A new NYSC – A new national youth development framework for national stability, growth, and prosperity

Programme summary

The vision

To reconstruct the world of the Nigerian youth;

to remould the youth into productive agents

by

Revising the current NYSC scheme into an active reorientation, training, and apprenticeship programme for the nation's youth.

The case for a new NYSC

We want to reform our polity by exposing our 15 to 20-year olds (secondary school leavers) early to ideas and values in a systematic and immersive way over the course of one year. How? By revising the current National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme on the bases of content and timing.

The current NYSC is discriminatory. It excludes every one who fails to enrol in an accredited tertiary institution. The proposed programme promises a more inclusive and enriching experience for the nation's youth. Students everywhere, even from the remotest villages will participate in it.

Why don't we revise it into the pre-process for quality instead of having the NYSC as a mock reward for achievement? The new NYSC will be pre-tertiary education instead of after it so it serves as a resource to guide young people to enrol for better suited professional or vocational education.

Chasing utopia?

No, this is a determination to pursue as much quality from our blessings, from our human resources, and then ultimately to change our lives and our stories for good. In the years following the nation's birth, Israel's quest to prevail against all odds – human and environmental – caused them to nurture the capacities of every man and woman, and especially of their youth.

Outside of insurgencies, our own war, our nationwide struggle remains against drudgery and rot in our collective mindset. We will begin to win by tracking back to influence the youth, the 'raw material' going into the nation's production engine.

Programme objectives

- Provide accelerated learning for youth through a holistic apprenticeship drive through exposure to various industries, societal needs and challenges so they begin to gravitate towards their calling, towards the economic area they feel suited for, where their efforts will be most significant.
- Provide incubation hubs and nurturing social networks of collaborators and mentors for young people.
- Broaden the youth's mind to embrace possibilities stretching beyond the plate on the table to the nation, and to the world; to enable them to overcome inertia and the current helplessness rank in our collective mind-set;
- Bring us, as a society, to a place where risk is embraced and effort, performance, the will and willingness to dare new enterprise is rated above failure or self-subsistence.

Programme strategy

Timing: Young people will undergo a one-year programme starting right after secondary school. Most youth are still teenagers at this stage and will be primed to receive instruction and guidance. This will be an opportunity to guide them towards relevant professional or vocational paths.

Logistics: The local governments will be administration/ logistics centres for the students. The unique requirements per student cluster will be determined for each location across the country.

Content: The following table highlights a sample of the proposed curriculum.

Sample programme schedule

Month	Courses		
Month 1	Military Camp & Sports: Extent and scope similar but more focused than current NYSC 3-week camp.	Aim is to condition the participants for mental and physical discipline. Afterwards, 1 weekend every month. Strictly no casualties! Students with ailments, allergies, handicaps exempt from rigorous drills.	
Month 2	Ethics/Civics	Global Studies: Overview of current national, African, and global realities.	
Month 3	Leadership	Self-Education (Personality Discovery, Talents & Skills, Sexuality)	Language Training
Month 4	Entrepreneurship	Business: Overview of Domains - Production, Marketing & Sales, Management, Operations, Accounting, Legal etc.)	
Month 5	AI, ICTs and New Media		
Month 6	Medical Sciences	Pharmaceuticals	
Month 7	Food Production and Agriculture	Petroleum & Mining	
Month 8	Manufacturing (From FMCGs to Textile)	Engineering (Mechanical, Civil, Electrical, Marine, Energy)	
Month 9	The Arts (Theatre, Media Production, Fine Arts, Writing, Music)		
Month 10	Law	Politics	Bureaucracy
Month 11	National Infrastructure Concerns: Housing	Transportation (Land/Aviation/Water)	
Month 12	Career/ Life Counselling	Students report on assigned project	Assisted choice of study or vocation, application, and admission to relevant training institution.

Training methodology

- One year instruction, apprenticeship, and service.
- Adoption of curriculum stating a list of books, and multimedia resources participants will study.
- Information technology tools such as video calls, online conferences, and forums will be employed to minimize expenses, risk of incidents, transport accidents, and the insecurity in some parts of the country.
- Facilitators might need to relocate to places where they are needed for the 1 year.
- The Foreign Affairs Ministry may arrange with diplomatic friends so their experts could be brought in to train participants.

Alignment with current programmes

Personnel: The current NYSC staff, budget and operations will be utilized for the programme. It may be necessary for government to outsource some operations to private educational/ mentoring organizations to assist the NYSC Directorate in delivering the programme.

NECO/WASSCE: Remedial classes can be organized for students who were not successful in their NECO/ WASSCE within the program.

SIWES: The New Youth Service becomes a foundation, a means of strengthening the Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) for students in their 300 level, the housemanship for medical students, and the 1-year transition between OND and HND at the polytechnics. Perhaps, a revision of these programmes should also be considered.

Risk analysis

Potential Challenges

- Acceptance by populace (government officials, current NYSC staff, parents, the nation's youth)
- Hitches in logistics
- Bureaucracy
- Cost
- Lack of competent facilitators and mentors
- The need to train mentors

Risk Mitigation

We may embrace a phased approach:

- Introduce, implement the programme immediately as a 3-month developmental system in Year 1 (government would spend on NYSC plus the programme...)
- Then increase duration to 6 months while sensitizing the populace in Year 2
- Turn NYSC around completely by Year 3

Programme budget

The budget will cover training logistics, allowance for students, and remuneration for NYSC staff and external facilitators/partners.

A detailed analysis to determine an appropriate budget for the programme needs to be carried out. However, we know that the NYSC budget for 2011, for instance, was about 43.3 billion naira. A budget around this figure may be suitable to help the programme succeed.

Programme benefits

- Nigerian youth will enrol and graduate from tertiary institutions with greater competence, confidence and a clearer life direction. They know what they are going into the economy to do. Hopefully the pre-university exposure and training would have triggered some entrepreneurial start-ups right from the higher institutions.

- Each participant's performance will be scored and available to the Ministry of Education and affiliated government and private organizations and bodies. Attributes such as technical ability, business, leadership, and communication skills will be used to point candidates to appropriate academic or vocational pursuits.

Programme benefits

- Again, for the students who may not immediately gain admission to study at higher levels, the programme will act as a means to expose them to vocations and even self-education they could embark on as they await the next set of admissions.

- The programme has the potential to trigger changes in the wide education sector. Repositioning the NYSC between the secondary and tertiary education may help secondary and tertiary institutions to restructure their curricula and refocus their efforts in providing essential training to meet the needs of the nation.

Programme benefits

- The programme will allow time for our universities and tertiary institutions to 'heal'- realize values, reorganize curricula at all levels, restructure staff, research and set up research arenas.

- The new NYSC will create or at least redefine a new sector of employment: mentors, graders, counsellors (converted old NYSC staff plus new) for the whole lot... we're talking at least one million students every year.

- More young entrepreneurs; increased job creation. Greater guarantee of a prepared youth to develop and sustain the nation's posterity.

Conclusion

Of course, the new NYSC cannot be the cure-all for our national ailment. It will complement other attempts by individuals, organizations, and the government in reforming our society.

Let us call it a *living strategy* flexible enough to be adapted as necessary. The ideas presented here are open to debate and refining-the aim is not to lay claim on an *invention* but to reopen a conversation regarding the NYSC from another perspective, hopefully for the good of all as we are able to develop an implementable system in the next one or two years.

Conclusion

Finally, this instructive quote from Tim Ballard's *The American Covenant* applies to Nigeria as it does America:

The battle for control and leadership of the world

has always been waged most effectively at the idea level.

An idea, whether right or wrong,

that captures the minds of a nation's youth

will soon work its way into every area of society,

especially in our multimedia age.

Ideas determine consequences.

*The book, *Start-Up Nation: The Story of Israel's Economic Miracle* by Dan Senor and Saul Singer provided inspiration for the proposed programme.