has achieved substantial success. To resolve the challenge of determining the successfulness or otherwise of the YouWiN initiative, the felicific and ethical calculi shall be explored. The felicific calculus is an algorithm formulated by Jeremy Bentham for calculating the degree or amount of pleasure that a specific action is likely to cause. To Bentham, the felicific calculus could, in principle determine the moral status of any considered act. To be included in this calculation are several variables or "circumstances" which are:

- a. Intensity – the robustness of the pleasure
- b. Duration: How long will the pleasure last?
- c. Certainty or uncertainty: How likely or unlikely is it that the pleasure will occur?
- d. Propinquity or remoteness: How soon will the pleasure occur?
- e. Fecundity: Probability that the action will be followed by sensations of the same kind.
- f. Purity: The probability that it will not be followed by sensations of the opposite kind.
- g. Extent: How many people will be affected?

For ethical calculus which is the application of mathematics to calculate issues in ethics, Francis Hutcheson devoted a section of his 1725 work *Inquiry into the Original of our ideas and Beauty and Virtue* to "an attempt to introduce a Mathematical Calculation in subjects of Morality". Formulas included (Jones, 1951).

$$M = B * A$$

Where,

M is the moral importance of any agent

B is the benevolence of the agent

A is the ability of the agent

An Overview of the YouWiN Programme in Nigeria

The Youth Enterprise With Innovation in Nigeria (YouWiN) Programme is a collaboration of the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Communication Technology (CT), the Ministry of Youth Development and the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development which

launched annual Business Plan Competition (BPC) for aspiring young entrepreneurs in Nigeria. This no doubt was in tune with the Nigerian state's drive to create more job opportunities for the citizenry. A major objective of the Programme is to generate jobs by encouraging aspiring entrepreneurial youths in Nigeria to develop and execute business ideas that will lead to job creation. The specific objectives of the Programme as stated on the government's official website (<http://www.statehouse.gov.ng/index.php/news>) are:

- i Attract ideas and innovations from young entrepreneurial aspirants from Universities, Polytechnics, Technical colleges, and other post-Secondary institutions in Nigeria;
- ii Provide a onetime Equity grant for 1,200 selected aspiring entrepreneurs to start or expand their business concepts and mitigate start up risks;
- iii Generate 80,000 to 110,000 new jobs for currently unemployed Nigerian youth over the three years during which the three cycles will be implemented;
- iv Provide business training for up to 6,000 aspiring youth entrepreneurs spread across all geo-political zones in Nigeria;
- v Encourage expansion, specialization and spin-offs of existing businesses in Nigeria;
- vi Enable young entrepreneurs to access a wide business professional network and improve their visibility.

Former President Goodluck Jonathan under whose watch YouWiN was initiated equally unveiled the *raison d'être* for the initiative in his opening speech during the launch of the third edition of the programme at the Presidential Villa. There he attested to the fact that the programme came on board following his administration's desire to vigorously confront the growing unemployment rate among the vibrant youth population in Nigeria. He observes that youth unemployment in the country as at 2011 stood at a staggering 35%. Hence the launching of YouWiN to help the youths create jobs for themselves and others. The promise then was that at least 80,000 jobs will be produced. Former President Jonathan in 2013 enunciated major achievements of the initiative in these words:

I am happy to report that so far, over 26,000 direct jobs have been created across our six geopolitical zones in various sectors of the economy. This includes 22,000 from YouWiN 1 and nearly 5,000 from YouWiN 2 (YouWiN Women) which commenced disbursement just in September. Let me reiterate that I believe strongly in the youth of this country. They are not only vibrant; they are intelligent, resilient and hard working. When provided the right environment, tools and opportunities, they will transform the economic future of our great country. ...With targeted support, the products and services on display here will compete with the best in the world. They will not only serve our domestic needs, they are potentially export revenue earners for this country. I am exceedingly pleased to learn that some of our youths who received only training and capacity building support, without financial grants, have proven their entrepreneurial skills by starting their own businesses and employing others. These commendable efforts challenge us to do more for our youths in the areas of entrepreneurship and job creation. I implore all young Nigerians who fall within the ages of 18 - 45 years to apply.

Applicants were however admonished to take note of the following rules of engagement:

- i 'YouWiN' is an equity contribution to businesses. It is hence not a loan but a grant.
- ii Award recipients will be paid according to the needs of the business and specific milestones stated in the business plan.
- iii Award recipients must be registered with Corporate Affairs Commission before disbursement of funds even though they do not need to be registered to apply. YouWiN will support the registration process.
- iv Award recipients will operate accounts using their registered companies with any of the participating commercial banks prior to disbursement.
- v Award recipients must sign a grant agreement with the managers of YouWiN before disbursement of funds (Akpediti, 2015).

Assessing the YouWiN in Relation to National Development

While the initiator of the YouWiN programme excites over the creation of 26,000 direct jobs as cited above, information garnered from officials explains that while the first edition of the programme tagged YouWiN1 was launched to sensitized aspiring entrepreneurial Youths on job creation by funding their business plans, and the second edition (YouWiN2) a Mono-gender version that rewarded over 1200 female youths, the third edition (YouWiN3) which was Poly-gender had a record awardees of just over 2500 Youths. The foregoing statistical inconsistency emanating from various forums notwithstanding, may we at this juncture employ the felicific calculus in determining the strength and/or weaknesses of the project. As depicted earlier, to be included in this determination is: Intensity; Duration; Certainty or uncertainty; Propinquity; Fecundity; Purity; and Extent as yardsticks for appraisal.

- i For intensity which critiques the strength of the benefit derived from the policy, one would not but thumb down considering the proportion of youths that benefited (that is just within the realm of 26,000 out of over 26 million that are unemployed).
- ii In terms of duration, certainty and propinquity – the indices that are interested in the political will to objectively carry out the implementation of the programme and work towards its sustainability, we already observed the contestations of awardees who are decrying the President Buhari regime's disinterested posture towards the programme. This lack of policy continuum no doubt has been a major bane of development in Nigeria. Every new government finds it difficult to continue with the programmes initiated by their predecessor.
- iii Talking now about Fecundity, Purity and extent – where we assess the programme's ability to produce offspring especially in large numbers and followed by the same original sensation, again we must stress here that the chances for these are slim particularly going by the poor infrastructural network that is suppose to link the youths together. No good road networks, poor and dwindling power generation and distribution and expensive and inefficient communication services.

If we now place the appraisal above against the ethical calculus, in which:

$$M = B * A$$

Where:

M represents the moral importance of the YouWiN initiative

B is the benevolence of the Programme, and

A is its ability to succeed

While the benevolence or benefit of the programme is indubitable even though the number of beneficiaries in the short-run is minute when compared to the total unemployed youth population which stands at 80 million (Mahmood, 2014), the chances of the programme to succeed in the face of acute infrastructural deficit – poor transport and communication networks and inadequate electricity and portable water supply for instance is very slim. Hence, the moral importance of the programme in view of this systemic obstacle to its success is no doubt highly questionable.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Having taken an in-depth look at the YouWiN entrepreneurship programme which is yet another policy with which the Federal Government of Nigeria professed it intends to explore to solve the unemployment quagmire in the country, it was discovered that the initiative could hardly survive particularly in the long run. This partly is due to the inadequate feasibility analysis conducted before the programme was kick-started. While the number of youths the policy proudly aims to cover within its short and long run projections is minute when compared with the total population of youth unemployment in the country which keep on skyrocketing, one cannot hesitate to undermine its claimed benevolence. Secondly, the ability of the programme to survive in the face of acute infrastructural deficit is certainly in doubt. This is not to talk of the culture of policy discontinuation which characterises every change of governmental baton in Nigeria. Awardees of the YouWiN 3 have for instance already appealed to the newly emerged All Progressive Congress (APC) government which defeated the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2015 presidential elections to pay their supposed grants in order not to kill their dreams and aspirations.

As a recommendation therefore, the government should first and foremost carry out serious studies weighing all options particularly factors that stand to possibly undermine such laudable projects before re-delving into it. In this light, while it is advisable that the government fixes the issues that concern most infrastructural facilities that will engender robust business operations in all sectors of the economy, the billions of dollars earmarked for this entrepreneurship initiative if used to fix some of the grounded government controlled industries, more youths than those projected to benefit from YouWiN will find gainful employments with multiplier effects across the lengths and breadths of the country.

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