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EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF NATIONAL OPEN APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME ON POVERTY REDUCTION IN JALINGO TARABA STATE

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Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of the National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS) in poverty reduction in Jalingo, Taraba State. Survey research design approach was adopted. The study combines quantitative surveys to comprehensively assess the outcomes and experiences of NOAS participants. The quantitative component involves surveys administered to NOAS beneficiaries, focusing on indicators such as employment status, income levels, and perceived impact on poverty reduction. The study is guided by two research questions and objectives, (60) sixty respondents were purposively selected and structured questionnaires were administered directly by the researcher and fifty (50) were retrieved. Reliability test was carried out using (Crombach Alpha) which resulted to 0.88 coefficient. Standard Deviation was used in data analysis to answer research questions. Findings of the study revealed that NOAS has played a vital role in reducing poverty and unemployment in Jalingo, Taraba State, and the scheme had also suffered some challenges which have hindered its smooth implementation. The study recommends that more policies of this nature to be introduced by the government as well as proper supervision, monitoring and evaluation to be strictly observed accordingly so as to realize the objectives of the scheme.

Keywords: National Open Apprenticeship Scheme, Participants, Poverty Reduction, Skills and Vocational Training, Unemployment.

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Introduction

The National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS) stands as a pivotal initiative by the Nigerian government aimed at addressing youth unemployment and poverty through vocational training and skill development. As part of its broader efforts to tackle socioeconomic challenges, the program was introduced under the auspices of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE). NOAS offers young Nigerians the opportunity to acquire practical skills in various trades and crafts, thereby enhancing their employability and fostering entrepreneurship. Taraba State, located in the northeastern region of Nigeria, including its capital city of Jalingo, has grappled with high levels of poverty and unemployment. Despite the state's rich agricultural potential and natural resources, persistent challenges such as limited access to education, inadequate infrastructure, and ethno-religious conflicts have hindered its socioeconomic development. In particular, youth unemployment has remained a pressing concern, contributing to social unrest and economic stagnation.

In response to these challenges, the NOAS was implemented in Jalingo, Taraba State, with the aim of empowering young people with practical skills that align with the needs of the local economy. The rationale behind focusing on Jalingo lies in its significance as the administrative and economic hub of Taraba State, making it a focal point for addressing unemployment and poverty in the region. By targeting Jalingo, the program seeks to leverage existing infrastructure and resources to maximize its impact on poverty reduction and economic development. Previous studies have underscored the importance of vocational training and apprenticeship programs in addressing unemployment and poverty in Nigeria. For instance, research by Ajisegiri and Adewuyi (2020) highlighted the positive impact of vocational training on the employability of young people in Nigeria, emphasizing the need for tailored interventions to address local socioeconomic realities. Similarly, the study by Ogunlana and Lawal (2019) emphasized the role of vocational education in fostering entrepreneurship and reducing poverty in Nigeria.

Despite these insights, there remains a dearth of empirical evidence on the specific impact of NOAS on poverty reduction in Jalingo, Taraba State. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by conducting a comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of NOAS in empowering youth, creating employment opportunities, and alleviating poverty in Jalingo. By examining the experiences and outcomes of NOAS beneficiaries in Jalingo, this research aims to provide valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders seeking to design and implement effective poverty reduction strategies in the region. Therefore, the study area is very crucial and worthy of assessing the impact of NOAS on poverty reduction.

Statement of the Problem

The National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS) has been implemented as a poverty reduction strategy in Jalingo, Taraba State. However, despite its implementation, there

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remains a pressing need to critically evaluate its effectiveness in alleviating poverty within the region.

The National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS) aims to alleviate poverty by providing vocational training and employment opportunities to individuals, particularly in various States in Nigeria by the Federal Government. Taraba State is among the beneficiary State where poverty levels are significant. Despite its implementation, the effectiveness of NOAS in reducing poverty in Jalingo remains uncertain as a result of glaring factors such as lack of a comprehensive analysis leaves gaps in understanding the scheme's impact on poverty reduction, poor accessibility of the program, its relevance to local industries. Also, socio-economic hurdles, including limited access to resources and educational opportunities hindered the scheme's effectiveness. Based on the aforementioned statement this study seeks to explore the effects of NOAS in poverty reduction and constraints faced by the scheme in Jalingo, Taraba State, so as to identify areas for improvement and maximize its potential contribution to poverty reduction efforts.

Research Objectives

i. To evaluate the effectiveness of the National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS) in reducing poverty among participants in Jalingo, Taraba State.
ii. To identify the socio-economic factors that hindered the implementation and outcomes of NOAS in Jalingo, Taraba State.

Research Questions

i. To what extent has the National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS) contributed to poverty reduction among participants in Jalingo, Taraba State?
ii. What socio-economic factors that hindered the implementation and outcomes of NOAS in Jalingo, Taraba State?

Literature Review

Vocational training programs, apprenticeships, and poverty reduction initiatives have garnered significant attention from scholars and policymakers worldwide due to their potential to address unemployment and poverty. Vocational training programs aim to equip individuals with practical skills and knowledge needed for specific occupations, while apprenticeships provide hands-on learning experiences under the guidance of skilled mentors. Both strategies play crucial roles in poverty reduction efforts by enhancing employability and income-generating opportunities for participants.

Scholars have extensively examined the effectiveness of vocational training programs in alleviating poverty. For instance, research by Blattman and Ralston (2015) emphasizes the importance of skills development in enhancing economic prospects for disadvantaged individuals. Their study in Uganda found that vocational training programs led to increased employment and earnings among participants, thereby contributing to poverty reduction. Similarly, a study by McKenzie and Woodruff (2014) in Sri Lanka highlights the positive impact of vocational training on income levels and household welfare.

Apprenticeship programs have also been recognized as effective poverty reduction initiatives. According to Cragg and O'Sullivan (2017), apprenticeships offer a pathway to sustainable employment by combining practical training with theoretical knowledge. Their research in the United Kingdom suggests that apprenticeship schemes help individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds secure stable jobs and improve their socio-economic status. Furthermore, studies by De Coulon et al. (2015) and Behncke et al. (2014) underscore the long-term benefits of apprenticeships, including higher wages and reduced reliance on social assistance.

Incorporating vocational training programs and apprenticeships into broader poverty reduction initiatives can yield promising outcomes. For example, a study by Almeida et al. (2016) in Brazil examines the impact of the National Program for Access to Technical Education and Employment (PRONATEC) on poverty alleviation. Their findings suggest that PRONATEC, which offers vocational courses to low-income individuals, has contributed to increased employment opportunities and income growth among participants, thereby lifting them out of poverty. Despite their potential, challenges exist in implementing vocational training and apprenticeship programs effectively. Limited access to quality training facilities, insufficient funding, and inadequate coordination between stakeholders can hinder their impact on poverty reduction (Crespo-Cebada et al., 2017).

Additionally, addressing the needs of marginalized groups, such as women and rural youth, remains a critical aspect of ensuring inclusivity and equitable access to these programs (Oostendorp et al., 2018).In conclusion, vocational training programs, apprenticeships, and poverty reduction initiatives are interconnected strategies that hold promise for empowering individuals and communities economically. By addressing skills gaps, promoting entrepreneurship, and fostering sustainable livelihoods, these initiatives contribute to breaking the cycle of poverty and fostering inclusive development. However, policymakers and practitioners must address implementation challenges and prioritize the needs of vulnerable populations to maximize the impact of these programs on poverty reduction.

Empirical Review

Several previous studies have examined the effectiveness of similar vocational training and apprenticeship programs in Nigeria, shedding light on their impact on poverty reduction, employment outcomes, and socio-economic empowerment. Nigeria Employability Skills Project (NESP) The Nigeria Employability Skills Project, implemented by the government in collaboration with international organizations, aimed to enhance the employability of Nigerian youth through vocational training and skills development. A study by Aremu and Adebayo (2015) evaluated the impact of NESP on youth employment outcomes. The findings revealed that participants who underwent vocational training experienced improved employability skills and increased chances of securing formal employment, thereby contributing to poverty reduction.

Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWiN). YouWiN was a government initiative aimed at supporting young entrepreneurs through business training, mentorship, and funding. A study by Amaeshi et al. (2017) assessed the impact of YouWiN! on entrepreneurship development and poverty alleviation. The research highlighted the positive effects of the program on job creation, income generation, and business growth

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among beneficiaries, demonstrating its potential to empower youth and reduce poverty levels in Nigeria.

National Directorate of Employment (NDE) Programs. The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) implements various vocational training and apprenticeship programs across Nigeria. Studies by Oduro and Antwi-Asare (2016) and Ajakaiye et al. (2019) examined the effectiveness of NDE programs in promoting entrepreneurship and reducing poverty. Both studies found that NDE interventions positively impacted participants' livelihoods by equipping them with relevant skills, facilitating access to credit facilities, and fostering self-employment opportunities.

Industrial Training Fund (ITF) Skills Acquisition Program: The Industrial Training Fund (ITF) runs skills acquisition programs aimed at equipping Nigerian youth with vocational skills for self-reliance and entrepreneurship. A study by Akpan (2018) evaluated the outcomes of ITF skills acquisition training on employment and income generation. The research revealed that participants experienced significant improvements in employability, income levels, and business establishment, indicating the program's effectiveness in poverty reduction.

Overall, previous studies on similar programs in Nigeria highlight the importance of vocational training and entrepreneurship development in addressing youth unemployment and poverty. These initiatives not only enhance individuals' skills and employability but also stimulate economic growth and foster sustainable livelihoods. However, challenges such as inadequate funding, limited access to resources, and ineffective monitoring mechanisms pose obstacles to achieving broader impact. Thus, continuous evaluation and improvement of such programs are essential for maximizing their contribution to poverty reduction and socio-economic development in Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted survey research design approach. The population of the study comprises individuals who have participated in the NOAS in Jalingo Taraba State. This includes participants who have undergone vocational training and apprenticeship programmes facilitated by the scheme within the study area as well as relevant stakeholders in the implementation and oversight such as programme coordinators and training providers.

The Study purposively selected sixty (60) Respondents from the categories mentioned to form the study population and systematically selected fifty (50) to constitute the sample size for generalization. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire which was designed into two components. Component A contains the demographic information of the respondents' while component B contains 16 sub questions developed from the research questions structured on a 4 likert scale rating system of strongly agreed (SA), agreed (A), disagreed (D), and strongly disagreed (SD). Content, criterion and construct validity was determined by research experts of Academic Institutions. Reliability test was carried out using (Crombach Alpha) which resulted to 0.88 coefficient. Standard Deviation was used in data analysis to answer research questions. The decision rule of the study holds that any mean score below 2.4 is considered being rejected while 2.5 and above is considered accepted and agreed.

Research Question One: To what extent has the National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS) contributed to poverty reduction among participants in Jalingo, Taraba State?

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Table 1: Respondents Cluster Mean and standard Deviation on the effect of NOAS in poverty reduction in Jalingo Taraba State.

S/N	Responses	X	SD	Remark
1.	The scheme has provided participants with skills needed for employment.	3.61	0.76	Agreed
2.	The scheme has helped in identifying potential career business opportunities	3.30	0.77	Agreed
3.	The scheme has equipped participants to meet their financial needs	3.45	0.75	Agreed
4.	The scheme has provided job opportunities to the participant	2.60	0.89	Agreed
5.	Training and mentorship of the scheme has been very adequate.	2.52	0.83	Agreed
6.	Skills learned have open up new income generating opportunities for participants.	3.20	0.78	Agreed
7.	Participants were provided with working tools required for the training received.	3.22	0.85	Agreed
8.	The scheme as ventured participants in to various small scale businesses.	3.10	0.86	Agreed
	Cluster Mean	**3.1**		

Data in Table 1 show that all the eight Variables on the effect of NOAS on poverty reduction in Jalingo were agreed to by the respondents. The Mean score ranged between 2.52 and 3.61. The Cluster Mean of 3.1 also revealed that the scheme had played a significant role in poverty reduction in Jalingo, Taraba State. The Standard deviation shows that there is homogeneity in the various responses of the respondents.

Table 2 Respondents Cluster Mean and standard Deviation on the socio-economic factors that hindered the implementation and outcomes of NOAS in Jalingo, Taraba State.

S/N	Responses	X	SD	Remark
1.	Inadequate financing has affected the implementation of the scheme in Jalingo.	3.64	0.71	Agreed
2.	Nepotism from the trainers has affected the implementation of the scheme	3.60	0.76	Agreed
3.	Cultural-ethnicity has affected the implementation of the scheme.	3.45	0.80	Agreed
4.	Political interference and instability has affected the scheme.	2.41	0.82	Rejected
5.	Poor academic background of respondents has affected the implementation of the scheme.	3.40	0.87	Agreed
6.	Influence and interest Local Authorities has affected the implementation of the scheme.	2.25	0.64	Rejected

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7.	Inadequate modern training facilities has affected the implementation of the scheme.	3.36	0.86	Agreed
8.	Laxity of some participants has affected the implementation of the sceme.	3.20	0.86	Agreed
	Cluster Mean	**3.2**		

Data in Table 1 show that all the eight Variables socio-economic factors that hindered the implementation and outcomes of NOAS in Jalingo, Taraba State. The respondents agreed on Varibles 1, 2, 3,5, 7 and 8 with Cluster Mean rating between 3.20 to 3.64 as socio-economic factors that hindered NOAS implementation and outcome in Jalingo, Taraba State. The Cluster Mean of 3.2 shows that there is serious socio-economic factor which bedeviled the smooth implementation outcome of the Scheme. The Standard deviation also shows homogeneity in the responses provided by the respondents'

Discussion of Findings

i. Findings from the analysis Table 1 shows that National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS) has played a vital role in reducing poverty rate in Jalingo, Taraba state as it provide beneficiaries with various vocational skills for entrepreneurship, boosted their employability potentials as well as small scale businesses which has significantly impacted the livelihoods of youths and makes them self reliant. In line with the findings of Tanko, Fosen & Miftahu Idris, 2023), the impact of genuine reduction in poverty, unemployment rate of could be attributed to existing vocational skills training in which graduates and non graduates participate to be meaningful and contribute to the society.

ii. Based on the analysis of Table 2, reveals that despite the viable and significance of the scheme, there are various factors that hinders the smooth implementation of the scheme such as weak supervision, political interference, nepotism, cultural ethnicity, poor educational background of beneficiaries and inadequate modern training facilities.

Conclusion

The study concludes based on findings that poverty is one of the socio-economic factors bedeviling Nigerian youths which constitute high turnout of unemployment leading to abject poverty and proliferation of social vices. Government in its part is trying tackle the problem through the coming up with suitable policies, the policies have played a vital role in reducing the rate of unemployment. However, the policies suffered some challenges that need to be addressed to enable the desired results achieved.

Recommendations

i. National open Apprenticeship Scheme is a very good policy brought by government geared towards poverty reduction. The scheme has recorded success in Jalingo and the therefore, the study recommended that government should come up with similar intensive policies so as to mitigate the menace of poverty and unemployment.

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ii. Government should ensure proper and thorough supervision of scheme in terms of auditing, monitoring and evaluation to sanitize the whole process in order to achieve the desired objectives.

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