
Evaluation of Public Policies: The Case of National Youth Service Corps in Nigeria

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Abstract

Government or public policies are outputs from political systems in forms of authoritative decisions arising from the processing of identified demands or problems in society. The aim is to make government responsive to the people within a given milieu. This is a major task in governance worldwide. The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Scheme is one of government's policies to foster the identified integration problem in Nigeria as a result of its heterogeneous nature. This paper was to evaluate the NYSC Scheme against the template of achieving this principal purpose of Nigeria's integration after over four decades of its operation. This study will be of use to government as well as the organization itself in taking future actions of development. Part of the primary data generated by this writer in his PhD research work which adopted a survey research methodology, was used in the analysis of this work. Two hypotheses were tested using the Independent t-test statistic to assess the impact of the scheme on its principal aim, integration. While the two hypotheses were rejected showing there was no statistically significant impact of NYSC on integration, it did not vitiate the fact that the scheme has performed well as a government policy but only needs to be revitalized. This paper recommended that the NYSC should be empowered by government and the organization should conduct pre-service sensitization as well as post-service evaluation programmes to enhance its performance.

Key Words: *Public policies, National Youth Service Corps, Integration, Evaluate, Independent t-test statistic and Performance.*

Introduction

Public policy according to Dye (1976) means what government deliberately chooses to do or not to do. It refers to the relationship of government to its environment. This is different from Private policy in terms of scope and impact because it is not limited to regulation of conduct in private domains (Anifowose and Enemu, 2008).

To Anderson (2003), public policy involves governmental action to affect a specific problem. It is goal-oriented, based on law and authoritative. Government, in the process of satisfying the needs of its people, accommodates demands, processes them and evolves policies.

In a policy formulation process, "Evaluation" is the last stage. The objectives include realizing efficient and high quality public administration focused on the people, based on performance and government's accountability to its citizens.

The Policy Process is composed of five stages including:

- a. Agenda Setting – This entails a list of issues those in and out of government are focused on at any point in time. Prioritization is critical at this point.
- b. Formulation – This is when alternative options to solving the perceived problems are suggested and examined. A cost-benefit analysis is made in respect of the various

options.

- c. Adoption – This is when a specific choice of option is made. This entails the use of adequate Decision-making process which could be Rational Comprehensive, Incrementalism (Muddling Through) or Mixed Scanning models. With a proponent like Herbert Simon, the Comprehensive model requires that all information on the alternative options is examined and the most beneficial option is selected. The Muddling Through model of Charles Lindblom uses the existing situation with an incremental modification while The Mixed Scanning model of Amitai Etzioni adopts a synthesis of the two other models.
- d. Implementation – This is when the adopted option in the form of policy is put into use. To Anifowose and Enemu (2008:290), this policy of government is now seen as response of the political system to the pressures generated from the environment. David Easton's Political System model whereby Inputs in forms of Demands and Support through the Conversion Box (system) producing Outputs in forms of authoritative decisions with a feedback mechanism which generates fresh Inputs, is explanatory of this policy process.
- e. Evaluation – This is when the policy is appraised in terms of content, implementation and achievement. An erroneous perception of some people is that public policies are never effective. This mainly arises from the noticed gap between the objectives and their realization. This may not always be so because various governments of the world differ in their capacity to make policies effective. More instances abound however where such ineffectiveness is more noticed in political systems of the developing countries.

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), one of such policies in Nigeria is to be evaluated in this paper.

Statement of the Problem

A researcher derives credence in his field when he seeks to solve identified problems. This could be by filling an identified gap between 'real' and 'desired' situations and contribute to knowledge (Greer, 1969).

To Osuala (1987), this may require the determination of Independent and Dependent variables to be tested. In this paper, the Independent variable has to do with formulation of Public Policies while the Dependent variable of National Youth Service Corps will be evaluated to test realization of the objective behind evolving public policies.

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), a government policy was evolved in 1973 principally to enhance the integration of Nigeria. This is important because of the fact that Nigeria is a plural society with wide multi-ethnic diversity. This Scheme was established with the view of encouraging and developing common ties among the citizens aimed at national unity.

This strategy might not have achieved the necessary outcome. This is in view of existing primordial loyalties leading to communal crises, tension and threats of instability cutting across national, state and local lines in the country. Then, what is the problem? While some sections question its relevance, others are of the view that the scheme which has lasted for over four decades contribute in no small measure to unity, peace and progress. What else is to be done? Could it be that the mandate of NYSC has outlived its usefulness or it should be strengthened?

This paper evaluates NYSC as a public policy after over forty years in terms of its main goal of integration through establishing common ties and instilling patriotism in citizens to see if it

has justified the essence of evolving it.

Objectives of Study

Generally the objective of this study is to assess the NYSC after over four decades of existence with a view to determining whether or not it has fulfilled its principal aim of integration. In addition, this study seeks to do the following:

1. To examine the people who participated in the NYSC scheme and ascertain whether or not they differed appreciably on integration from those who did not; and
2. To examine if the rate of inter-ethnic marriages is higher among participants of NYSC than those who did not participate in the scheme.

Hypotheses of Study

Akinyele (1992) argued that before any study in the behavioural sciences can be regarded as truly scientific, it must be guided by hypotheses. Directional hypotheses specify whether the true value of the parameter is greater than or less than the reference value specified. Hypotheses here provide the relationship between variables and basis for drawing the conclusion. Therefore, the following directional hypotheses would be tested:

1. People who participated in the NYSC Scheme would be significantly higher on integration scale than people who did not participate; and
2. People who married outside their ethnic group of origin will be significantly higher on integration scale than people who married within their ethnic group of origin.

Research Questions

This study addresses these research questions:

1. Will people who participated in the NYSC scheme be higher on integration than those who did not participate?
2. Will people who married outside their ethnic group of origin be significantly higher on integration than those who married within their ethnic group of origin?

Literature Review

Policy evaluation as the last step in a policy process is required to track effects of policies and assess them in terms of necessity, efficiency and appropriateness in order to improve planning and implementation.

It seeks to provide answers to such questions as:

- i) Was the problem correctly diagnosed?
- ii) Were important aspects disregarded?
- iii) Were salient data left out?
- iv) Were recommendations properly executed?
- v) Was the response appropriate?
- vi) Should policy be modified or changed? (Granello and Wheaton, 2004).

There are basically two types of assessment namely, Formative Assessment and Summative Assessment. Formative assessment, which is also known as Process evaluation entails policy monitoring for the purpose of making improvements as implementation is unfolding. Summative assessment, otherwise known as Outcome evaluation which takes place after the full implementation of the policy or programme, is aimed at checking if it meets the objective or not, and why (Birkland, 2005).

When a policy fails, it could be due to either a Theory failure or Programme failure. It is theory failure if the policy is implemented as intended and yet it fails to have the desired

effect. This means it may not be the appropriate solution to the problem. It is a programme failure however if the policy is not implemented as intended and does not achieve the desired result. This is an implementation problem; it could have been the appropriate solution.

There are some basic evaluation designs aimed at guiding the planning and execution of evaluation of government policy and they are as follows:

- a) 'Before and After' design which is to assess changes produced since implementation of policy;
- b) 'With and without' or Experimental design which is to assess changes in a target when compared with another target without such a policy;
- c) 'After only' design which is to examine the extent of goal achievement when compared with status quo ; and
- d) 'Time series' design which is to assess changes produced by policy over a long time.

Scholars have offered a variety of solutions to the national integration problem. These include the development of a national identity through socialization so that people may think "Nigeria", and for this purpose, the expansion of the National Youth Service Corps Scheme to include high school graduates, legislation on the indigeneity question; fostering the so much desired unity through the educational system, e.g. the composition of Federal Government Colleges, the fusion of the idea of social justice as a central value in the Nigerian personality and emphasis on a Federal character which focuses on states etc. These suggestions are all plausible.

Sanda (1980:94) examined the problems and prospects of National Youth Service Corps in Nigeria. His investigation centred on viewing the Service corps as a source of 'directed social change'. The study which took place in 1976, few years after the scheme's establishment was to assist policy makers fashion the scheme to perform better. At the end, he identified some problems and made recommendations including organized and consistent public enlightenment, restructure of the scheme and qualitative content changes.

Generally, scholars believe that the task of integration in a country requires a multi-faceted approach including the NYSC option.

Theoretical Framework

Theory guides empirical investigation by providing hypotheses with pointers to areas of further researches (Goode and Hart, 1986).

David Easton's Political System model where Inputs in forms of Demands and Support through the Conversion Box produce Outputs in forms of authoritative decisions with a feedback mechanism that in turn generates fresh Inputs is explanatory of this policy process. Demands are in forms of requests or noticed problems while Support would be in form of loyalty which could increase or decrease. Authoritative decisions could be in form of Acts of parliament, government policies or judicial decisions. These all occur within a given environment which could be a state. The feedback system is essential as it paves way for continuing, modifying or abrogating the policy.

This is represented as follows:

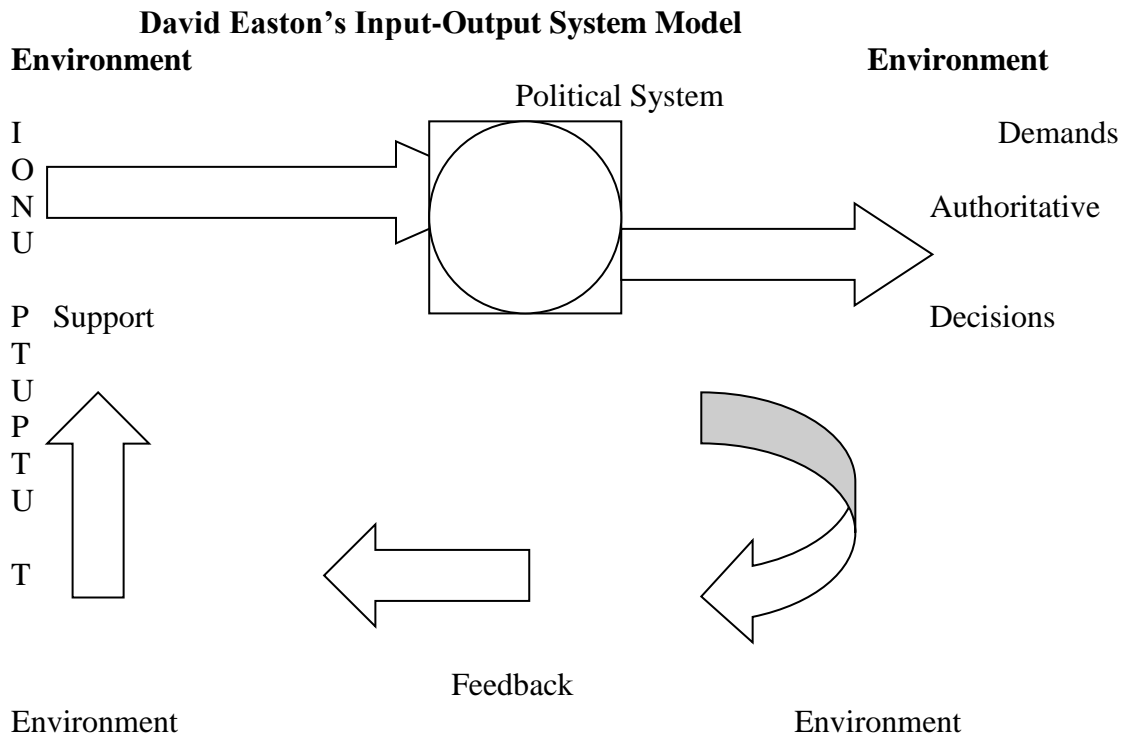


Fig.1

Source: Anifowose, R. and Enemu, F. (2008). *Elements of politics* Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publications.

Methodology of Study

The methodology adopted is both qualitative and quantitative. It is based on part of the primary data collected by this writer in his PhD research work (Ogbeide, 2016). The data got was from a survey research which adopted a cross-sectional design covering graduates of Nigerian universities, both those who served under the NYSC scheme and those who did not. It covered staff of NYSC, civil servants, staff of tertiary institutions as well as staff of Private sector organizations.

With a population of study of over 2,700,000, using Raosoft Incorporation Sample size Calculator (Raosoft, 2004) with a confidence level of 95%, a minimum sample size of 377 was recommended. A sample size of 600 was adopted using a multi-stage sampling technique with a National Integration Inventory Questionnaire showing socio-demographic data and integrational elements. Independent t-test statistic was used to test the impact of NYSC experience on Integration, the key aim of the scheme. Responses from some direct interviews conducted were also used.

Discourse and Evaluation

Nigeria has been plagued by a myriad of problems including poverty, illiteracy, shortage of manpower, inadequate infrastructure, housing, essential services but with the issue of integration appearing to be fundamental.

Present-day Nigeria started to evolve from 1861 with the annexation of Lagos as a Crown colony in incorporating several areas under the British Empire (Anifowose and Enemu, 2008:238). With appointment of Sir Frederick Lugard as Governor-General in 1906 and his introduction of the Indirect Rule system, the Northern and Southern Protectorates were

administered separately. With the amalgamation of these two protectorates in Nigeria to what is currently known as the Nigerian state, varied nationalities at different levels of development were brought together. There still existed administrative polarization between the Northern and Southern areas until the country was divided into three regions, North, West and East in 1939 (Anifowose and Enemu, 2008:239). To Osaghae (2011:1), this has continuously been referred to as “the mistake of 1914”. This is because the groups of people lumped together by the British for administrative convenience had very little in common. The North was composed of mainly the muslims arising from the long established trans-saharan trade links, the West was of related empires like Benin and Oyo kingdoms while the East was made up segments of Igbo, Efik etc (Osaghae, 2011:30). This nature of pulling together incompatible people has had grave implications on integration. This multi-ethnic nature of Nigeria as well as socio-cultural differences has led to cultural dissimilarity. Even the recent trend of globalization which links different cultures and peoples of the world together has not adequately extinguished these differences (Salawu and Hassan, 2011:28-33). Today, identification is easier at family and ethnic platforms than at the national because of the concept of ethnicism. This denotes ethnic loyalty arising from the existence of groups which are social formations, whose members are different from others as a result of shared kinship, religious and linguistic connections (Cohen, 1974).

Nigeria as a heterogeneous society with different ethnic groups, cultures and arrangements interact with one another on the basis of competition for power and wealth thereby creating problems for integration. To Aluko (2003), colonialism and monopoly of power by the major ethnic groups in Nigeria, Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo and the marginalization of the minorities is a major promoter of ethnic nationalism which negates integration. Additionally, Babangida (2002) sees the poverty of leadership inadequately forging integration as the perpetrator of ethnicism. Osadolor (1998) sees the structural imbalance in the federal system being operated in Nigeria as a promoter of competitive federalism which constantly brings up the fear of domination and repel forces of integration.

With the civil war ended, General Gowon embarked on post-war rehabilitation and reconstruction of affected areas as well as re-integration of the Ibos into the Nigerian society. Nigeria has adopted different strategies in its effort to accomplish integration including the Federal system of government being operated, the creation of states and local governments and the introduction of the Federal character clause. To Hicks (1961:24), Federalism is a constitutional government which respects the rule of law and an independent judiciary. It rests on co-operation and compromise. States have been created from the earlier three regions to four regions/states through twelve, nineteen to the present thirty six states and the federal capital territory. Local government system has been adopted as the third tier of government with the current number of seven hundred and seventy four (774). The federal character clause was introduced to benefit the educationally disadvantaged segments of the Nigerian society. These have been measures to instill the sense of belonging in the citizens of Nigeria. While some success might have been achieved, the full goal of integration is yet to be achieved.

National Youth Service Corps scheme is one of the federal policies introduced to manage this problem.

As far back as 1964, the National Youth Council of Nigeria, affiliated with the World Assembly of Youth, was founded to coordinate youth organizations and activities in Nigeria. The National Association of Nigerian Students, founded in 1954, also has been an important national influence on youth and educational policy. However, these two bodies have failed to

represent the Nigerian Youth. The largest youth service organization, to say the least, is the government sponsored one, the National Youth Service Corps.

Nigeria is composed of people living together but has not formed a political unit. This challenge has been apparent since independence in 1960 portraying lack of common consciousness among the diverse people of the country.

From 1965, calls were made as reflected during the visit of Prime Minister Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa to University of Ibadan when when people asked for a ‘Youth Volunteer Corps’ for both civilian and military purposes (Balogun, 2015). When nothing was heard from government about the call, in 1969, Professor Adeoye Lambo on behalf of the Committee of Vice Chancellors stated their acceptance of the move for a National Youth Service.

During the Nigerian civil war between 1967 and 1970, there were speculations that students of University of Nigeria, Nsukka were drafted into the Biafran army, so university students on the federal side requested to join the war but the then Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon turned the request down but promised that after the war, a programme will be established for the youths. In 1968, the Nigerian government set up a Study committee headed by late Lt Col Nicholas Ajayi Ayanru to advise on the likelihood of establishing a youth service corps for Nigeria. As a result of the civil war, government wanted the service corps to be directed at relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction (3Rs) and later for it to be a permanent scheme to mobilize the youths. Lt Col. Nicholas Ayanru who has sometimes been called “the brain behind the NYSC” was said to have indicated that the scheme might be voluntary and financed by private individuals (Balogun, 2015). Government did nothing about the scheme until General Gowon launched the Second National Development Plan in 1970. Then it was indicated that a compulsory National Youth Service Corps would be launched to bring together the youth, inculcate in them discipline, national pride and consciousness.

Initially, the Nigerian students agitated against the scheme but later backed down. Nigeria’s national youth service scheme which began in 1973 is a developmental approach focusing on a segment of the population seen as the country’s future leaders. University graduates who are Nigerian citizens, at home or abroad, are required to spend one year in the government sponsored National Youth Service Corps, serving in a Nigerian state other than their home state. The military government at the time created the National Youth Service Corps with the primary purpose of strengthening national unity. Having just emerged from a civil war, the Nigerian government hoped to instill a sense of patriotism and unity in the next generation. The NYSC was seen as a way to instill a sense of national unity that went beyond ethnic or regional identity by having educated citizens undertake service in different parts of the country.

Socio-Demographic Data (Questionnaire)

Table 1: Ethnic Group Distribution of the Respondents

Ethnic Group	Frequency	Percentage
Hausa	19	3.7
Fulani	4	0.8
Yoruba	153	29.9
Ibo	107	20.9
Bini	67	13.1
Ibibio	6	1.2
Idoma	8	1.6
Efik	7	1.3
Urhobo	14	2.7
Ishan	15	2.9
Isoko	8	1.6
Igala	6	1.2
Ijaw	14	2.7
Ibira	6	1.2
Ika	7	1.3
Heggi	4	0.8
Gbagyi	4	0.8
Alago	4	0.8
Ora	6	1.2
No Response	53	10.3
Total	512	100

Source: Ogbeide, D. R. (2016), Unpublished PhD Research Work.

From the survey, Table 1 shows that the study covered a wide range of ethnic groups, beyond the generally identified majority ethnic groups of Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo. This is to have the views of a broader spectrum of the multi-ethnic country, Nigeria.

Table 2: Gender Distribution of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	289	56.4
Female	223	43.6
Total	512	100.0

Source: Ogbeide, D. R. (2016), Unpublished PhD Research Work.

Table 2 shows a fair distribution across the sexes.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	345	67.4
Single	158	30.9
Separated	6	1.2
Widow/er	3	0.6
Total	512	100.0

Source: Ogbeide, D. R. (2016), Unpublished PhD Research Work.
Table 3 shows that all categories of men and women were therefore included in the study.

Table 4: If married, is your spouse from your ethnic group?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	266	75.1
No	88	24.9
Total	354	100

Source: Ogbeide, D. R. (2016), Unpublished PhD Research Work.
Table 4 shows that a large proportion of the married respondents were from the same ethnic group.

Table 5: If yes, if given a second chance, would you wish to marry from your ethnic Group again?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	228	85.7
No	38	14.3
Total	266	100

Source: Ogbeide, D. R. (2016), Unpublished PhD Research Work.
Table 5 shows that large proportions of respondents do not have regrets marrying from their ethnic group.

Table 6: If your response to item 7 (on questionnaire) is No, do you regret

marrying from another ethnic group?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	60	68.2
No	28	31.8
Total	88	100

Source: Ogbeide, D. R. (2016), Unpublished PhD Research Work.

Table 6 shows that a large proportion of respondents would prefer marrying from their ethnic group.

Table 7: Did you undergo the National Youth Service Corps Scheme?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	419	81.8
No	93	18.2
Total	512	100

Source: Ogbeide, D. R. (2016), Unpublished PhD Research Work.

Table 7 shows that a very high proportion of the sample experienced the compulsory service which makes the finding more valid.

Quantitative Data and Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

H1: People who participated in the NYSC scheme will be significantly higher on integration scale than people who did not.

H0: People who participated in the NYSC scheme will not be significantly higher on integration scale than people who did not.

Table 8: Independent t-test table showing the effect of NYSC participation on National Integration

National Integration	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Crit-t	Cal-t.	DF	P
Participated	419	44.9	5.4	1.96	1.77	510	>0.05
Did not participate	93	43.8	5.0				

Source: Ogbeide, D. R. (2016), Unpublished PhD Research Work.

Table 8 shows the effect of NYSC participation on National integration using the Independent t-test statistic. 419 respondents participated in the NYSC scheme with a mean of 44.9 and standard deviation of 5.4 while 93 respondents who did not participate in the NYSC

scheme had a mean of 43.8 and standard deviation of 5.0. With a degree of freedom of 510 and a level of testing of 0.05 (95% confidence level), the critical t (tabular) is 1.96 while the calculated t is 1.77.

Decision rule: If calculated t is less than critical t, **reject** Directional Hypothesis (H1) and **accept** Null Hypothesis (H0); if calculated t is greater than critical t, **accept** Directional Hypothesis (H1).

Since Cal.t of 1.77 is less than Crit. T of 1.96, H1 was rejected and H0 accepted. This means that people who participated in the NYSC scheme will not be significantly higher on integration than those who did not. This however does not mean that there is no difference at all since some differences can be noted in the means and standard deviation. All it connotes is that the difference is not statistically significant.

Hypothesis 2

H1: People who married outside their ethnic group of origin will be significantly higher on integration than people who married within their ethnic group of origin.

H0: People who married outside their ethnic group of origin will not be significantly higher on integration than people who married within their ethnic group of origin.

Table 9: Independent t-test table showing the effect of ethnic group on integration

National Integration	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Crit-t	Cal-t.	DF	P
Married within ethnic group	235	44.7	5.5	1.96	0.51	343	>0.05
Married outside ethnic group	110	45.0	5.9				

Source: Ogbeide, D. R. (2016), Unpublished PhD Research Work.

Table 9 shows the effect of marriage in ethnic groups on National integration using the Independent t-test statistic. 235 respondents married within their ethnic group with a mean of 44.7 and standard deviation of 5.5 while 110 respondents who married outside their ethnic group had a mean of 45.0 and standard deviation of 5.9. With a degree of freedom of 343 and a level of testing of 0.05 (95% confidence level), the critical t (tabular) is 1.96 while the calculated t is 0.51.

Decision rule: If calculated t is less than critical t, reject Directional Hypothesis (H1) and accept Null Hypothesis (H0); if calculated t is greater than critical t, accept Directional Hypothesis (H1).

Since Cal.t of 0.51 is less than Crit. t of 1.96, H1 was rejected and H0 accepted. This means that people who married outside their ethnic group of origin will not be significantly higher on national integration than those who married within their ethnic group. This however does not mean that there is no difference at all since some differences exist in the means and standard deviation. The difference is however not statistically significant.

Discussion of Findings

From the ethnic group distribution, it is clear that while broad categorizations of majority and

minority ethnic groups exist in Nigeria, there is actually no homogeneity either within the so-called majority or minority groups. They refer to themselves distinctly. This can be noticed from the 89.7% response level for individual profiling against ethnic grouping. This shows that the issue of integration is potent in the Nigerian society.

The less than 13% difference in the gender distribution shows the willingness of both sexes to participate in issues concerning the well-being of Nigeria. This shows that results obtained are not gender-discriminatory.

The distributions on intra- or inter-ethnic group marriage show that there is still preference for intra-ethnic marriages. This buttresses the relevance of maintaining cultural affinity. The distributions on perception of other ethnic groups, religions and working relationship show a reasonable level of tolerance among Nigerians. These impact positively in varying proportions on the three dimensions of integration used in this study namely, social, organizational and political.

As a government policy, the NYSC programme when subjected to evaluation brings up some salient issues. The problem of integration has been properly diagnosed. Initially the students' constituting the youths were not involved in the decision-making process particularly as it was during a military dictatorship. They were however later persuaded to buy into the idea. The revelation from the hypotheses that there is no statistically significant impact does not nullify the usefulness of NYSC.

Reasonably, the NYSC Scheme appears to have been properly executed.

Conclusion

The findings of this study support David Easton's System Model where inputs from the environment go through a conversion process in the political system to yield outputs. These outputs affect the environment and instigate a feedback in forms of changes in volume and quality of demand and support from the environment. This supports the rationale for this evaluation.

Thus, while the National Youth Service Corps as a policy should not be scrapped by the Federal government of Nigeria, it should be revitalized to achieve the set goal of integration. Nigeria needs to encourage greater understanding of the existing cultural, ethnic and religious differences while promoting values the citizen's share and build a nation with hope and opportunity.

As a formative assessment of this governmental policy of National Youth Service Corps scheme, using the "After Only" design, this monitoring satisfies the purpose of making improvements as the implementation of the programme unfolds.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are put forward:

1. NYSC as an organization should put a programme in place to sensitize prospective corps members in their final year in the universities and polytechnics. This will make them expectant and after the service year, have self-evaluation to identify marked differences, overcome prejudices among ethnic groups in Nigeria which should last beyond the service year;
2. State and local governments should fulfill their obligations to the NYSC in terms of statutory contributions. This is by viewing the scheme as a collective programme of all tiers of government and not just the responsibility of the federal government. This

will promote national unity and integration by making the impact of NYSC entrenched across the federation; and

3. Places of primary assignment should not see corps members as continuous sources of cheap labour or occasionally offer 'contract jobs' for ex-corps members but should offer permanent employment as possible without bias. This will reveal the inherent benefits in emphasizing the empowerment (power to) of the ex-corps members in spreading the impact of the scheme positively, post service year. This will make graduates of this scheme to imbibe the spirit of oneness after the NYSC period and promote free movement of labour across the country, which fosters integration.

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