

THE POLITICS OF SUBSIDY REINVESTMENT AND EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME (SURE-P) AND YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the subsidy reinvestment and empowerment programme (SURE-P) and youth employment in Nigeria 2012-2015. The specific question of the study are that there is significant relationship between subsidy reinvestment and empowerment programme (SURE-P) and creation of employment for the Nigeria youth; what are the possible challenges to the implementation of subsidy reinvestment and empowerment programme (SURE-P) for youth employment creation in Nigeria and how will the implementation challenges of subsidy reinvestment and empowerment programme (SURE-P) be alleviated to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the achievement of the programme ?. the study was based on the following hypotheses: there is a significant between subsidy reinvestment and empowerment programme (SURE-P) and employment generation for the Nigeria youth; lack of fund and corrupt leadership significantly contribute to poor implementation of subsidy reinvestment and empowerment programme (SURE-P) towards employment creation for the Nigerian youth and fund diversion by implementators of subsidy reinvestment and empowerment programme (SURE-P) is responsible for the inability to achieve the purpose of SURE-P. The study adopted qualitative descriptive analysis which is an aspect of content analysis, which analyze and present the data generated from our sources. The neo- liberalism theory serves as the theoretical frame work for analysis. The finding indicates that SURE-P programme reduced the rate of unemployment in Nigeria it also revealed that the adoption of untimely economic measure and corrupt leadership significantly contributed to the high rate of unemployment in Nigeria. The study, therefore recommended among others, that government should create enabling environment to promote investments and channel funds towards agricultural development which is a viable source of investment for the young people if it is made attractive.

Keyword: Employment, empowerment, Implementation

INTRODUCTION

Subsidies were introduced in the Nigerian energy sector in the mid 1980's. Something of a creeping phenomenon, the value of the subsidies has gone from Ibillion in the 1980's to an expected 6billion US dollars in 2011(Centre for Public Policy Alternatives, 2012). In this period, the specific products targeted for subsidy have changed (Oyedele, 2012). In Nigeria, President Goodluck Jonathan on 1 January, 2012, announced the commencement of fuel subsidy removal. The reduction of the fuel subsidy by the Federal Government in January 2012, as a deliberate policy aimed at conserving and maximizing the oil wealth, of Nigeria, generated cries of discontent, fear and worry amongst Nigerians which led to a national strike. In response to the cries of Nigerians, the President on 13 February, 2012, inaugurated the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) to reinvest the Federal Government's share of the savings arising from the reduction of subsidies on petroleum products into

programmes and initiatives that would go a long way to ease the pain of subsidy removal and create a better life for Nigerians, such as creating employment for the youths. Nevertheless, an average Nigerian would wonder if this initiative would affect any change in Nigeria's development towards generating employment opportunities for young Nigeria youths and also whether it will not fail like other government policies.

The justifications for the removal of subsidies vary markedly. In developed economies; environmental issues, international trade and competitiveness are the main drivers of policy. In contrast, welfare, poverty alleviation and cycle of politics largely underpin the reasons for which subsidies are introduced in developing countries, of which Nigeria is inclusive. Nigeria as a case in point is under increased pressure to grow its economy. Yet countervailing forces of corruption, mismanagement of public resources and poor governance conspire to frustrate efforts to sustain growth in the face of rising population members and demands for a democratic dividend by citizenry. The Nigerian government proposed to remove all subsidies on fuel arguing that such subsidy removal savings can be better invested in refineries, roads and major infrastructural projects, and also mitigate the spate of youth unemployment in the country through the re-investment of the subsidy funds, but the problem lies on whether these savings meant to be invested through SURE-P can alleviate the epidemic of youth unemployment in Nigeria. Making efforts to providing reasonable answers to the above questions gave rise to this research.

Statement of the Problem

One of the greatest challenges facing the Nigeria economy is unemployment which has maintained a rising trend over the years. Official figures from the Bureau of Statistics puts the figure of unemployed at 19.70 per cent, about 30 million, but this figure still did not include about 40 million other Nigerian youths captured in World Bank statistics in 2009 (Njoku and Okezie, 2011). Viewing this from the perspective of the recent events in the Middle East, where unemployment and poverty, among others, played a key role in the uprising, one can rightly conclude that Nigeria's unemployment poses a threat to its development, security and peaceful co-existence, being that Nigeria is made up of diverse entities from different cultural and religious backgrounds most of whom have shown differences in political, cultural and religious understanding emanating from concerns of abuse of power, resource allocation, nepotism, negligence and corruption among others (Njoku and Okezie, 2011).

Every year, over 300,000 graduates are churned out from the tertiary institutions nationwide (Osolor, 2012). This number grows yearly and translates into more and more unemployed people littering the streets of Nigerian cities. Unemployment is a societal problem in any nation. Unemployment seems to account for most of the social crimes perpetrated by graduates in the Nigerian society today. The accelerating level of prostitution, armed robbery, oil bunkering, internet rats, drug addiction, trafficking, rape, kidnapping and all facets of violence can be largely attributed to the incidence of unemployment. An examination of most of the apprehended criminals seems to signify that a large number of Nigerian graduates that engage in criminal activities are those without gainful employment. Some of these criminals are people who have the potentials for gainful employment but have been deprived such opportunity.

Central to the attainment of employment generation in any economy is the availability of finance; more generally, cheap finance. Nnanna (2004) argued that bank credit is important for a smooth take-off of business enterprises and also ensures its efficient performance thereafter, even as Nzotta (2004) reiterated that finance influences, positively, the level of economic activity in a region. Finance is capable of influencing what is to be produced, for whom to be produced and how it will be produced including the prices of the produced goods and services are to be dispensed to final consumers. Thus, adequate availability of finance is the hub of employment generation in both small and large economies. Finance thus ensures that economic ills enshrined in unemployment are checked and controlled. Several factors may be blamed for the prevalence of youth unemployment in Nigeria. There is a high population growth rate—3.5 percent per annum—which accompanies an already large national population of over 167 million people. In addition, deficient school curricula and poor teacher training have contributed to the failure of educational institutions to provide students the appropriate skills to make them employable. Since schools in rural areas are generally more deficient in infrastructure, teaching facilities and teacher quality than schools in urban areas, this may help account for the high growth in rural unemployed youth.

In addition to these supply factors, there is a lack of vibrant industries to absorb competent graduates. This obstacle was in part caused by an infrastructural deficit and a debilitating structural adjustment program (SAP) implemented by Nigeria in the 1980s, which led to the closure of many industries and from which the country is yet to fully recover. It is also well-known that the youth unemployment situation has been aggravated by flawed and inconsistent public policies on employment. Another reason might be that policymakers have had to confront inadequate information and data that can form the basis of effective planning. As reported in other studies (Asaju et al., 2014 and Iwayemi, (2014), employment data are very hard to obtain, even from statutory institutions and agencies established for gathering socio-economic data. Where unemployment registers exist at all, they are limited to urban areas, and, in fact, not all those searching for employment attempt to register. In the absence of such data, policymakers

tend to rely on cross-sectional household surveys, which are often inconsistent and full of errors. This lack of data makes it difficult for policymakers to understand the nature of the employment challenge and make informed decisions on how to support young people in the labor market. The scarcity of data on informal employment and entrepreneurship in particular is a major obstacle, given the importance of this sector for youth employment. However, with the transition to civilian rule in 1999, successive civilian administrations have tried to refocus unemployment programs, discontinuing many of the old programs, restructuring some of them and creating new ones. It should be noted that as a federation, public policy on employment has been addressed at the three levels of government—federal, state and local—and that this new emphasis on unemployment has made youths the primary constituency of concern. Consequently, certain institutional arrangements and agencies have been established to promote employment among youth. Three of the current and most prominent programs include the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), the Youth Enterprise With Innovation in Nigeria (YOU-WIN) and the Osun State Youth Employment Scheme (O'YES), among others. The SURE-P was introduced in February 2012 and focuses on management and investment of federal government savings derived from proceeds accruing from the partial removal of the subsidy on petroleum products. The SURE-P is the flagship of recent efforts to provide job opportunities to graduates of tertiary institutions. It is more or less a whole range of activities and programmatic schemes, including the Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS), Community Services Scheme (CSS), Vocational Training Scheme (VTS), and Community Services, Women and Youth Empowerment (CSWYE), among others. One of the more successful schemes of the SURE-P is the GIS, which offers unemployed graduates the opportunity to undergo a one-year internship in firms, banks, ministries, government departments and agencies, as well as in small and medium enterprises (SMEs), relevant to beneficiaries' disciplines. The purpose of GIS is to help beneficiaries

acquire the appropriate skills and practical knowledge that will make them more suitable for the job market. About 50,000 graduates were selected for the first phase of the scheme out of some 85,000 applicants. Even though around 2000 firms expressed interest in hosting graduates, only 293 firms were approved. The YOU-WIN program was designed to create job opportunities specifically, again, for graduates of tertiary institutions that elect to go into business as entrepreneurs. Simply put, participants are required to develop and execute their own business ideas that will provide jobs for themselves and other unemployed youths who may or not be graduates. By 2015, the program is expected to have provided 40,000 to 50,000 new jobs, encouraged expansion, specialization and job spinoffs of existing businesses, and enabled young entrepreneurs to have a broad professional and business network (NPC, 2013). At the state level, the government established various forms of employment-creating programs. The most prominent one is the Osun Youth Empowerment Scheme (O'YES) established by the state of Osun. The scheme provides a series of employment opportunities for participants as traffic controllers, sanitation and environmental officials, security personnel, and other works and services. The World Bank has singled out the O'YES scheme for its success in promoting youth employment in Nigeria and has recommended the scheme for replication by the federal and other state governments.

Consequently, SURE-P was targeted to ensure that the Federal Government's part of the savings from fuel subsidy removal or reduction is applied on critical infrastructure projects and also try to mitigate the spate of youth unemployment in the country through the re-investment of the subsidy funds. However, the problem now lies on the possibility of SURE-P alleviating the high rate of unemployment in Nigeria considering the socio-economic challenges (such as increase in prices of food, transportation, house rent, etc) posed by the fuel subsidy removal.

It is in view of these issues that this study poses the following research questions:

- (i) Is there any significant relationship between Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) and creation of employment for the Nigeria youths?
- (ii) What are the possible challenges to the implementation of Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) for youth employment creation in Nigeria?
- (iii) How will the implementation challenges of Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) be alleviated to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the achievement of the programme?

Objectives of the Study

- (i) To examine whether there is any significant relationship between Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) and creation of employment for the Nigeria youths.
- (ii) To ascertain the possible challenges to the implementation of Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) for youth employment creation in Nigeria.
- (iii) To suggest ways of alleviating the implementation challenges of Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) so as to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the achievement of the programme.

Hypotheses

This study is guided by the following hypotheses,

- (i) There is a significant relationship between Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) and employment generation for the Nigeria youths.
- (ii) Lack of fund and corrupt leadership significantly contribute to poor implementation of Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) towards employment creation for the Nigeria youths.
- (iii) Fund diversions by implementors of Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) is responsible for inability to achieve the purpose of SURE-P.

Literature Review and Theoretical framework

Concept of Unemployment

There is precise definition of unemployment in the economic literature. To the layman, unemployment means a state of joblessness (Gbosi, 2005). Unemployment could be defined as the percentage of the labour force that is without job but is able and willing to work. According to Briggs (1973), unemployment is defined as the difference between the amount of labour employed at current wage levels and working conditions and the amount of labour not hired at these levels. However, Gbosi (1997) has defined unemployment as a situation in which people who are willing to work at the prevailing wage rate are unable to find jobs. Here emphasis is placed on willingness. Therefore, anybody who is not actively seeking paid employment should not be counted as part of the unemployed labour force. If we do so, we may be overestimating the official rate of unemployment.

Youth unemployment, then refers to the conglomerate of youths with diverse background, willing and able to work, but cannot find any. When the supply of labour outstrips the demand for labor, it causes joblessness and unemployment. Given the lack of sufficient employment opportunities in the formal sector, young people may be compelled to engage in casual work and other unorthodox livelihood sources, thus leading to underemployment (Echebiri, 2005; Emeh et al, 2012; Gibb & George, 1990 & Onah, 2001).

Within the Nigerian context, unemployment rate is defined as the percentage of persons among the labour force (15-65 years) excluding students and those medically unfit, available for work but did not work (Central Bank of Nigeria, 1993).

Mathematically, unemployment rate is determined by:

Where: $UR = \frac{UP}{LF} \times 100/1$

UR = unemployment rate

UP = Number of unemployed persons; and

LF = total labour force

According to Ojo (1997), underemployment simply refers to under-utilized workers whose productive capacity is below the reasonable potential. Specifically, it is a measure of the degree in which people's gainful activities fail to make the maximum use of their productive capacity.

Underemployment also refers to less than full employment of the labour force. It also means employment less than full time or inadequate employment in various sectors of an economy. The problem of underemployment is an extension of unemployment. Unemployment refers to those working zero hours and earn zero income. But underemployment refers to those working few hours but earn less income. No matter how one defines underemployment, the underlying philosophy is that people's maximum capacity is not fully utilized in the process of producing goods and services.

One of the greatest challenges facing the Nigeria economy is unemployment which has maintained a rising trend over the years. The total labour force in Nigeria is made up of all persons aged 15-64 years excluding students home keepers, retired persons and stay-at-home to work or not interested (Aiyedogbon & Ohwofasa, 2012). Unemployed refers to people who are willing and a capable of work but are unable to find suitable paid employment. The classical school of thought that provided the earliest thinking on economic issues did not fail to give a central point of reflection on the undesirability of unemployment. The Keynesian revolution of the 1930's, which commanded the explosive attack on economic orthodox apparently, treated unemployment as a central issue of great concern. Following the path of the predecessors, economists at all times and in all ages have expressed various degrees of concern over the threat of the monster called unemployment (Aiyedogon & Ohwofasa, 20122).

The population of every economy is divided into two categories, the economically active and the economically inactive. The economically active population (labor force) or working population refers to the population that is willing and able to work, including those actively engaged in the production of goods and services (employed) and those who are unemployed (Njoku and Okezie, 2011). The next category, the economically inactive population refers to people who are neither working nor looking for jobs. There seems to be a consensus on the definition of unemployment. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines the unemployed as numbers of the economically active population who are without work but available for and seeking work, including people who have lost their jobs and those who have voluntarily left work (World Bank, 1999). Examples include housewives, full time students, invalids, those below the legal age for work, old and retired persons. However, the application of this definition across countries has been faulted, especially for the purpose of comparison and policy formulation, as countries characteristics are not the same in their commitment to resolving unemployment problems (Akintoye, 2008).

Unemployment in Nigeria: empirical examination

The current unemployment statistics in Nigeria, put at about 19.7% (national Bureau for Statistics, World Bank 2009) is on the high side. This figure varies between professions, geo-political zones, States and age brackets with as high as 41.6% reported for youth in the 18 to 24 years age bracket (National Bureau for Statistics, World Bank 2009).

Table 1: unemployment Rate in Nigeria.

State	Rate	State	Rate	State	Rate
Abia	14.5	Ekiti	20.6	Nasarawa	10.1
Adamawa	29.4	Enugu	14.9	Niger	11.9
Akwaibom	34.1	Gombe	32.1	Ogun	8.5
Anambra	16.8	Imo	20.8	Ondo	14.9
Bauchi	37.2	Jigawa	26.5	Osun	12.6
Bayelsa	38.4	Kaduna	11.6	Oyo	14.9
Benue	8.5	Kano	27.6	Plateau	7.1
Borno	27.7	Katsina	37.3	Rivers	27.9
Cross River	14.3	Kebbi	12.0	Sokoto	22.4
Delta	18.4	Kogi	19.0	Taraba	26.8
Ebonyi	12.0	Kwara	11.0	Yobe	27.3
Edo	12.2	Lagos	19.5	Zamfara	13.3

Source: National Bureau for Statistics, 2010

The average rate of unemployment worldwide is 14.2% while Nigeria's rate of unemployment is 19.7%. The country as a whole is above the world average and some states are actually above the National average. According to the above, fifteen (15) States, fall within that category. In table 2 below,

the growth of unemployment by states in Nigeria is shown in which Abia, Adamawa, Bauchi, Delta, Kebbi and Zamfara are among the states with the highest level of unemployment in Nigeria.

Table 2: Unemployment rates by states in Nigeria 2002- 2011

State	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Abia	14.8	11.4	9.7	7.9	13.5	10.9	14.5	14.5	15.5	11.2
Adamawa	12.9	11.9	16.7	21.4	17.9	11.9	29.4	29.4	31.4	18.4
A/Ibom	12.3	14.4	14.4	14.4	15.3	13.5	34.1	34.1	36.1	18.4
Anambra	6.6	9.1	9.5	9.8	10.8	11.1	16.8	16.8	17.8	12.2
Bauchi	10.4	20.5	25.1	29.7	23.9	7.3	37.2	37.2	39.2	41.4
Bayelsa	3.5	7.1	14.0	20.9	16.0	6.9	38.4	38.4	40.4	23.9
Benue	8.2	4.8	11.7	18.6	10.8	67.4	8.5	8.5	9.5	14.2
Borno	6.4	0.8	3.6	6.3	5.8	7.8	27.7	27.7	29.7	29.1
C/River	7.9	12.0	11.5	11.1	16.9	11.8	14.3	14.3	15.3	18.2
Delta	14.9	17.1	10.8	4.5	13.8	18.9	18.4	18.4	20.8	27.2
Ebonyi	2.8	16.7	11.8	7.0	10.9	11.5	12.0	12.0	13.0	23.1
Edo	4.8	3.1	6.5	9.9	8.6	5.1	12.2	12.2	13.2	35.2
Ekiti	17.5	8.2	7.9	7.5	8.7	15.6	20.6	20.6	22.6	12.1
Enugu	15.2	16.5	21.6	27.4	20.0	11.5	14.9	14.9	15.9	25.2
Gombe	13.4	7.6	15.2	22.8	15.6	10.5	14.9	32.1	34.1	38.7
Imo	19.9	22.1	19.3	16.5	21.5	7.6	20.8	20.8	22.8	35.9
Jigawa	6.1	20.5	19.8	19.1	21.6	17.4	26.5	26.5	28.5	35.9
Kaduna	8.4	19.6	15.9	12.1	14.1	5.9	11.6	11.6	12.6	30.3
Kano	12.8	25.9	22.5	19.1	19.4	12.7	27.6	27.6	29.6	21.3
Katsina	10.4	20.3	22.1	23.8	19.3	5.8	37.3	37.3	39.3	28.1
Kebbi	12.3	19.8	19.9	19.9	15.2	11.8	12.0	12.0	13.0	25.3
Kogi	19.9	14.9	11.8	8.7	12.5	16.5	19.0	19.0	21.0	14.4
Kwara	8.8	5.4	4.2	2.9	7.5	16.4	11.0	11.0	12.0	7.1
Lagos	8.0	25.6	16.1	6.5	15.5	10.2	19.5	19.5	20.5	8.3
Nasarawa	1.6	5.1	6.9	8.7	8.1	7.6	10.1	10.1	11.1	36.5
Niger	6.3	6.7	3.5	0.2	3.6	17.0	11.9	11.9	12.9	39.4
Ogun	9.2	1.3	1.9	2.5	2.3	3.9	8.5	8.5	9.5	22.9
Ondo	16.8	7.3	6.8	6.2	6.7	5.8	14.9	14.9	16.9	12.5
Osun	1.0	0.4	1.2	1.9	2.7	6.3	12.6	12.6	13.6	3.0
Oyo	7.0	0.8	3.1	5.3	4.3	6.5	14.9	14.9	15.9	8.9
Plaeau	11.8	0.4	1.6	2.8	2.9	8.7	7.1	7.1	8.1	25.3
Rivers	6.6	15.3	11.2	7.0	25.0	4.7	27.9	27.9	29.9	25.5
Sokoto	4.1	4.9	4.5	4.1	6.4	12.1	22.4	22.4	24.4	17.9
Taraba	16.8	23.8	13.6	3.4	14.0	5.9	26.8	26.8	28.8	12.7
Yobe	15.0	12.1	10.7	8.0	13.6	19.9	27.3	27.3	29.3	35.6
Zamfara	46.4	17.5	61.3	51.1	50.8	12.8	13.3	13.3	14.3	42.6
Fct	14.4	5.3	5.9	6.5	16.4	16.4	21.5	21.5	23.5	21.1
Nigeria	12.6	14.8	13.4	11.9	13.7	14.6	19.7	19.7	21.5	23.9

Source: NBS (2010); CBN Annual Report and Statement of Account

Fuel price increase in Nigeria: A historical perspective

The first fuel price increase started on June 1st, 2000, where petrol price per litre was raised to N3.00 but only to be reduced to N 25 one week after due to massive protests by organized labour, civil society organizations and the ordinary Nigerians (Ering & Akpan, 2012). Five days later, on June 13, 2000, the pump price was further adjusted to N22.00 per liter. On January 1st, 2002, Obasanjo regime increased the price from N22.00 to N26.00 per litre. On January 1st, 2002, Obasanjo regime increased the price from N22.00 and to N40.00 on June 23, 2003 just one year after. In June, 2007, also the same

regime raised the price of fuel per litre of N70, but the Yaradua’s regime later reviewed it downward to N65 on assumption of office in May 2007. This was how it remained until President Goodluck Jonathan regimes decision at an outright removal of fuel subsidy. Interestingly the then Nigeria labour Congress, President, Comrade Adams Oshiomole who had led several fights against fuel subsidy removal including fighting Olusegun Obasanjo, and as a sitting governor of Edo State, joined his fellow governors and the Federal government to argue strongly for the complete removal of fuel subsidy. The still going on, the Petroleum Product Pricing Regulatory Agency (PPPRA) on January 1st, 2012, announced the outright removal of fuel subsidy. This decision by the Goodluck Janothan administration did not go down well with the masses of Nigerians. It resulted in massive strike actions and protests by the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), Trade Union Congress of Nigeria, PENGASAN, Civil Society Organisations, Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the generality of Nigerians. The mass protests almost transformed into the “Nigerian spiring” which would have brought down the regime. The regime quickly entered into a negotiation with the organized labour and rescinded its decision of an outright removal to a partial removal and reduced the pump price to N97. Table 3 provide a clearer picture of the different pump prices by the different administrations from 1978 to Jan. 2012(Ering & Akpan,2012).

Table 3: Data on Petroleum Price Increase/ Adjustments in Nigeria (1978 -2012).

S/N	DATE	ADMINISTRATION	PRICE	% CHANGE
1	1978	Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo (as military rule)	15.37k	-
2	1982	Alh. Shehu Shagari	20k	-
3	1990	Gen. Ibrahim Babangida	60k	300%
4	1992	Gen. Ibrahim Babangida	70k	17%
5	1992	Gen. Ibrahim Babangida	N 3.25k	364%
6	1993	Gen. Ibrahim Babangida	N5.00	54%
7	1994	Chief Ernest Shonekan	N11.00	120%
8	1994/98	Gen. Sani Abacha	N11.00	-
9	2000	Olusegun Obsanjo (as civilian ruler)	N20.00	82%
10	2000	Olusegun Obasanjo (as civilian ruler)	N22.00	10%
11	2001	Olusegun Obasanjo (as civilian ruler)	N26.00	18%
12	2003	Olusegun Obasanjo (as civilian ruler)	N40.00	54%
13	2004	Olusegun Obasanjo (as civilian ruler)	N45.00	13%
14	2007	Olusegun Obasanjo (as civilian ruler)	N70.00	56%
15	2007	Alh. Umaru Shehu Yardua	N 65.00	0.07%
16	2012	Dr. Goodluck Jonathan	N 141.00	117%

Source: Ering & Akpan (2012)

Data in table 3 shows that the Nigerian public have been subjected to a number of fuel increases since 1978, when the General Olusegun Obasanjo regime effected a change upward in the pump price of gasoline from 8.4 kobo to 15.37 kobo. However, Generals Babangida and Obasanjo are reputed to have made the most increases within each of their eight years in office.

Operating Structure of SURE-P

2012 Budget

The partial removal of the fuel subsidy by the Federal Government in January 2012, aimed at conserving a maximizing the oil wealth of Nigeria, in specific terms saw the emergence of a fiscal formula for the sharing of the national petroleum products subsidy savings. The formula required the Federal Government to warehouse 41 per cent of the subsidy savings while the State and Local Government share 54 per cent.

According to CP-Africa (2012), the 2012 SURE-Programme budget breakdown for some of the projects and allocations are as follows:

(i) Works:

- N11bn was allocated to the Abuja- Lokoja road in the 2012 Budget, with an additional N 14bn from the SURE-P.
- N6bn was allocated to Benin- Ore-Shagamu, with an additional N5bn from the SURE-P.

- Similarly, N18.5bn was allocated to Kano- Maiduguri road, with an additional N1.5bn from SURE-P.
 - Provision was made in the 2012 budget for construction of the Second Niger Bridge (N2bn) and Oweto Bridge (N3.5bn). an additional N5.5bn and N4bn would be spent on both bridges respectively from the SURE-P.
 - Provision of N23.bn was made for maintenance of roads and bridges across the country through Federal Road Maintenance Agency (Ferma).
- (ii) Agriculture & Rural Development:**
- The total allocation to the sector is N 78.98bn
 - N4bn was allocated to research and mechanization
 - Provision of N 1.22bn was made for the construction of access roads to each of the 6 Staple Crop Processing Zones.
 - Value Chain: N720 million was allocated to the development of value chains in cocoa, rice, maize, livestock, cotton and others sectors.
 - N1bn was allocated to the Price stabilization scheme.
 - N610 million to facilitate for the access to credit, fertilizers and seeds.
 - An additional sum of us\$500m is expected from development Finance Institute to support the sector.
- (iii) Transport**
- Rail lines: The 2012 budget allocates N3.95bn, N3.15bn and N3.3bn to the construction and completion of Abuja-Kaduna, Lagos-Ibadan and Ajaokuta- Warri rail lines respectively. In addition, the SURE-P allocates N11.6bn to the Abuja- Kaduna line and N9.3bn to the Lagos-Ibadan line.
 - Provision of N800mn is made for the procurement of wagons, coaches and locomotives,
 - Dredging project: N1.2bn is allocated to the dredging of Lower River Niger (Warri-Baro).
- (iv) Education**
- The total allocation to the sector is N400bn
 - N11.6bn was allocated for existing universities.
 - N7.7bn was allocated for the restructuring to Unity Schools
 - National Teachers Institute: The 2012 budget allocates N3.5bn to the retraining of teachers for basic education and training in innovative teaching.
 - Moreover, an additional N24.6bn will be spent on vocational training centres from the SURE-P.
- (v) Health**
- N4.6bn is allocated to the Polio eradication programme
 - N3.5bn is allocated to the procurement of HIV/AIDS Drugs
 - The sum of N174 million was allocated to Integrated Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Strategy, including capacity building, and promoting school health initiatives.
 - N8.42bn was allocated to Federal University teaching Hospitals.
 - N6bn and N3.6bn were allocated to the procurement of vaccines and midwifery service scheme respectively.
 - An additional N73.8bn will be spent on Maternal and Child health from SURE-P.
- (vi) Aviation**
- Various Airports: N22.2bn was allocated for the modernization of airport terminals and upgrading of facilities in the six geopolitical zones of the country.
- (vii) Federal Capital Territory Administration**
- N3.1bn was allocated to the construction of a 20.00m³/hr lower Usuma dam Water Treatment Plants.
 - N2.5bn was allocated to the construction of Cultural and Millennium Tower.
 - N1.25bn was allocated to the Development of Idu Industrial Area (1b Engineering Infrastructure).
 - Various road projects including the completion of roads B6, B12 and circle road (N4bn), rehabilitation and expansion of airport Expressway (N7.53bn).

(viii) Niger Delta

- East- West Road (Section 1-V): The 2012 budget allocated N22.2bn to this road. In order to accelerate its completion, an additional N21.7bn was allocated in 2012 from the SURE programme.

(ix) Water resources

- N1.2bn was allocated to the construction of Central Ogbia Regional Water Project.
- A total of N4bn were allocated to the construction of dams.
- Other provision for water facilities (i.e. regional water supply scheme) of N8bn.
- Rehabilitation of river Basin authorities (12nos) of N13.91bn.

Moreover, over the period 2012-2015, an additional N205.5bn will be invested in rural water scheme, water supply scheme, irrigation scheme and other water related projects from SURE-P. These projects will not only significantly improve the country's infrastructure, but will also create millions of jobs for Nigerians (CP-Africa, 2012).

To oversee and ensure the effective and timely implementation of the projects to be funded with the savings accruing to the Federal Government from Subsidy removal, the SURE-P committee has employed the following processes and procedures:

Funds, Management

Following the approval of its 2012 budget by the Executive and the National Assembly, SURE-P established a fund management structure that ensures probity, transparency and accountability. After the Committee has approved payments for projects, the Chairman signs the approval, the DG Budget Office, as Accounting Officer to SURE-P, Processes approvals. He then authorizes the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to make payments directly to the bank accounts of beneficiaries. The Director- General, Budget Office of the Federation (DG Budget Office) is the designated Accounting officer for all SURE-P activities as a means of providing the check- and balance arrangement that guarantees the probity of the SURE-P process. It also insulates the officials of SURE-P and the Project Implementation Units (PIUs) from direct contact with contractors on financial matters.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Neo-liberalism theory, which is a political philosophy whose advocates support economic liberalization, free trade and open markets, privatization, deregulation, and decreasing the size of the public sector while increasing the role of the private sector in modern society. The meaning of neo-liberalism has changed over time and come to mean different things to different groups. As a result, it is very hard to define. This is seen by the fact that authoritative sources on neo-liberalism, such as Friedrich Hayek (2006), David Harvey (2005) and Noam Chomsky (1999) do not agree about the meaning of neo-liberalism. This lack of agreement creates major problems in creating an unbiased and unambiguous definition of neo-liberalism.

Neo-liberalism is, in the first instance, a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well- being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade (Harvey 2005). It refers to the policies and processes whereby a relative handful of private interests are permitted to control as much as possible of social life in order to maximize their personal profit (Chomsky, 1999).

The term was introduced in the late thirties by European liberal schools to promote a new form of liberalism after interest in classical liberalism had declined in Europe. In the decades that followed, neoliberal theory tended to be at variance with the more laissez- faire doctrine of classical liberalism and promoted instead a market economy under the guidance and rules of a strong state, a model which came to be known as the social market economy. In the sixties, usage of the term "neoliberal" heavily declined. When the term was reintroduced in the following decades, the meaning had shifted. The term neoliberal is now normally associated with laissez-faire economic policies, and is used mainly by those who are critical of legislative market reform (Boas & Morse, 2009).

The term "neo-liberalism" was originally coined in 1938 by the German scholar Alexander Rustow at the Colloque Walter Lippmann (Mirowski & Plehwe, 2009; Hartwich, 2009; Sinn, 2010). The colloquium defined the concept of neo-liberalism as "the priority of the price mechanism, the free enterprise, the system of competition and a strong and impartial state." (Mirowski & Plehwe, 2009). To be "neo-liberalism was not a monolithic theory, at the outset it drew on different academic approaches

such as the Freiburg school, the Austrian School, the Chicago school of economics, and Lippmann's realism (Boas & Morse, 2009).

The concept has, during the past twenty years or so, become somewhat of an exhortation in many political and academic debates. This has especially been the case among authors who uses the concept pejoratively, describing what they perceive of as the lamentable spread of global capitalism and consumerism, as well as the equally deplorable demolition of the proactive welfare state (especially Bourdieu 1998; 2001' Chomsky 1999; Touraine 2001; Hermansen 2005; Saad- Filho and Johnston 2005; Hagen 2006; Plehwe et al. 2006).

The concept suggests its own definition: 'Neo-liberalism' is a revival of 'liberalism'. This definition suggests that liberalism, as a political ideology, has been absent from political discussions and policy-making for a period of time, only to emerge in more recent times in a reincarnated form. It suggests, in other words, that liberalism has undergone a process of initial growth, intermediary decline, and finally a recent rejuvenation. Alternatively, neo-liberalism might be perceived as a distinct ideology, descending from, but not identical to liberalism proper. Under this interpretation, neo-liberalism would share some historical roots and some of the basic vocabulary with liberalism in general. This interpretation places neo-liberalism in the same category as American 'neo-conservatism', which is an ideology or political persuasion somewhat similar to and yet markedly different from much conventional conservative thought, and often hardly recognizable as a genuinely conservative ideology (Kristol 1983; Wolfson 2004, Fukuyama 2006).

During the military rule under Augusto Pinochet (1973- 1990) in Chile, opposition scholars took up the expression again without a specific reference to any theoretical revision of Liberalism. Rather, it described a set of political and economic reforms being implemented in Chile and imbued the term with pejorative connotations (Boas and Morse, 2009). In the last two decades, according to the Boas and Gans-Morse study of 148 journal articles, neoliberalism is almost never defined but used in several senses to describe ideology, economic theory, development theory, or economic reform policy. It has largely become a term of condemnation employed by critics of liberalizing economic tendencies. And it now suggests a market fundamentalism closer to the laissez-faire principles of the "pale liberals" than to the ideas of the original neoliberals who attended the colloquium. This leaves some controversy as to the precise meaning of the term and its usefulness as a descriptor in the social sciences, especially as the number of different kinds of market economies have proliferated in recent years.

According to Boas and Gans-Morse (2009), nowadays the most common use of the term neo-liberalism refers to economic reform policies such as "eliminating price controls, deregulation capital markets and lowering trade barriers", and reducing state influence on the economy especially by privatization and fiscal austerity. The term is used in several senses: as a development model, it refers to the rejection of structural economics in favour of the Washington Consensus; as an ideology, the term is used to denote a conception of freedom as an overarching social value associated with reducing state functions to those of a minimal state; and finally as an academic paradigm, the term is closely related to neoclassical economic theory (Boas & Morse, 2009). Some people believe that the term is used as a pejorative for policies that deregulate the private sector and increase its role in the economy.

2.4.1 Basic Tenets of Neo-liberalism

The basic assumptions of the neo-liberalism involve the following aspects:

- (i) The Rule of the Market: this involves liberating "free" enterprise or private enterprise from any bonds imposed by the government (the state) no matter how much social damage this causes.
- (ii) Cutting Public Expenditure for Social Services: like education and health care.
- (iii) Reducing the Safety-Net for the poor: this involves maintenance of roads, bridges, water supply, in the name of reducing government's role.
- (iv) Sound Macroeconomic Policy: the need for what are referred to as "sound macroeconomic fundamentals" by ensuring stable and predictable prices and positive real interest rates. This requires tight fiscal and monetary policy by ensuring that budget deficits and money.

Supplies are assiduously controlled to minimally acceptable minimum levels in relation to gross domestic product. The aim here is to stabilize key indicators of the market such as overall price level, interest rates, and the exchange rate in the belief that the ensuring stability and predictability of the

indicators provide a basis for rational economic behavior and decision making for all economic agents, thereby enhancing overall efficiency.

- (v) Trade Liberalization: The need for trade liberalization by reducing tariffs and non-tariff barriers and freeing the exchange rate in order to enhance competition internationally.
- (vi) Labour market Flexibility: The call for flexible labor markets, in particular the freedom of entrepreneurs to hire and fire workers at will and to reorganize work as needed; and, for some the need for the free mobility of labor within and across countries.
- (vii) Privatization: The need for the state to exit from productive activities that can be undertaken by the private sector by transferring ownership or management functions from the state to the private sector. Over time, neoliberals have been able to drastically circumscribe areas that are seen to be legitimate government activities, thereby expanding those areas that need to be privatized. Thus, for instance, areas such as health, education, provision of water and sanitation, security, and certain routine administrative functions such as the issuing of licenses, collection of fees and rates, issuing of fines, and so forth, have increasingly been identified as areas that need privatization.
- (viii) Deregulation: The need to remove any regulations that may act as barriers or constraints to the mobility of goods and services, capital, it is demanded of the state it provide and appropriate regulatory environment for the functioning of the market and the protection of property rights and contracts.
- (ix) Export-oriented Sectorial Policies; a policy environment that is neutral in relation to export promotion or import substitution or preferably biased through the use of narrowly targeted supply-side incentives, in favour of export promotion and integration into the global economy based on open trade and free movement of capital across nations.

2.4.2 Application of the Theory to the Study

Neo-liberalism theory is an approach to economic and social studies in which control of economics factors is shifted from the public sector to the private sector. Drawing upon principles of neoclassical economics, neo-liberalism suggests that governments reduce deficit spending, limit subsidies, reform tax law to broaden the tax base, remove fixed exchange rates, open up markets to trade by limiting protectionism, privatize state-businesses, allow probate property and back deregulation.

Using the words of Boas and Gans-Morse (2009), neo-liberalism refers to economic reform policies such as “eliminating price controls, deregulation capital markets and lowering trade barriers”, and reducing state influence on the economy especially by privatization and fiscal austerity. Applying this theory to this study, it is axiomatic to posit that in Nigeria today, the most contentious issue is, unarguably, the deregulation (which is one of the tenets of neo-liberalism) of the prices of petroleum products. The debate acquired added impetus in January 2012, when the senate, the highest legislative organ of government in Nigeria, supported the deregulation in the downstream of the oil and gas industry, which is an important component of the petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) (Onyishi, Eme and Emeh, 2012). The reduction of the fuel subsidy by the Federal Government in January 2012, as deliberate policy aimed at conserving and maximizing the oil wealth of Nigeria, generated cries of discontent, fear and worry, amongst Nigerians which led to a national strike.

Just as it was apparently seen in one of the tenets of neo-liberalism (Reducing the Safety- Net for the Poor: which involves maintenance of roads, bridges, water supply, etc.) and in response to the cries of Nigerians, the president announced the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) to reinvest the Federal Government’s share of the savings arising from the reduction of subsidies on petroleum products into programmes and initiatives that would go a long way to ease the pain of subsidy removal and create a better life for Nigerians. The programme therefore ensures that the Federal Government’s part of the savings from fuel subsidy removal or reduction is applied on critical infrastructure projects and social safety net programmes that will directly ameliorate the sufferings of Nigerians and mitigate the impact of subsidy removal.

Methodology

The study adopted qualitative descriptive analysis which is an aspect of content analysis. According to Asika (2006:118), “qualitative descriptive analysis essentially has to do with summarizing the data generated in the research.” Being a non-experimental research, the use of qualitative descriptive

analysis was employed to analyze and present the data generated from our sources. This we will do through a careful analysis of the hypotheses with the data generated from the reviewed literature.

3.3 Discussions and Findings

A thematic approach was employed in the presentation of the discussions and findings of this work.

Testing and discussion of these hypotheses were carefully presented under the following subheading.

- Subsidy Reinvestment and empowerment programme (SURE-P) and employment generation for Nigeria youths.
- Implementation challenges of Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment programme (SURE-P) in generating employment for Nigeria youths

3.3.1 Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) and employment generation for the Nigeria youths.

In the aftermath of the January 2012 fuel price increase, the Subsidy Reinvestment programme was launched by the federal Government for the prudent management and investment of the saved subsidy proceeds for the benefit of all Nigerians particularly the poor and vulnerable. The objectives of the SURE-P initiative are to mitigate the immediate impact of the petrol subsidy removal on the population; to accelerate economic transformation and to lay a foundation for the successful development of a national safety net programme that is better targeted at the poor and most vulnerable on a continuous basis.

According to the website of the committee, the intervention areas under SURE-P are divided into two broad areas under social Safety net projects and infrastructure development projects.

Under the Social safety net projects includes Maternal and Child Health, MCH programme; community Services/ Women and Youth Employment, CWYE Programme; Urban Mass Transit Programme; vocational Training Schemes and Water and Agriculture Projects. On the other hand infrastructure Development projects include: FERMA Preventive Roads Maintenance programme; Niger Delta Development Projects; Roads and bridges; Rail transport projects, ICT and Petroleum/ NNPC Projects; However, the major focus of this study is the role of SURE-P in generating employment opportunities for Nigeria youths.

The SURE-P Committee in carrying out the mandate trusted upon it by the President, to mitigate the spate of youth unemployment in the country, made some effects which include:

- (i) Establishment of Graduate Internship Scheme of the Community Services, Women and Youth Employment Programme under the Social Safety Net Component.

In line with Mr. President's promise to mitigate the spate of youth unemployment in the country through the re-investment of the subsidy fund, the Federal Government initiated the graduate Internship Scheme under the Social Safety net component of Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P). The ultimate goal of this internship scheme is to reduce unemployment among graduates and stimulate economic growth. This is a part of the transformation agenda of the current administration, which is also geared towards enhancing opportunities for the attainment of Vision 2020.

The scheme has the objective to create opportunities for unemployed graduates to be engaged for a period of one (1) year in reputable firms and institutions, to enable them acquire skills and experience and enhance their employability. The scheme would be a form of partnership with firms and institutions in which they get free labour and undertake to groom and mentor the interns to acquire skills on the job experience while government pays stipends to the interns. This will help equip graduates towards meeting the demand of employers in the current labour market. Interns would be deployed to firms and institutions in their areas of residence for convenience. Interns would be deployed according to the relevance of their discipline to the firms. This will not only improve manpower development will broaden the applicant's expertise. And these interns would be under close supervision for the period, to ensure diligence. The Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) was meant to employ 50,000 youth across the country, to ensure that their skills have been developed towards empowering them to be employable in the short/medium/ long term. GIS will ensure that youths are attached as apprentices in reputable public/private firms for a period of one year where the skills of such individuals will be sharpened.

In view of the above, the Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) is established as part of the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment programme (SURE-P) and it will employ 50,000 youth across the country to ensure that their skills have been developed towards empowering them to be employable in the short/medium/long term. GIS will ensure that youths are attached as apprentices in reputable

public/private firms for a period of one year where the skills of such individuals will be sharpened as well as boost their chances of becoming self-employed. While the GIS is designed as a short-term measure, it has high prospects for job creation. The specific objectives of the program are:

- To enhance the employability of up to 50,000 unemployed graduates in the 36 states of the Federation and the FCT through internship programs in pre-selected institutions; and
- To build manpower base towards attaining national development operations.

During this period the Federal Government of Nigeria will be responsible for paying monthly stipend to the graduate interns. The participating institution will be expected to provide adequate opportunities for training and mentoring the interns.

Implementation of Graduate internship Scheme (GIS) in some states

Enugu State: The SURE-P has engaged more than 3000 youths, women and vulnerable persons in Enugu state under the Federal Government's community services women and youth Empowerment programme, an official said (News Agency of Nigeria, 2013). SURE-P was set up to engage the poor in community services and reduces youth unemployment. Mr. Nnamdi Asomugha, the State Coordinator of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Enugu, that the selection was going on simultaneously in the 17 local government councils in the state. He said the programme was meant to help the poor and vulnerable, adding that the directorate, in collaboration with an implementation committee set up by the Federal Government had set up checks and balances to ensure that the programme was not hijacked by politicians. He maintained: "We are in Enugu South Local Government Area of Enugu State to specifically selection unemployed women, youth and persons with vulnerability which includes widow, albinos, people living with HIV and AIDS, blind people and so on and so forth. We are selecting 3000 persons who belong to these categories into the community services women and youth empowerment programme of the SURE-P programme of the Federal Government. "He said the programme would last for a year in the first instance with the possibility of expansion. The coordinator said those selected would be captured biometrically because their stipend of N10,000 would be paid direct from Abuja, he called on those selected to reciprocate the gesture by performing the tasks assigned to them by their communities (News Agency of Nigeria, 2013).

Yobe State: the National Directorate of Employment Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment programme (SURE-P) said on Tuesday, January 29 2013, it engaged 1,000 persons in Yobe in its community service employment scheme Mr Muhammad Alka, the information officer of the directorate in the state, told the news Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Damaturu that the beneficiaries were engaged under the subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P). He said those engaged were deployed to the 17 local government areas of the state, while 2,000 others had been screened for the scheme. "Unemployed and under employed women, youths and other vulnerable groups were targeted in the scheme, to provide them with employment opportunities. The beneficiaries will be paid a monthly stipend of N 10.000 for one year," Alka said. He explained that the Amb. El-Gash Maina- led SURE-P in the state would continue to screen the participants thoroughly to ensure that only qualified people benefitted from the programme. The NDE spokesman said it had engaged 385 facilitators to complement teaching services in various primary and secondary schools in the state. Alka said 10 people were engaged in the Graduate Attachment Programme. He said 58 others, comprising NCE and Diploma certificate holders, were absorbed in the non- graduate scheme while 317 teachers enrolled in the National open Apprentice scheme.

Ekiti State, Ado, Ekiti: The Subsidy Reinvestment Programmes (SURE-P) implementation Committee in Ekiti state has commenced the process of recruiting 3,000 beneficiaries of its community services, Youths and Women Employment Scheme with another 2,000 to be recruited thereafter. At a meeting held with community leaders and representatives of traditional rulers at the weekend, in Ado-Ekiti, community services to be rendered by the SURE-P beneficiaries were submitted by leaders of all towns and villages in the state (Adebusuyi, 2013). Chairman of the state implementation committee, Mr Femi Akinyemi said the committee would embark on another round of sensitization exercise by visiting all towns and villages in the state during which the recruitment exercise would go on (Adebusuyi, 2013). Figure 3.1: Unveiling of the first 3,000 beneficiaries of the scheme and presentation of working tools to them at the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) secretariat in Ado- Ekiti

Source: www.thenigerianvoice.com (from Right –left, Chairman and coordinator of the State implementation Committee of Subsidy Re-Investment Programme, Rt. Hon. Femi Akinyemi with other

stakeholders and beneficiaries of the Community Services, Youths and Women Employment Scheme during the unveiling of the first 3,000 beneficiaries of the scheme and presentation of working tools to them at the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) secretariat in Ado-Ekiti.)

Lagos State: National Directorate of Employment, Lagos state chapter, has said 5, 000 jobs will be created in the state at the end of 2013 through the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment programme. Chairman, State Coordination and Implementation Committee, Alhaji Bode Oyedele, said this at the commencement of empowerment and loan scheme of SURE-P in Lagos. Oyedele said, “We have gone round all the local governments in Lagos, and we are starting this programme with 3,000 participants. Before the end of the year we will add another 2,000.” (<http://www.naijafreejobs.com>)

Benue State: The Benue State chapter of Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment programme (SURE-P) has selected 3,000 unemployed persons from the 23 Local Government Area of the State to participate in Community Services scheme. Those recruited into the programme, according to SURE-P would be paid N10,000 monthly stipends for rendering various services to their communities. Addressing the participants at a 2-day orientation and biometric data capturing exercise held simultaneously in the three senatorial zones of the State, the State Chairman of SURE-P, Samuel Utoo, an engineer said President Goodluck Jonathan has mandated the State to employ 3,000 unemployed persons for the first batch of the scheme which has a target of providing 10,000 jobs for Benue State (www.hotnigerianjobs.com)

Oyo State: A total of 3,000 people have been offered employment in Oyo State under the Federal Government Subsidy Reinvestment and Employment programme (SURE-P), state coordinator of the project, Mr. Dare Adeleke, has said. Adeleke, who said the newly- employed youths have already started work state that the programme is fully on ground in Oyo State. “Those already employed will be paid their money at the end of March,” he said. He however added that fiancé has continued to be the main problem of the programme as. According to him, it is not being adequately funded (www.allafrica.com).

(ii) Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment programme (sure-P) Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Programme

In line with Mr. President’s promise to encourage wealth creation and mitigate the scourge of youth unemployment in the country the Federal Government through the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) has developed a technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programme to be managed a project implementation Unit (PIU) will manage the implementation of the TVET program which has the mandate to invest in the development of vocational and technical education in Nigeria. This scheme is expected to stimulate the economic growth needed as part of the transformation agenda of the current administration while also enhancing opportunities towards the attainment of Vision 20: 2020 (SURE-P Report, 2012).

The scheme has the mandate to equip young Nigerians with skills in three broad areas: vocational/ technical skills, life skills and entrepreneurship./ it is targeted at bridging the demand gaps in eight industry areas: ICT/Telecoms, Creative (e.g movies, music, fashion, etc). gas, and Mechanical Fabrication/ Woodwork. The training has been classified into two focus areas: Client- based and Citizen- based trainings.

Table 4 No of applicants registered in each state of the Federation as 10.12.12 and on-going.

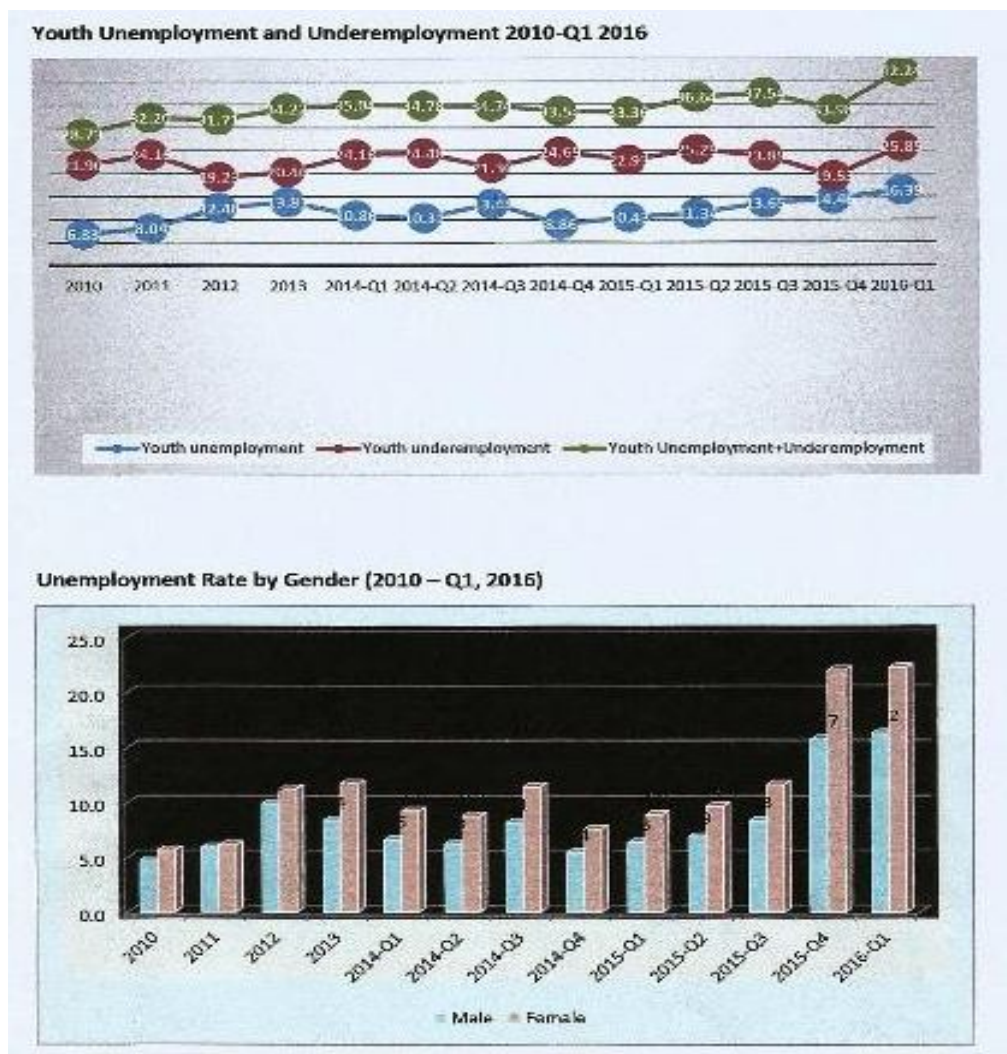
State	No. of Trainees	State	No. of Trainees	State	No. of Trainees
ABIA	699	EKITI	84	LAGOS	63
ADAMAWA	96	ENUGU	157	NASARAWA	91
AKWA IBOM	139	FCT	36	NIGER	95
ANMBRA	237	GOMBE	189	OGUN	182
BAUCHI	362	IMO	353	ONDO	114
BAYELSA	115	JIGAWA	197	OSUN	147
BENUE	168	KADUNA	339	OYO	163
BORNO	87	KANO	2219	PLATEAU	121

CROSS RIVER	84	KATSINA	265	RIVES	78
DELTA	1965	KEBBI	437	SOKOTO	275
EBONYI	169	KOGI	265	TARABA	331
EDO	540	KWARA	128	YOBE	63

Source: SURE-P Report on Vocational Training, 2012

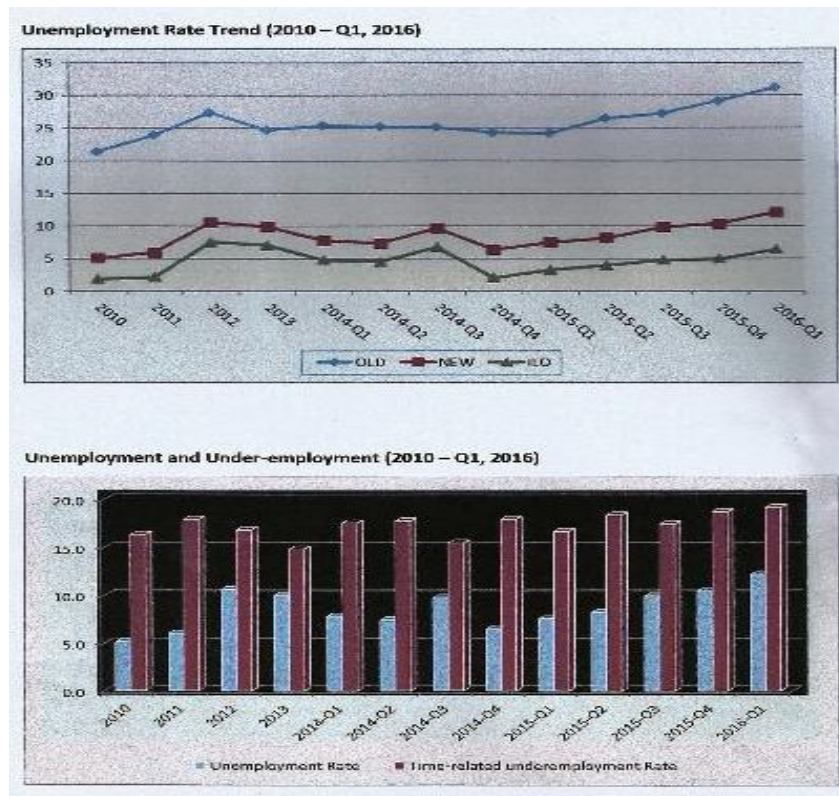
The above table 4 revealed the number of youths that applied for the scheme in various states. From the above expositions, it was observed that the federal government, through SURE-P made some efforts in mitigating the high rate of unemployment through the introduction of Graduate internship Scheme (GIS) and Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (Sure-p) Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programme.

Youth Unemployment and underemployment between 2010 and first quarter of 2016



SOURCE: nbs-National Bureau of Statistics: Unemployment/Under-employment watch Q1 2016

Unemployment Rate between 2010 and first quarter of 2016



SOURCE: nbs-National Bureau of Statistics: Unemployment/Under-employment watch Q1 2016

The above both figures show that the unemployment rate reduced between 2014 Q1 during the implementation of the SURE-P Programme. In Q1 2016, the labour force population increased to 78.4 million from 769 million in Q4 2015, representing an increase in the labour force by 1.99%, this means an additional 1,528,647 economically active people entered the labour force i.e willing and actively looking for work between January 1 and March 31st, 2016.

Therefore the H₁, which states that there is a considerable relationship between Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) and employment generation for the Nigeria youths, was upheld because of the discussions above which showed the giant stride taken by SURE-P to reduce the rate unemployment in Nigeria.

To effectively test and discuss hypothesis two, this sub-theme was posited and discussed:

- Implementation challenges of Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) in generating employment for Nigeria youths.

Implementation challenges of Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) in generating employment for Nigeria youths

In spite of the major economic programs and policies being paraded and implemented by the government, unemployment continues to be on the rise in Nigeria and this forms one of the reasons for the inauguration of Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P). However, Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) faces some implementation challenges in achieving its main objective; creating employment for the Nigerian youths. This could be attributed to quite a number of factors, including the following:

Rise in Population

The rise in the population of the country brought about a large number of young school leavers and universities graduate more than the available job opportunities could absorb. When economic development and the creation of employment opportunities, it will be observed that it has a serious implication on the employment situation. This however flaws the implementation of the programme, as the planners may not know the size of the population to cover

Unavailability of New Programmes

One of the major problems the SURE-P was facing in its implementation has to do with the fact it never came up with brand new programmes on its, own, so as to monitor its progress. The programmes that are being funded from SURE-P were mostly abandoned programmes and projects (examples are the federal roads and bridge construction).

Lack of Fund

Though large sum of money was allocated to SURE-P implementation, some part of the funds is yet to be made available for the programme to utilize. This was why the Minister of Labour and Productivity, Emeka Wogu, called on the National Assembly to expedite action on the amendment of budgetary provision for the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) (Premium Times, 2013). Using his words, “there is the need to amend the budgetary provisions for the project and part of this is already contained in the amendment proposal sent to the National Assembly by president Goodluck Jonathan. He stated that the financial requirement to sustain the project in terms of stipends payment, running cost to states and project management for 2013 is N29 billion.” This, he said, included 67 per cent for the stipend of beneficiary and tools, 22 per cent for running cost in states and 10 per cent for federal management cost. However, the Minister stated that the ministry received only N5 billion, which is grossly inadequate. Mr Wogu said, “out of the 27 billion that was put in the budget, we only got N9 billion’ and N5 billion has been released. If it is not amended quickly as requested by Mr. President, we run the risk of jeopardizing this process.” He said that the need for adequate funding for the project was due to high demand, which resulted from high number of unemployed, unskilled and poor youths.

Mr. Wogu made the call at the inaugural meeting of the Inter- Ministerial Consultative Committee of Community Service, Women and youth Employment project (CSWYE) of SURE-P. He said that lack of funding was the major challenge in the implementation of the project, adding that it could lead to lot of problems, if not promptly attended to (Premium Times, 2013).

Rapid Expansion of poorly equipped educational institutions

The rate of creation and expansion of educational institutions (facilities) outstrips the rate at which jobs are created. Most times these institutions are poorly equipped and under staffed. As a result of the increase in both the number of poorly equipped educational institutions and student enrolment, the educational system merely succeed in producing white-collar job- seekers who did not acquire the necessary skills required in the labour market, or which could promote self- employment. Little wonder why some of our graduates are not just unemployed, but are unemployable. This poses danger for the SURE-P implementation, as it finds difficult to create jobs for the unemployable youths.

Corrupt Leadership

Corruption of the nation’s leaders is by far the biggest cause of unemployment in Nigeria. The attitude of those in position of authority who see their assignment as an opportunity to share the “national cake” at the expense of the people they claim to represent. As a result, resources that are supposed to be channeled towards job creation are embezzled by the leadership of the country, leaving a lot of able Nigerians unemployed and thereby frustrating the implementation of one, of the major objectives of SURE-P, which is employment creation.

Poor Economic Growth Rate

The overall situation in the country in the part of eighties, nineties and even in this decade has been very hostile to economic growth and development. The high level of corruption, mismanagement of public funds, harsh economic policies and the insecurity of the Nigerian environment coupled with long- term despotic rule of the military among other factors have dampened the spirit of economic growth for a long time. This however increase unemployment rate as it provides no good environment for foreign and local investment in the country.

Adoption of untimely Economic Policy Measures

Another crucial factor that has elicited unemployment problem overtime is the demise of the small scale and cottage industries which operated in both formal and informal sectors. Following the introduction of the Structural Adjustment program (SAP) in September 1986 that ushered in liberalization, deregulation and the devaluation program of the domestic currency, many of the teething domestic firms collapsed. This resulted in the loss of many jobs and thereby rendering many people unemployed. Although, these policies were designed to jump start the growth of the economy, but given

the structure of the Nigerian economy, some of the policy packages became out rightly inimical to the system due to wrong timing.

Wrong impression about technical and vocation studies

Wrong impression of students about the place of technical and vocational education also accounts for the deteriorating state of unemployment in Nigeria. There is an enduring societal biased attitude against technical and vocational education Damachi (2001). A large number of job seekers lack practical skills that could enhance self-employment. That is why rather than providing jobs for others, the graduate unemployed persons keep depending on the government and the non-vibrant private sector for job offers.

Neglect of the Agricultural Sector

The agricultural sector has been the leading provider of employment in Nigeria especially in the sixties and in the seventies when the sector provides employment for more than 60 percent of the Nigerian population. However, unfortunately, in the wake of oil discovery, the attention on this anchor of the economy was gradually drawn away to the oil sector where employment capacity is very low. The resulting effect is the large number of job seekers who have no place in the oil industry. Even with the expansion of the industry, unemployment has continued to grow at an alarming rate.

Poor enabling environment

The poor economic enabling environment that characterizes the economy over the years has continued to pose serious challenges to employment generation in Nigeria. This, coupled with poor security environment has continued to hamper investment drives and thereby reducing the prospects of employment generation. Many job seekers who would have embarked on self-employment programs are unable to do so because of the hostile production environment. Others who make attempt are forced to wind up due to absence of infrastructures and the overall heat of the investment environment.

From the discussions above, it is apparent that adoption of untimely economic policy measures and corrupt leadership significantly contribute to the rate of unemployment in Nigeria. Owing to this, the H_{ii} and H_{iii} which states that lack of funds, corrupt leadership and funds diversions significantly contribute to poor implementation of Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) towards employment creation in Nigeria was upheld because they contribute to the increase of unemployed youths in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Deriving from the finding of this study above, we proffer the following recommendation:

Stronger job creation mechanisms grounded in a deliberate strategy for inclusive growth and social development should be developed by Sure-p in order to enhance its quest for employment generation for the youths. Addressing youth unemployment in Nigeria requires an integrated holistic approach. The world Bank 2008 report advocates for a comprehensive model that caters for rural development, rural-urban migration, preparation of young people for the labour market and investments in agriculture.

The aim of every Government should be to create enabling environment to promote investments. This includes provision of power, maintaining law and order, and adequate security. SURE-P funds should be geared towards providing these facilities in order to pave way for both foreign and local investments, thereby crafting more employment opportunities for Nigeria graduates.

SURE-P development funds should also be channeled toward agricultural development, as it is a viable source of investments for young people if it is made attractive. There should be a swift transition from subsistence to commercialized farm and non-farm activities should be better packaged to make them really attractive. There should also be adequate investment in rural education. This will boost rural opportunities and reduce rural-urban migration and its concomitant challenges.

Conclusion

This study was aimed at ascertaining the role of SURE-P in mitigating the rate of unemployment in Nigeria. It also tried to ascertain whether there was a considerable relationship between SURE-P and creation of employment for Nigeria youths and to examine the strategic cause of unemployment in Nigeria. Our findings, through the literature reviewed and the test of our hypotheses apparently signified that SURE-P took some giant strides in mitigating the scourge of unemployment among Nigeria youths. However, SURE-P still needs to strategize its approaches to creating employment by going beyond the internship scheme to creating enabling environment for

investments through the provision of basic amenities like good roads and constant power supply. This will attract investments that will give Nigeria youths lasting and better employment opportunities than providing ten thousand naira to a graduate after an internship scheme.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that there might have been some salient issues in the study that were not adequately discussed and also there might be important issues that were not raised in the course of this work. These inadequacies might have been caused by the limitations of this study. We therefore plead that future research should be geared towards these inadequacies.

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