Nigerian National Youth Service Corps: Its Rationale and Development 1973-1983

by

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ABSTRACT

Since the establishment of Nigeria as a nation-state in 1960, the issue of national consciousness has bedevilled successive governments, civilian and military. The National Youth Service Corps was created in 1973 to foster national integration and mobility of university graduates and to instil in students a sense of social responsibility for privileges they enjoy.

Data for this thesis was collected from the National Youth Service Corps Directorate Headquarters and the National Universities Commission for the period 1973 to 1983. The thesis describes the political, socio-economic and educational context in which the scheme was established and analyses its present functioning. The scheme is shown to be successful in promoting mobility of high-level manpower on a short term basis and rural development, especially insofar as the achievement of universal primary education is concerned. In addition the scheme, which now enjoys the support of students, political leaders and the officer cadre, has made an important contribution to the stability of elected government.

RESUME

Depuis l'existence, en 1960, du Nigéria comme un état-nation, la question de conscience nationale a été au coeur des préoccupations des gouvernements successifs, tant civils que militaires. Le projet du Service civil obligatoire fut établi en 1973 afin de stimuler l'intégration nationale, pour favoriser la mobilité des diplômés de l'université et finalement pour inculquer un sens de la responsabilité sociale aux étudiants, étant donné tous les privilèges dont ils jouissent.

Les données pour cette thèse étaient recueillies au siège central du conseil d'administration du service civil obligatoire ainsi qu'au bureau central de la Commission nationale des universités (nigérianes); les données couvrent la période de 1973 à 1983, soit la première décennie du projet. La thèse décrit le contexte politique, socio-économique et éducationnel dans lequel le projet fut établit; elle analyse également son fonctionnement actuel. Nous avons démontré la réussite du projet quant à la promotion de la mobilité à court terme d'un très haut niveau de main-d'oeuvre et quant au développement socio-économique surtout en ce qui concerne la réalisation de l'enseignement primaire universel. En outre, le projet qui a gagné l'appui des étudiants, des dirigeants politiques et des cadres, a beaucoup contribué à la stabilité du gouvernement élu.

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Finally, I wish to express my deep appreciation to my family, and especially to my youngest daughter, Tope, for their understanding and loving support throughout my graduate studies away from home.

To my daughters

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education in developing countries is regarded as an instrument of national development, and assigned the task of integrating different ethnic groups and of mobilising available human resources. The issue of unity has bedevilled successive administrations in Nigeria. Its many ethnic groups, variety of languages, cultural and religious traditions are factors that have promoted intense conflict.

The difficulty of forging a united nation in the post-independence era was tragically illustrated by the first military coup of January 15, 1966 followed by the civil war of 1967-1970. In an effort to lessen the social and educational inequalities that resulted in civil war and as part of its programme of national reconstruction, the Federal Military Government decided in 1973 that all graduates of institutions of higher education would perform a year of national service in a state other than their state of origin. The service was mainly intended to develop in university graduates a better understanding of the problems and cultures of the society and loyalty to the nation.

Other African countries have adopted youth service schemes. The Tanzania National Service, one of the oldest, was established at independence in 1963. The objective was to involve primary and secondary school leavers as well as

university graduates in rural development projects.1 After an abortive army mutiny in 1964, the National Service became the principal route for entry into the reconstituted Tanzania People's Defence Force.2 Participants were given three months of military training and short courses in politics, language training and physical education. They then served for twenty months in rural development schemes.

Graduates received preferential treatment in employment in the public sector and in parastatal enterprises. Although participation was voluntary, the scheme attracted many youth, especially those who did not proceed beyond primary school.3 But in 1965, largely because of the opposition of university students, the government intensified efforts to recruit university graduates into the National Service, making their participation compulsory.4 Students at the University of Dar es Salaam voiced their displeasure, and they demonstrated on November 13, 1965. The government insisted on student participation but increased the emoluments of graduates.5

Ethiopia also has a National Youth Service scheme. Introduced in 1964, it was initially administered by the University of Addis Ababa which was responsible for

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1. The East African Standard, October 4, 1963.
2. Tordoff, W., Government and Politics in Tanzania, p. 164.
3. Morrison, D.R., Education and Politics in Africa, p. 238.
4. Morrison, ibid.
5. Morrison, ibid., p. 242.

allocating the students to assignments in rural areas. Every Ethiopian university student was required to spend an academic year (between the third and the fourth year of studies) in some form of civilian service. Unless specifically exempted they were not eligible to receive diplomas or degrees until they were discharged from service.1 The students were paid a stipend during the service period. The intention of the scheme was threefold: to promote mass education and health care; to dispel the attitude, only too common in Ethiopia and other African countries, that students are a privileged elite; and, finally, to propagate throughout the country a better image of the university and of intellectuals, more generally.2 The Ethiopia University Service was terminated in 1974 during the popular uprising against the reign of Haile Selassie.

The Zambian Youth Service was created in 1965 as a means by which "the energy and enthusiasm of a large number of young men and women who had played a prominent role in the emancipation of the country could be harnessed to constructive channels."3 When the basic objectives of the scheme were elaborated in 1967, emphasis was placed on the rural development and nation building. The school leavers were to be trained in a variety of technical skills (leather work, bricklaying, and carpentry among

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1. Ashby, E., Universities: British, India, Africa, p. 356.
2. Ashby, ibid.
3. Mwanakatwe, J.M., The Growth of Education in Zambia Since Independence, p. 246.

others) as well as in agriculture. Military training was provided by Zambia and the Youth Service was made an adjunct of the Security Forces.1

Like the other youth service schemes, Nigeria's was started as a means of promoting rural development as well as of instilling humility among the educated elite. But primary importance was given to developing greater awareness of the commonalities among Nigeria's various ethnic and religious groups. The National Youth Service Corps enabling act, passed in 1973, made this explicit. Graduates of universities were mobilised for service in states other than their states of origin.2 And unlike the Tanzanian, Ethiopian and Zambian schemes, the Nigerian National Youth Service Corps was introduced to facilitate the transition from education to work. Service is related to the participant's educational training and qualifications and has been made a pre-condition for employment.3

This study examines the origins, objectives, evolution and outcomes of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme. Data was collected through a study of annual reports and other publications of the NYSC Directorate and National Universities Commission, interviews with five senior officials of the Directorate and two officers of the Lagos State NYSC Secretariat, and through a survey of eighty

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1. Wood, A.W., Informal Education and Development in Africa, pp. 245-246.
2. NYSC Handbook, p. 7, para. 19.
3. NYSC Decree, No. 24, p. 12.

two participants who served between 1975 and 1982.

As no register is kept of the whereabouts of past participants, graduates were identified in some of the principal offices and places where they have taken up permanent employment in Lagos State. Interviews were conducted at the Central Bank, Lagos, Federal Ministries of Defence, Establishment, Trade and Education; Lagos University Teaching Hospital and at such firms as Unipetrol, K. Chellarams and the Sun Insurance Company. The intention in interviewing a small number of graduates was to develop a means of collaborating the evaluation of the scheme sponsored by the NYSC Directorate in 1977.

Subjects were asked about the relevance of their field of study to their primary assignment. See Appendix II. Information was also obtained about their participation in community development programmes and the effect of the scheme on their attitudes towards other ethnic groups.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter describes the development of higher education in Nigeria during the colonial and post-independence periods with attention to the impact of ethnicity and regional rivalries in educational expansion. The second chapter highlights the political role of Nigerian students and governmental repression and co-optation of student groups. The third traces the history of the National Youth Service Corps and outlines its administrative structure. The last

chapter examines the impact, difficulties, political and student acceptance of the service. The conclusion considers the implications of the present proposals to broaden the scope of the National Youth Service Corps and to introduce military training.

CHAPTER I

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

An identity and self awareness developed among Nigerians during the colonial period. It was fostered by unified colonial administration and by the sense of belonging that a common territory generates. The growth of national identity and self-awareness was also facilitated by the resemblance in social structures, customs and traditions among the country's various peoples. Yet there are formidable obstacles to political integration in contemporary Nigeria. Rupert Emerson writes in this connection that: "Nigeria is notoriously, a precarious lumping together of people whose separate identity is at least as real a matter as their acceptance of national unity." 1 There are groups within the state whose collective identity has roots imbedded much more deeply in the past, sharing a deeper fellowship embodied in social structures and language, and drawing on more primordial loyalties than the state. In this sense, each of Nigeria's tribal groups is a nation, and Nigeria is best described as a "multi-national state."2

The drive for independence exacerbated differences

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1. Emerson, R., "Nationalism and Political Development," Journal of Politics, 1960, p. 3.
2. See O'Connell, J.; Senghor, L.; Nkrumah, K.; and Azikiwe, N., "Unity and Diversity in West African States," Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies (NJESS), 1963.

between the northern and southern parts of the country. The leadership of the independent movement was drawn from three main groups. The first were the principal nationalist leaders, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Ahmadu Bello and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. Azikiwe, who later became the first President of Nigeria in 1960, is an Ibo. Educated in America he worked as a journalist in the Gold Coast (Ghana) before returning to Nigeria in 1937. Obafemi Awolowo, an Ijebu Yoruba, studied Law in London. He was an active member of the Nigerian Youth Movement, a group of politically-minded Nigerians which split in the 1940's along ethnic lines over the leadership of the movement. Azikiwe withdrew from the Movement and founded the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons. Ahmadu Bello and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa represented the educated elite of the Muslim north.

The second group went into politics during the first elections in 1951. Some such as Shiaka Momodu and Omo-Osagie in the Mid-West, played an important role in regional politics. They were self-acknowledged spokesmen for communal interests. The third were representatives of the new professional class; teachers, clerks, traders,and others who possessed enough education to lead villagers. In the north, they served in the Native Authorities. They too have functioned as spokesmen for their communities.

The administrative units into which Nigeria has been divided have changed several times. Since the beginning of colonial rule an important distinction has been made between

the north and the south. From 1946 to 1963 the south was divided into the Western and the Eastern Regions, and in the latter year a third region, the Mid West, was carved out of the West. Regional tensions were particularly severe in the first years of independence and in January 1966, the civilian government was deposed.

In July 1966, General Yakubu Gowon became the Head of State. Political leaders in the Eastern Region declared the area an independent republic (Biafra), and the country was plunged into civil war. The civil war ended in 1971 and the Federal Military Government embarked on programmes of national reconstruction and reconciliation. Nigeria was divided into nineteen states in 1976. The Federal Military Government transferred power to a popularly elected civilian government in October 1979.

Military and civilian governments have placed great importance on educational expansion as a means of correcting regional disparities and forging a unitary state. Ethnicity is a powerful determinant of access to education. The major ethnic groups in the country (the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Ibo) responded differently to the introduction of formal schooling. Clignet, 1 Abernethy, 2 and Coleman 3 in their studies of West Africa have shown that levels of

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1. Clignet, Remi. "Ethnicity, Some Differentiation, and Some Secondary Schooling in West Africa." Cashiers d'Etudes Africaanes, VII (1967), 360-378.
2. Abernethy, David. Political Dilemma of Popular Education: An African Case. (Stanford University Press, 1969).
3. Coleman, James. Nigeria: Background to Nationalism. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958).

educational attainment found in the coastal areas which had the earliest and most extensive exposure to missionary activities are much higher than those of inland areas of these countries. Moreover, the northern and southern parts of Nigeria had different types of schools with different aims, emphases and programmes. While missionary education was embraced in the southern part of the country, missionary activities were less influential in the north where government schools were established for the sons of Chiefs and Emirs who received administrative and moral education in preparation for their roles as future rulers and leaders of Muslim peoples.

In considering the origins of regional inequalities in access to education, three features of the Nigeria's educational history are significant. The first relates to the initial lack of interest on the part of the colonial administration in the education of Nigerians which resulted in the shifting of the responsibility for providing education on to the Christian missions. The second pertains to the slow and gradual development of the government interest in the administration and control of educational institutions which crystallised into a "dual system" with government and voluntary agencies as partners. The third was the agreement between the colonial administration and the Muslim rulers of the north to prohibit Christian missions from operating in that part of the country.

The missionaries were the first to introduce formal

education in West Africa. The present system of education in Nigeria can be traced directly to the educational activities of the Christian missionaries during the nineteenth century. The Wesleyan Methodist Mission was the first to arrive at Badagry near Lagos in 1842. Two years later (1845), the Church Missionary Society (CMS) established another school at Badagry. From this coastal base, the two missionary bodies extended their evangelical and educational work into Lagos, Abeokuta and the rest of Yorubaland. The Church Missionary Society made better progress than the Wesleyan Methodist mission. By the end of the century, a number of well known Church Missionary Society educational institutions had come into existence. These included a Boys' Grammar School founded in 1859 at Lagos, a Girls' Seminary also in Lagos, and the teachers college which was opened in Oyo in 1896 (now known as St. Andrew's College, Oyo).1

There were many other missionary societies that entered the country and each recognised the educational aspects of evangelization and lost no time in establishing schools. Education was an important part of their activities only insofar as it was instrumental to the conversion of the people to Christianity. For this, a "literary education" was deemed adequate, and so Nigeria inherited an educational tradition which neglected science and technology.2

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1. Adetoro, J. Handbook of Nigerian Education, p. 16.
2. Ashby, E. Universities: British, Indian, African.

Government involvement in education began through grants-in-aid to a few mission schools in 1877 and later through the establishment of a government primary school in Lagos in 1899 to cater for non-Christians.1 Prior to 1925 the British government had no clearly defined policy on education in its African colonies. Between 1870 to 1876 the colonial government in Lagos made spasmodic attempts to assist some of the missions in their educational work. The first education ordinance, promulgated in 1882, established conditions for participation in the grants-in-aid scheme and provided for governmental inspection of schools. The ordinance covered the West African territories of Lagos, Gold Coast (Ghana), Sierra Leone and Gambia. In 1886 Lagos was separated from the Gold Coast and became the colony and Protectorate of Lagos. At the turn of the century, the Northern and Southern Protectorates were created, an important event in the educational history of Nigeria. With the proclamation of Northern Protectorate, the missionaries intensified their educational activities in the north.

In 1911, the Phelps-Stoke Fund was established by an American philanthropist, Miss Caroline Phelps-Stoke with the object of educating black people both in Africa and in the United States. In the early 1920s the Fund sent a commision to study education in British colonial Africa, composed of distinguished educationists and colonial officials such as

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1. Adetoro, ibid.

Hans Visher who founded government schools in Northern Nigeria and Frederich Lugard, who devised the policy of indirect rule for Muslim areas. The Commission's report (1922), criticised the type of education that the missions were providing and concluded that by concentrating on classical type of education "based on books" the missionaries "were following the ideals prevailing in their home countries."1 Their report proposed the development of primary education along vocational and agricultural lines.

The Commission's most far reaching recommendation concerned the need to develop local institutions of higher education. The Report acknowledged that "it seems that for some years to come African colonies must depend upon Europe and America for university training." But it added, "that Africa should have its own Colleges as soon as elementary and secondary schools are able to supply a sufficient number of students to warrant the organisation of colleges." 2 In the 1920s, West African agitation for an institution of higher learning was combined with the agitation for more African participation in government. The immediate effect was the introduction of the 1926 Education Code. The Code indicated the course that Nigeria's educational development should take. It recognised the need for expansion but emphasised that whatever expansion took place should be

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1. Phelps-Stoke Fund, Education in Africa, New York, 1932.
2. Ibid.

within the financial resources of the colonial administration. Provision was made for the establishment of a Board of Education whose major function was to advise the governor on educational matters. The Code authorised the governor to control the establishment of new schools or close down any which were poorly administered. In northern Nigeria the Code did not apply owing to the policy of non-interference in the affairs of Muslim communities.

In 1937, the colonial administration started a scheme whereby a number of Nigerian students were trained in Britain at government expense. Scholarships were awarded in the less attractive areas of education and the humanities so as not to threaten the privileged position of European expatriates in the fields of law, medicine, engineering and public administration. A decade later, resentment led to agitation for overhauling Yaba Higher College and setting up an institution of true university status.

Yaba Higher College

The establishment of the Yaba Higher College in 1932, marked the begining of higher education in Nigeria. 1 When the institution was founded, there was no intention to give Nigerians an education on par with that available in metropolitan ccuntries. The purpose was to produce "assistants" who would relieve colonial officials of many

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1. Phelps-Stokes Fund, Education in Africa (1932).

administrative tasks.1 Admission into the college was dictated by the number of vacancies for Africans in government service. In its first year the college admitted only eighteen students. Until 1948, the total enrolment of the college did not exceed ninety five.2

The college offered studies in several fields; agriculture, forestry, medicine, veterinary science, surveying, engineering, and teacher training. The course in engineering lasted four years including two months of practical work each year during the vacation period. The medical course took six and a half years; agriculture, forestry, surveying, and teacher training, four years; and veterinary science, a full seven years. In spite of the length of the courses and the fact that admission was based on a stiff competitive post-secondary entrance examination, the college offered diplomas. Students were not allowed to take the University of London external examinations. Graduates and students of the Yaba Higher College were dissatisfied with this situation. It was difficult for them to understand why even with the possession of London Matriculation Certificate or its equivalent as an entry qualification, they should spend several years in the college without emerging with a degree while other Nigerians would go to Britain or America and become university graduates.

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1. Report of the Commission on Higher Education West Africa, ibid.
2. Ikejiani, O., Nigerian Universities, p. 133.

The Elliot and Asquith Commissions

In June 1943, the British government announced the creation of a commission whose duty was "to report on the organisation and facilities of the existing centres of higher education in British West Africa and to make recommendations regarding future university development in that area."1 Two months later, in August 1943, the Secretary of State for the Colonies appointed yet another commission to study higher education. Its terms of reference were more explicit, "to consider the principles which should give the promotion of higher education, learning and research and the development of universities in the colonies, and to explore means whereby universities and other appropriate bodies in the United Kingdom may be able to cooperate with the institutions of higher learning in the colonies in order to give effect to these principles."2

The appointment of these commissions was welcomed with great enthusiasm in West Africa generally and in Nigeria in particular. The Elliot Commission, as the first commission was called, had its members drawn from Colonial Office and British universities and included three West African members, one of whom was Rev. Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria, a leader of the Nigerian Union of Teachers and the Principal of Abeokuta Grammar School. The Commission met in London and travelled extensively in west Africa where they

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1. Report of the Commission on Higher Education in West Africa. (H. M. S. O. London Cmnd. 6655, 1945) p. iv.
2. Report of the Commission on Higher Education in the colonies (H. M. S. O. London, Cmnd, 6647, 1945), p. 3.

received memoranda from various colonial administrators and representatives of African political and educational groups.

The Elliot Commission presented two reports, a majority and minority report, because the members were not in full agreement on the Commission's recommendations. The majority report recommended the establishment of three university colleges in the British West African territories: at Ibadan (Nigeria), at Achimota (Ghana), and at site a to which Fourah Bay could be moved in Sierra Leone (to serve both Sierra Leone and the Gambia). There was to be one medical school and one institute of education for the whole of West Africa, the former to be located at Ibadan while the latter should be at Achimota.

The minority report which was officially adopted took into consideration the potential number of students in West Africa, the availability of qualified teaching staff and the financial resources available in recommending "the immediate establishment of only one institution of university rank, to serve the whole of British West Africa. This should be named the West African University College and should be situated at Ibadan, Nigeria".1 The report further recommended that each of the three dependencies should have a territorial college which would devote itself "to providing courses to the intermediate level, to the training of teachers and social welfare

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1. Report on the Commission on Higher Education in the colonies, Ibid.

workers and to adult education and extra-mural activities."[1] The report advised that the West African University College to be established at Ibadan should serve the whole of West Africa in fields of medicine, agriculture, forestry, animal health, education and engineering.

News of the approval of the minority report sparked off agitation all over British West Africa. Nationalists, especially those from Gold Coast(Ghana) pressed for immediate political independence arguing that any kind of retardation in educational development would prolong colonialism. 2 The Colonial Office relented and sanctioned another examination of the issue.

The second commission, the Asquith Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies, concerned itself primarily with the form the proposed universities should take and how they should be operated. The Commission concluded that universities to be established should be entirely residential and open to men and women, and in the tradition of British universities, that they should be autonomous. The Commission also recommended that the new universities should be University Colleges enter into "special relationship" with the University of London so that their graduates might receive London degrees. Finally, the Asquith Commission recommended the establishment of a Inter-University Council

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.

for higher Education in the Colonies. The Council was to assist the new institutions in the selection of staff and in all academic matters pertaining to their development. In December 1946 a delegation of the newly-formed Inter-University Council, led by Sir William Hamilton Fyfe visited West Africa and after a thorough study of the situation, proposed the founding of two university colleges, one in Nigeria and the other in Ghana.

The initial African response to the recommendations of the Asquith Commission was gratifying to colonial authorities. The University of London was prepared to admit some modification in the curricula to suit the circumstances of these new institutions. For example, in Biology courses, African plants and animals were to be studied and courses in African history and geography were to be introduced. The University of London subsequently established a "special relationship" with the colonial colleges. Both standards and curricula were anchored to those of University of London. The link with the University of London ensured that degrees obtained from these colleges were equal to those of British universities. The link was one of partnership and not merely of patronage. Teachers in the colonial colleges took part in examining under the guidance of London examiners who visited the colleges.

The importation of British standards and curricula was welcomed. 1. In Nigeria, neither the government nor the university college wished to make any significant adaptation to local needs and conditions that would compromise the international recognition which the new institutions hoped to obtain. "We don't want another Yaba" announced the Minister of Education in Western Region, Chief S. O. Awokoya, in defense of the standard of the London degree. The programmes offered in the colleges made no provision for technical studies. The source of this policy was closely connected with British practice. In Britain, a binary structure of higher education was adopted and although it was a source of controversy, the binary pattern was recommended for Africa. 2 Engineering training was to take place in colleges of Arts, Science and Technology which were not accorded university status.

The supreme merit of the Asquith plan was that it established in the colonial territories a quality of higher education which brought the Asquith colleges into the international family of universities. Until late in the 1950s the Asquith report remained Britain's "blue print" for the export

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1. Ibid.
2. Ashby, University: British: Indian, African.

of universities to her subjects overseas. 1.

As independence approached, the Nigerian federal government invited a commission to prepare a plan for post-secondary education for the first twenty years of independence, 1960-80. The membership of the Commission consisted of an equal number of members drawn mainly from universities in Britain, Nigeria and the United States of America.2 Sir Eric Ashby, the Principal of Queens University, served as the chairman. At the time the Commission was established(1959), university graduates in Nigeria numbered less than three hundred. 3 The Commission suggested that Nigeria needed at least 2,000 graduates if its current high-level manpower requirements were to be met.4 Its report emphasised that student enrollment should reach 7,500 by 1970.5 Because of the logistical difficulties of assembling 7,500 students in a single university, the Report recommended 'at least one university in each region.' A university was already being established in Nsukka for the Eastern Region. Two universities were proposed by the Commission for Lagos and Zaria, making four in total.6

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1. Ashby, ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.

The University College, Ibadan: Nigeria's First University

The Fyfe delegation supported the Elliot Commission's recommendation for siting the Nigerian University College at Ibadan, then Africa's largest city. On May 8, 1947, Dr. Kenneth Mellanby, a biologist, was appointed Principal designate of the University College.

The Asquith Commission recommended that the ordinance of the University College, Ibadan should provide for conventional two-tier constitution of an English civic university; a Council with some academic representation, but composed predominantly of laymen; and the Academic Board (equivalent to the Senate in England), composed of all professors and a few teachers below professorial rank to which various Faculty Boards reported.1

On January 18, 1948, the University College, Ibadan was opened. The staff, courses, equipment and library of the Yaba Higher College were removed from Lagos to Ibadan and were taken over by the University College. It might be said in retrospect, that during the first year of the University College, Ibadan, the work of the Yaba Higher College was in fact continued, with the idea that those students who proved themselves capable should be given the opportunity to read for degree courses.2 The college was already in session before permanent members of staff were appointed.

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1. Ashby, African University, p. 23.
2. Fafunwa, A.B., A History of Higher Education in Nigeria, p. 284.

The first full academic session began in October 1948 with a student intake of 210 of whom 35 were pursuing intermediate Art courses, 5 Final Arts, 29 Medicine, 113 Intermediate Science, 8 Final Science and 20 were enrolled in the teacher training course. The Medical School was incorporated into the college that year and from October 1949 both Adeoyo and Jericho government hospitals came under its administration. (The pre-clinical courses in medicine, however, continued at Yaba Higher College until the end of November 1950.) Faculties of Arts, Science and Medicine were created at the outset as programmes in these areas had been developed at Yaba Higher College. In 1949, the Faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary Science was established.

In 1962 the University College, Ibadan became the University of Ibadan, and was empowered to grant degrees. As a Federal institution Ibadan was a prototype of Federal political structure. The Council and Senate often split along ethnic lines on major issues affecting the institution.1 The two dominant groups in the university were the Ibos and the Yorubas. An example of ethnic rivalry was the controversy that developed over the appointment of the first Nigerian Vice-Chancellor of the university, Dr. Dike, an Ibo, in 1965. In making this appointment, the newly independent government passed over the most senior Nigerian professor, Dr. Oladele Ajose, a Yoruba. This was the

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1. Fafunwa, ibid.

beginning of a seven-year feud between Yoruba and Ibo staff.1 The situation deteriorated to the extent that it infected the student body as well as the university workers. The struggle continued until the 1966 political crisis when the Vice-Chancellor was forced to resign; his resignation compelled by the change of government in the country. The Northern Peoples Congress (a predominantly Hausa/Fulani party) and the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (Ibo based) controlled the Federal Government until the 1966 military coup. Dr. Dike was backed by these parties. The opposition Action Group Party (with strength in Yorubaland) backed Dr. Ajose. 2

The University of Nigeria, Nsukka

The establishment of the University of Nigeria was the initiative of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe who was in 1955 the premier of the Eastern Region and later President of the first Republic. From a reading of Azikiwe's speeches one is left in no doubt about the purpose of the university he founded. The university's activities were to be related:

> "to the social and economic needs and the day to day life of the people of Nigeria ... This calls for a realistic approach to the problems of higher learning in our system of education. We must frankly admit that we can no longer afford to flood only white collar jobs

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1. Fafunwa, ibid.
2. Ashby, ibid.

> at the expense of the basic occupations and productive vocation, which can be so intelligently directed to create wealth, health and happiness among the greatest number of our people, particularly in the fields of agriculture, engineering, business administration, education and domestic science."1.

In other speeches, Dr. Azikiwe made it clear that he had in mind the American Land Grant College as a model for his university rather than the British civic university, and that he proposed to look to the United States for help. This aroused apprehension in the colonial government and in academic circles.2

The University drew heavily upon the British and American university models, but has also striven to develop a pattern which is appropriate to Nigeria. The University embodied according to Ashby, "the hope of Nigerian higher education lies in its diversity."3 Courses of study are related to the day to day life of Nigeria and focus upon the social and economic needs of the nation. The aim of the University is to promote general and practical education in fields ranging from the humanities to journalism, business administration and food science. In attempting to blend the 'land grant college' idea with the classical concept of

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1. Eastern House of Assembly Debates (May 18, 1955).
2. Ashby, ibid., p. 227.
3. Ashby, ibid.

universities, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka made astonishingly rapid development. By 1964, after four years of existence, the student population of Nsukka had already surpassed that at Ibadan established twelve years before it. The University suffered a setback during the civil war period. It was temporarily closed and at different times its premises were taken over for military purposes.

While Ibadan developed a distinctly cosmopolitan flavour and close ties to the British universities in curricula, staff and modes of governance, Nsukka had a regional bias profoundly interwoven with an American educational style. The universities that have been founded since independence have sought consciously to diverge from either or both but found themselves introducing here and there, practices from the two universities.1

Expansion of the University System

The 1954 Federal Constitution made higher education in Nigeria a concurrent legislative matter. Exercising this constitutional right, the regional governments initiated bold proposals for the establishment of universities. By 1962, the East, North and Western Regional legislatures had established the universities at Nsukka; Zaria; and Ife, respectively. (The University College, Ibadan, which became the University of Ibadan in 1962 and the University of Lagos were established in 1962 as Federal institutions.)

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1. Eisemon, T., "The Implantation of Science in Nigeria and Kenya," Minerva, Vol. XVII, No. 4, Winter 1979.

Initially, the regional universities were the financial responsibility of the regional governments. In 1971, the Federal Military Government transferred higher education from the Concurrent Legislative List of the Constitution to Exclusive Legislative List. This made the Federal Military Government the only authority to establish universities in the country. The Government took this decision to halt indiscriminate proliferation of universities. The regional universities(Ahmadu Bello, Benin, Ife and Nsukka) were left with the option of remaining state institutions if they wished. Still the Federal Government contributed 50% of the capital costs and 30% of the recurrent costs of these universities.1 Unable to obtain sufficient finance from local governments, the universities at Nsukka and Benin requested to be taken over by the Federal Government in 1973 and 1975, respectively. In August 1975, the Federal Military Government unilaterally assumed responsibility for the two other state universities (Ahmadu Bello and Ife). But increasing federal control over higher education did not slow the pace of expansion.

Even though it had been evident in each National Plan Period that the available resources of the nation could not cope with more university institutions, political pressure outweighed financial and academic objections to the

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1. Guobadia, A.T. NUC Lagos, "The Political Environment of Higher Education co-ordination in Nigeria." September 1981.

establishment of new universities. Changes in the political structure of the country led to the immediate demands for new institutions. Thus, the University of Benin, formerly known as the Mid-West Institute of Technology, was the result of the designation of the Mid-West as Nigeria's fourth region in 1963. Similar demands by seven of the eight states set up in 1967, led to the establishment of seven new universities in 1975 located at Calabar, Jos, Maiduguri, Sokoto, Ilorin, Port Harcourt and Kano. And the recent 1980 Federal Government commitment to the establishment of seven Universities of Technology was prompted by the creation of seven additional states in 1976 which had no Federal institution of university rank.

The Ashby Report suggested that enrolment in the country's universities should be about 7,500 by 1970, a target which the Federal Government rejected as being too modest and increased to 10,000. This target was attained by 1970 (see Table 1) notwithstanding

TABLE 1.1

Nigerian Universities - Total Enrolment 1966-1982

YEAR	TOTAL ENROLMENT
1966/67	8,888
1970/71	14,468
1976/77	41,499
1982/83	94,375

SOURCE: National Universities Commission, Lagos. Nigerian Universities - Total Enrolment 1966-1982 (Feb. 1983)

the national crisis of 1967-1971 which led to the closing of Nsukka for three years. By 1982/83 student enrolment had risen to 94,375 in the twenty universites which have been establisned.

Summary

Imbalances in educational development resulted partly from the lack of interest of the colonial administration in the education of Nigerians thus making education the responsibility of the Christain missionaries. The southern parts of the country had the earliest contact with missionaries and responded more favourably to western education than the Muslim north. Western education was closely linked with Christianity. Ethnicity and political rivalries have influenced the provision and expansion of educational facilities -- especially university education. When Nigeria attained political independence in 1960, the University College, Ibadan established in 1948, was the only institution of higher learning. By 1962, four more universities were created in Lagos, Ife, Nsukka and Zaria. Changes in the political structure of the country led to immediate demand for establishment of new universities so that today there are twenty.

Since independence, expansion of higher education has been viewed as a matter of national and regional prestige, with each state government maintaining its own university with federal aid until the federation of universities in 1975. Educational expansion is both a response to ethnic

heterogeneity and an effort to forge a unitary state by correcting the imbalances in access to education dating from the colonial period. The positive role which higher education may play in furthering national development was broadly recognized with the result that conscious efforts were made by the government to eradicate the imbalances in educational development in the country.

CHAPTER II

STUDENTS AND POLITICS IN NIGERIA

Introduction

There are a number of reasons why African university students are important in the political life of their countries. Entrance to professional and managerial occupations in the modern sector is almost entirely dependent on whether an individual possesses a university education. University students are, thus, a "presumptive elite."[1] This gives them prestige and influence which they would not be able to obtain at their age. University students expect to be treated and are treated deferentially by those with less or no education.

Second, university students constitute a relatively high proportion of the well-educated population of their countries which is not employed by or otherwise under the direct control of the government. Students possess a freedom of action which few other groups within their societies enjoy. Studentship is a transitory state, usually lasting only three or four years, though perhaps extended by graduate study. Academic life is seen as a brief way-station to economic advancement by many. It is also a time unburdened by financial, social or political responsibilities. Students have often been united by a

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1. Barkan, J.D., An African Dilemma, p. 37.

common alienation from traditional patterns of society from which they have been separated by process of schooling. While this alienation often disappears as the student takes his place in modern economy, it is an important factor during the student period. The very sense of alienation serves to unite the student community and has a politicising effect.

Third, in contrast to many other segments of the population, students have experienced due to the expansion of higher education a deterioration of their privileged position in society. This produces a profound sense of grievance against the state from which students seek entitlements. The university community in Nigeria as in most African countries is highly stratified combining some of the features of colonial caste society with those of traditional status systems indigenous to African societies.1 But relative to the larger society, university staff and students are privileged, collectively. Since the universities are mainly residential, the students enjoy a standard of living which is considerably above that of their fellow countrymen. Students live in furnished hostels and are fed a well-balanced diet. In recent years, however, the living standards of the students have deteriorated. The halls of residences in the older universities in Nigeria

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1. Van de Berghe, P., Power and Privilege in at African University.

have become overcrowded by about 100% in terms of their original design, for instance.1 Moreover, opportunities for immediate entry into highly remunerated positions in the society have diminished as a result of the great number of graduates produced by the universities. Consequently, the high expectations which student status generates are increasingly difficult to satisfy, encouraging an oppositional relationship to the state, the employer of most graduates.

Finally, the student population provides an organisational base for student political and social action. Student unions and other organisations which have been set up by educational authorities and governments are a meeting place for those interested in ideological discussions or political activity. Politics exercise a strong attraction and a potent pressure among students in Nigeria. Political issues have caused student uprisings and agitational campaigns. Activism by students in the affairs of their universities, communities and the nation is not new; it is as old as the universities. But the impact of that activism on public affairs has new significance in countries undergoing rapid political, economic and social change.

Student Unrest in Nigerian Universities

Student involvement in politics takes place in two

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1. For example, in Moremi Hall of the University of Lagos, four female students are officially allocated to a room designed for two students. Under these crowded conditions second year students who cannot get accommodation stay with their friends as squatters.

interrelated arenas -- the university campus and the world beyond its gates. For most Nigerian students, the main arena for political activity is the latter. Instead of turning the campus into a political battleground by making demands and expressing their grievances to the university authorities, Nigerian students usually take their problems directly to their governments. The explanation for this tendency lies in the fact that the issues over which students protest are beyond the control of university authorities. Even problems relating to accommodation, catering facilities and other welfare matters cannot usually be solved by the university authorities alone.

Nigerian students have often been described as restive. Racial and ethnic tensions, corruption and social injustice and matters of privilege often arouse strong emotions among them. During the civil war and the period of Military rule, there was no channel for expression of public discontent as a result of the ban on politics between 1971 and 1978. Student activism focused on issues of national importance during this period.

Prior to independence, however, student unrest was directed against university authorities and the colonial government by implication. The failure of the University College at Ibadan to appoint qualified Nigerians to the faculty, and assigning those appointed to lower faculty rank prompted the student protests in 1957 which culminated in the closing of the College. All top administrative posts

were held by non-Nigerians. In addition, African staff received lower salaries than Europeans. The Principal, Dr. Mellanby, justified this practice arguing that "if during this initial subsidised period Africans insist on salaries which the country cannot support then they will have to be prepared to accept very substantial cuts when Nigeria becomes independent."1 Students demanded that African staff receive equal pay for equal work. Press releases and handouts damaged the public image of the university, and there was a public outcry against the reliance on European professors and lecturers who were alleged to be of low academic calibre.2

In the independence period student concerns shifted to national issues including those which affected their general welfare. In 1971, the President of the National Union of Nigerian Students (NUNS), Mr. Olu. Adegboro, compiled a list of grievances: the Union objected to the proposed two-year National Youth Service for university students; it wanted an end to the wartime state of emergency and direct access to the Military government to explain its needs; and, the Union asked for better catering facilities in the halls of residence, better accommodation and a more generous distribution of scholarships. When the students were rebuffed, discontent spilled over into the streets. A sequence of events followed in 1971 that was repeated in

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1. Ashby, E., ibid.
2. Ibid.

1974-75 and in 1978. Students at Ibadan, Zaria and Lagos held up traffic, blocked the streets, burned government vehicles and demanded the resignation of public officials. An effigy of Dr. Audu, the Vice-Chancellor of Ahmadu Bello, was burned.1 The protests ran parallel to widespread industrial unrest during a period of inflation and rising unemployment. Squads of police and soldiers dispersed the students with tear gas and batons and when firearms were used, one of the students, Mr. Kunle Adepeju, was killed.

The government made some concessions but had its way with the National Youth Service Scheme. Significantly, one of the concessions made by the government was a pledge that the student leaders could have direct contact with the government.2

Much the same combination of immediate local grievances and national discontent resulted in the student protest of 1975. Student groups in the universities of Ibadan, Ife, Benin and Zaria expressed opposition to General Gowon's clear intention to continue in office. The students' demands included a return to civilian rule in 1976, the creation of additional states, the introduction of free education and health care, full employment, publication of the salary scales of the Armed Forces, a decree against corruption and the penalising of corrupt officers, and the

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1. Austin, D., "Universities and Academic Gold Standard in Nigeria," Minerva XVIII, No. 2, Summer 1980, p. 237.
2. Nigeria, Press Release No. 578, April 28, 1978.

relocation of the Federal Capital.1 The students' complaints revealed the country-wide dissatisfaction with the military government and the daily experience of hardship. General Gowon dismissed the students' demands as "a mere silly suggestion."2

The protests of the mid-1970s were directed against a military regime which had actually turned to the National Union of Nigerian Students (NUNS) from time to time to try and find support for its rule. This increased the students' sense of their own importance and led to the NUNS' insistence on seeing the Head of State during the celebrated 1978 unrest.3 The spark which set the universities alight was the announcement of a two hundred percent increase in fees for board and lodging at a time when the nation was expecting education to be entirely free at all levels. The Federal Military Government had indicated that free education will soon be extended to every deserving citizen.4 Universal Free Primary Education had been introduced.5 Secondary school fees had been slashed throughout the country and tuition had been made absolutely free in all Nigerian universities.6 These measures appeared to suggest that education

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1. Afriscope, Vol. 5, No. 4, April 1975, p. 18 and Africa, No. 45, May 1975, p. 27.
2. West Africa, No. 3427, April 18, 1983, p. 933.
3. New Nigeria, Kaduna, 22 April 1978.
4. Federal Republic of Nigeria, National Policy of Education (1977).
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.

would ultimately become free. The increase in board and lodging fees was seen as being contrary to previous government policy.

Violence first erupted in Lagos when the students marched outside the campus and gained the support of pupils from nearby secondary schools. The police who were stationed on the approach road to the main university campus at Akoka, showered tear gas to disperse the students while the students hurled stones, bottles and other missiles at the police.1 As the situation became more violent and the demonstration attracted many school children who were lured by the excitement, shots were fired by the police. Students and bystanders were injured and as a result of injuries sustained, one of the students, Akintunde Ojo, died.2

The thirteen universities were closed down during the crisis. In some universities, Sokoto, Ilorin, Port Harcourt and Calabar, the unrest was nipped in the bud by the university authorities who closed the universities immediately. At Ahmadu Bello University, six people were reported killed and twenty-three were injured while two policemen and an Army Major were kidnapped.3 (They were subsequently released.)

At the University of Ibadan students carrying placards

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1. Federal Ministry of Information, Lagos, Press Release No. 578, April 28, 1978.
2. New Nigerian, Kaduna, 22-26 April 1978.
3. Ibid.

containing abusive slogans staged a relatively peaceful demonstration within the campus on April 17. Two days later, students demonstrated in the town distributing leaflets at the State Secretariat, The Daily Sketch Office, Radio Nigeria and other public places to solicit public support. Some clashed with police and damaged government vehicles.

At the climax of the crisis at the University of Benin, students submitted a petition to the Military Government. They went a step further in their protest by calling for the dissolution of the Supreme Military Council and the Federal Executive. The protests ended with a general riot in Lagos on April 28, 1978. The students refused to discuss increased fees with the National Universities Commission (NUC) nor even the Chief of Staff. They insisted on a meeting with the Head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo.1

Aftermath

Following the 1978 unrest in Nigeria, a three man commission of enquiry was set up which identified "societal indiscipline" as a contributory factor to the disturbances.2 University authorities were held accountable for the

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1. New Nigerian, Kaduna, 22 April 1978.
2. Reports of the Commission of inquiry on the Recent Disturbances in some universities in April 1978. (Mohammed's Commission of Enquiry).

behaviour of the students. The Commission criticised the Vice-Chancellors of Ahmadu Bello University and Lagos University for acts of commission and omission which led inexorably to loss of lives and property, thereby escalating the crisis.1 Also criticised in the Commission's report was the role played by individual staff. And the press was blamed for sensational and irresponsible reporting.2

The Federal Military Government took actions reflecting its agreement with the views expressed by the Commission. Thus, two Vice-Chancellors and a number of academic staff were relieved of their posts, the National Union of Nigerian Students was banned and several student union leaders were expelled from the universities.3 The only concession to the students was a pledge not to increase boarding and lodging fees.

Prior to the 1978 agitation, the National Union of Nigerian Students was a federation of the autonomous unions in each university. According to the Students' Union constitution, every student on the campus was automatically a member and contributed a certain amount to the Union's treasury. The National President was the Chief Executive and served as the chairman of the Executive Council which was the policy making body. The Executive Council was made up of the National President, his lieutenants and the

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Mohammed's Commision of Enquiry 1978, ibid.

presidents of member unions. Each university now has a student union but affiliation between unions of individual institutions is proscribed. Membership is no longer obligatory and any student who desires can opt out of university union without prejudice to his entitlement to enjoy university facilities.

The student unions of each university, though not as militant as the banned National Union of Nigerian Students, are still vocal on national issues. For example, the students of the University of Lagos demonstrated in February 1983 over the burning of the Nigerian External Telecommunication Building. The students called on the government to put a stop to attempts of corrupt officials who set fire to public buildings to incinerate records of their fraudulent practices. In evaluating the outcomes of the student activism in terms of immediate effects, it might be said that the influence of the students is minimal, though many of their demands are endorsed by the government at a later date. Among those which have been adopted are the creation of an additional seven states in 1976 and the transfer of the Federal capital to Abuja. Also education became free at all levels throughout the Federation.

Repression and Co-optation

The height of the student unrest in Nigeria was during the period of military rule. In almost all the Anglophone African states which became independent after 1957, a change of government occurred which deviated from parliamentary

practice. In almost every case, political change has arisen from the intervention of the military. Often, the general pattern of political change has been roughly similar. Frantz Fanon gave a description of this pattern when in writing about the newly independent states of Africa, he said, "Before independence, the leader generally embodies the aspirations of the people for independence, political liberty and national dignity. But as soon as independence is declared, far from embodying in concrete terms the needs of the people, the leader will reveal his inner purpose: to become the general president of that company of profiteers impatient for their returns which constitutes the national bourgeoisie."1 Such leaders have been replaced by military rulers who, while professing a desire to end corruption, have themselves become full members of the voracious bourgeoisie.

The Nigerian military was a product of the colonial inheritance. As such it was oriented more toward the maintenance of internal security than toward external defense. The military's self image, however, tends to be that of protector against external aggression, which not infrequently has caused it to resent being called upon to perform essentially internal security duties intended to keep politicians in power.2 For the six years of Nigeria's

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1. Fanon, Frantz, The Damned, p. 134.
2. Dudley, B.J. "Military Government and National Integration in Nigeria" in D.R. Smock, The Search for National Integration in Africa, p. 37.

independent government before the civilian regime was overthrown, the military did little but help maintain the politicians in power. When, therefore, sections of the army intervened in January 1966, the surprise was not that they intervened at all, but that they waited so long before stepping in.1

A particular problem of the military at the time was its ethnic composition. The majority of the top officers had risen from the lower ranks to officers cadre. There were a few educated soldiers at the top cadre, but these were largely made up of men of Yoruba and Ibo origin2 while the enlisted ranks were mainly Hausa.

Students were regarded by the military government as potential enemies capable of causing instability in the country if not repressed. The insecurity of the military leaders was heightened by the knowledge that the students are armed with the skills and ambitions of the educated class which views power as legitimately theirs. Military governments were especially sensitive to students' accusations of governmental corruption because the students, as they have not had the opportunity of holding public office, could be vocal and convincing on such a sensitive issue.

Cases of corruption have been established against every

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1. Dudley, ibid.
2. Ibid.

category of leader in the country from the most to the least important in office.1 Corruption is very rampant in the society. It was as a result of the widespread corruption in the country which the students brought to the attention of the public in their protests of 1975 that the Federal Military Government promulgated Decree No. 38 later that year to check corrupt practices.2

Compared with the politicians and military leaders in the country, the students constitute an intellectual class which is homogeneous in terms of age, position in society and in relatively full agreement on questions of rights and privileges. The government deals with this class through co-optation as well as through repressive legislation and violence. Governments have tried to co-opt the students by maintaining dialogue with their leaders, and by conceding to their demands for maintenance of their fees and allowance. However, students are often dealt with ruthlessly, as individuals who have broken an implicit pledge to government to reciprocate with loyalty for the privileges they enjoy, including the privilege of direct

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1. There was mass retirement and dismissal of corrupt officers in 1975.
2. Federal Republic of Nigeria, Decree No. 38, July 1975.

access to government which was suspended in 1978 when students assumed this to be their right. Governments, military and civilian, have felt it necessary to instil humility and sense of social responsibility in university students. In the 1970's compulsory national service was introduced in part as a means of purging students of the "elitism" fostered by a university education.

CHAPTER III

THE NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE CORPS

Introduction

A National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) was first proposed in Nigeria's Second Development Plan, 1970-74. The Federal Military Government declared its intention to establish a Youth Corps Scheme during the Plan period with the stated objective of providing work orientation for school-leavers between fifteen and twenty-three years of age.1. In his broadcast to the nation on the twelfth anniversary of Nigeria's independence (1972), General Yakubu Gowon, then the Head of State, indicated that the government was prepared to initiate a voluntary youth service programme. The proposed service was meant "to transcend political, social, state and ethnic loyalties and to form the basis of fostering loyalty to the Nation."2. In December of that year in his convocation address at Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, General Gowon anncunced that the NYSC would be established and in February 1973 at Lagos University, he asked for memoranda and ideas from concerned groups. University Vice-Chancellors were invited by the Cabinet Office to submit suggestions, and they responded by deciding that a workshop on the NYSC should be held at the University of Ibadan to discuss and make recommendations regarding the scope of the proposed scheme.

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1. Second National Development Plan ibid, pp. 261-2 and 314.
2. Ibid.

The workshop opened amidst confusion. Participants felt the universities were being stage-managed into rubber stamping the Government's decree. Most were drawn from different academic departments of the university but also included Mr. Areoye Oyebola, the editor of a Lagos based newspaper, and Mr. Kanmi Osobu, a well known lawyer. The participants concluded that the scheme would not succeed. Dr. Ola of the Social Science department at the University argued that while the government of Nigeria had the right to mobilize students for the purpose of nation building, compulsory national service was economically unproductive.1. He suggested, instead, the mobilization of the entire mass of the population if the country was bent on rapid economic development.2 Dr. Oroge, also a university professor, made reference to the case of Ethiopia where a similar youth service had been established. The Ethiopian experience succeeded, he claimed, because the students were taken into confidence by the government before the plan was executed. The NYSC scheme, by implication, had already started off on the wrong foot. Students walked out of the workshop on the grounds of non-consultation by both the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and by the Federal Military Government.3

Students demonstrations against the scheme took place on the campuses of the universities in Lagos,

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1. Daily Times February 16, 1973 and New Nigerian February 23, 1973, SYMPOSIUM ON NYSC.
2. Ibid.
3. Daily Times, Feb. 16, 1973 and New Nigerian, Kaduna, February 23, 1973, Symposium on NYSC.

Ibadan, Zaria and Ife during the Spring of 1973. Students at the University of Ife disrupted a conference on national education by throwing stones and rotten eggs at the delegates, deflating the tires of their vehicles and beating up a television-camera crew and smashing their equipment.1. At Lagos University, a peaceful protest which was planned to coincide with the Head of States's return from a visit to Mali turned violent. During the demonstration a commissioner's car was burnt, the gates of the university were barricaded and, finally, police stormed the campus.2. In Zaria, students first boycotted lectures then blocked the entrance to the university. The police came to clear the campus. Students at the University of Ibadan held a protest march through the town and a government vehicle was set on fire. They also seized some public and private vehicles which they used as transport.3. The students protested against what they felt was an imposition of the scheme on them without prior consultation. The student union (NUNS) urged the government to consider the addition of student representatives to the Central Directorate of the NYSC scheme and to the state committees formed to administer the programme. They also took the position that the experience should constitute part of their record of service and that permanent jobs in various government departments be guaranteed to participants.4.

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1. New Nigerian (Kaduna) February 27-29, 1973.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid, February 23, 1973.
4. Daily Express, June 15, 1973.

The very negative reaction of the students was exacerbated by the fact that details of the scheme were not known, thereby generating wild speculation. Rumours circulated that the term of service would run for two years, that it would involve road building and heavy manual labour to which educated Nigerians are not exposed, and that the remuneration would be roughly one-third of what the student would expect to earn on graduation. The students considered the scheme to be a means of making them scapegoats for the corruption and ills of the Federal Military Government. The demonstrations subsided when the government announced that it had not taken final decisions on vital issues including the remuneration of corps participants and the duration of their postings, and would consider the views expressed by the students.1.

Structure and Administration

The National Youth Service Corps Decree No. 24 was formally promulgated on May 22, 1973. The NYSC scheme had as its primary purpose the involvement of youths in national development. Provision was made for educated elites to undertake community development especially in the rural areas and to serve in parts of the country other than their state of origin.

The National Youth Service Corps is organized along federal lines. The National Directorate is the governing and

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1. New Nigerian, Kaduna, 27 February 1973.

policy making body while its Director is the chief executive of the scheme. The establishing decree stipulates that the Chairman and members of the Directorate as well as the Director should be appointed by the Government. The membership of the Directorate comprises in addition to the Director, a chairman; five persons to represent the universities in Nigeria in rotation (so that no two of them shall come from one university at the same time); one member of the Armed Forces of the Federation; a member of the Nigeria Police Force; representatives from the Nigerian Employers' Consultative Association; the Cabinet Office; Federal Ministry of Education and Federal Ministry of Labour, Youth and Sports; two representatives each from polytechnics or equivalent institutions and advanced teacher training colleges; and three other persons (at least one of whom should be a woman).1

The National Directorate was inaugurated in June 1973 by Professor Adebayo Adedeji, who was then the Federal Commissioner of Economic Development and Reconstruction, as the chairman. Lieutenant Colonel A. Ali was appointed as the first Director. Lt. Colonel Ali, a medical doctor, was until this appointment, a member of the Nigerian Army Medical Corps.2 He also served as the Federal Commissioner of Education during the military government of Lieutenant General

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1. See Appendix I.
2. It was during his tenure of office as commissioner for education that the celebrated student unrest of April 1978 took place.

Olusegun Obasanjo. During his student days at the University of Ibadan, he was secretary-general of MUNS (in 1957-58). He later became the secretary of the Ibadan Medical Students Union (in 1961-62). Lt. Colonel Ali was succeeded as the Director of the NYSC by Colonel S. K. Omojokun (now a Brigadier and the Director of Nigerian Army Education Corps). The current Director of the Scheme is Colonel P. K. Obasa who is also an educator and a senior officer in the Nigerian Army Education Corps. Members of the Directorate who are not public officers are appointed for a period of three years and are eligible for re-appointment for one term only.1

Section 2 of the establishing decree set out the categories of youths who were to participate in the scheme. Initially, the scheme was to encompass every Nigerian up to the age of 30 years who obtained a first degree from any Nigerian university as from the end of the 1972/73 academic year. Participation in the scheme is for one year. The first ammendment to the Decree allowed the inclusion of graduates who are above 30 years on a voluntary basis. In 1974, an order of the then Head of the Federal Military Government extended the scheme to Nigerians who obtained their first degree from institutions overseas at the end of the 1972/73 academic year on a voluntary basis. Their participation became compulsory from the end of 1974/75 academic year. Participation in the scheme has also

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1. Federal Republic of Nigeria: NYSC Decree No. 24, 1973, p. 6, Section 3(1) and (2) and (3).

been extended tc hclders of the Nigerian Certificate of Education (NCE), Higher National Diploma (HND) and others with professional qualifications acquired subsequent to the completion of secondary school.

Tne Directcrate maintains close contact with the universities and colleges on the number and identities of prospective graduates and issues "call up" letters to the new corps members in May and June. The Directorate posts participants to the different states of the federation ensuring that they are, as much as possible, not sent to their states of origin. Exceptions are made in recognition of marital status, medical and compassionate reasons. Individuals who are forty years old or older and in-service officers on salary grade level 08 and above (senior officers) are also exempted. The number of such concessions is usually very small. For example, in 1980/81 when 982 corps members were posted to Ondo State, only 46 (5%) were re-assigned to other states for various reasons. Table 3.1 shows that almcst half (43%) of the participants were re-assigned to Ondo state because of their age. Most of tne remainder were married women. Although national data are not available, the proportion of reassignments probably does not exceed 10%.1

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1. NYSC Annual Report, Ondo State Secretariat, 1980/81.

TABLE 3.1

Reassignment of Corps Members - Ondo State

1980/81

Reason for Outward Redeployment	
Age	20
Marriage	13
Health	4
Others	9
Total	46

All the nineteen states of the federation have a State Committee which is comprised of a member of the Nigeria Police, a Principal Inspector of the NYSC, and four other persons representing different sectors of the Nigerian economy. Members of the State Committee are appointed by the governors of the state. The Commissioner for Education of the state is usually the chairman of the State Committee, and the other four members are often principals of secondary schools or business executives. Each State Committee deploys corps members within the state and arranges their accommodation, boarding and transport. The Chief Inspector supervises the day to day running of the state secretariat and collects requests for NYSC postings from the public and private sectors. Employers send requests for manpower to the state secretariats early in the year. The state directorates also organize the orientation seminar and passing out parade, and act on complaints from corps members

and employers.

The NYSC Directorate at the national and state levels started with meagre personnel obtained from both the state and federal civil services. Some of the state officials were often withdrawn without adequate notice and replacement.1 This impediment was removed with the promulgation of the NYSC (amendment) Decree No. 17 of May 17, 1979, which confers the status of an approved service on the scheme and empowers the Directorate to appoint (including power to confirm), advance, transfer, terminate and discipline its own staff. The scheme is now part of the Federal civil service within the terms of the 1974 Pensions Act.

The NYSC programme is mainly funded by the Federal Government, which provides salaries and allowances for participants. Each state government gives an annual subvention to cover part of the costs of participants' accommodation and transport. The state also assumes the cost of running the orientation course, the community development programme and similar activities. However, state subventions amount to only about 17% of the annual expenses of the scheme. During the 1976/77 service year, the Federal Military Government spent a total of ₦14,458,396 ($28,916,792) to cover the costs of the 6,139 participants that year. By 1978/79 expenditures more than doubled to

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1. NYSC Directorate: Annual Report 1976/77.

₦38,060,060 ($76,120,120) because of the increase in the number of participants and the new rate of allowances. An examination of the expenditures of the service in 1979/80 (Table 3.2) reveales that more than three-fourths (82%) of the funds are allocated for participants' stipends and other allowances.

TABLE 3.2

NYSC Expenditures 1979/80

ITEM	TOTAL EXPENDITURE AMOUNT ₦	%
1. ORIENTATION SESSIONS	2,445,203.26	11.5
2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES	1,010,869.97	4.8
3. PASSING OUT ACTIVITY	328,512.85	1.5
4. SALARIES AND ALLOWANCES	17,458,130.42	82.2
TOTAL	21,242,716.50	100.0

Adequate provision is made for the welfare and safety of participants ("corpers"), although there are reported cases of accidents and deaths.1 Free medical care is given to every corps member on the same basis as civil servants. Every participant is paid a local transport allowance and ₦50.00 ($100.00) to travel to the state of deployment and the same amount at the end of the service year to travel

1. NYSC Annual reports.

back home. (Doctors and pharmacists are, however, not paid the local transport allowance because they are paid a basic automobile allowance.) The monthly stipend for graduates and holders of the Higher National Diploma (HND) is ₦200.00 ($400.00) while holders of the National Certificate of Education (NCE) receive ₦180.00 ($360.00). Graduates of the Advanced Teachers' Colleges protested against this lower rate by boycotting their classes for one week in 1977, without success. The allowance paid to each participant is about 60% of the normal annual salary for a civil servant with comparable qualifications. The NCE holders, by requesting to be paid the same rate as the graduate and HND holders, were asking for 85% of their salary.1 There seem to be two principles involved in determining the payment of the stipend: first, it is not to be regarded as salary but as a subsistence allowance to enable participants live fairly comfortably; and, secondly, there should be an element of financial sacrifice by all participants.

The last ten years have witnessed a marked increase in the number of NYSC participants as shown in Table 3.3(1). About two thousand (2,341) individuals joined the scheme in 1973/74. By 1981/2 conscription had increased more than tenfold to 26,811. The rise in the number of participants was the result of significant changes in the scope of the scheme. One was the inclusion of holders of the HND and NCE and other professionally qualified Nigerians who graduated

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1. NCE holders earn less (GL.07) upon graduation than HND or graduates (GL.08).

at the end of the 1975/76 academic year and subsequent years. Second, from July 1, 1977, individuals were no longer excused from service because of their age. Thirdly, the exemption of Nigerian students graduating from overseas universities was cancelled in 1975.

TABLE 3.3(1)

Number of Participants in the NYSC,

1973/74 - 1981/82

Year	No. of Participants
1973/74	2,341
1974/75	2,958
1975/76	3,504
1976/77	6,139
1977/78	10,904
1978/79	15,632
1979/80	19,337
1980/81	23,039
1981/82	26,811

SOURCE: Data Bank, National Youth Service Corps Directorate Haedquarters, Lagos.

The deployment pattern of the 1981/82 participants as shown in Table 3.3(2) depicts a fairly even deployment of participants to all states of the federation.

Table 3.3(a)

State of Development of Batch Camps 1991/92

State of Development	No. of Participants	%
Anambra	1,346	5.0
Bauchi	956	3.5
[illegible]	1,556	5.7
[illegible]	916	3.3
[illegible]	946	3.4
[illegible]	1,018	3.8
[illegible]	778	2.8
Imo	1,154	4.2
Kaduna	1,229	4.4
Kano	1,451	5.4
Kwara	1,708	6.3
Lagos	3,444	12.6
[illegible]	858	3.1
Ogun	1,335	4.8
Ondo	1,352	5.0
Oyo	2,557	9.4
Plateau	1,595	5.8
Rivers	1,[illegible]	5.5
Sokoto	1,[illegible]	4.7
Total	26,911	100.0

SOURCE: Data Bank, NYSC Directorate Headquarters, Lagos.

Lagos state has the greatest proportion, about 13% of the total number of participants. This is due in part to the fact that Lagos still accommodates several Federal ministries being the former national capital. The other heavily populated states, Kano, Oyo and Kaduna take about 14% of the participants. The remaining 42% of participants are evenly distributed among the other ten states according to their needs. A relatively high proportion of participants (26%) are sent to the least developed states of Ni, I, Ogun, Rivers, Sokoto and Kwara.

TABLE 3.4

NYS participants 1981/82 by Discipline

Discipline	Total No. of participants	%
Medical Doctors	536	2.3
Veterinarians	113	0.4
Pharmacists	230	0.9
Lawyers	461	1.7
Nurses	28	0.1
Medical Lab. Tech.	159	0.6
Teachers	13,803	51.5
Arts and Science	11,387	42.5
Total	26,811	100.0

Source: Data Bank, NYSC Directorate Headquarters, Lagos.

Table 3.4 shows the number of participants according to their previous training. Most (52%) of the participants in 1981/82 possessed teaching qualifications. Only 6% have received training in a profession.

The First Programme

The NYSC scheme has four phases: the Orientation Course, the Primary Assignment; Community Development; and, the Passing-Out Parade. The service year normally starts in August with the Orientation and Induction Course. The corps participants are camped for five to six weeks in the state to which they are deployed for their primary assignment. The state's Chief Inspector, as the chief executive of the scheme in the states, is the co-ordinator of the Orientation and Induction Course. The Inspector is assisted by a number of personnel drawn from the Army, the Police, the State Leadership and Citizen Training Centres[1] and from various government institutions. Orientation activities include lectures and discussions, physical exercise, games and sports and field trips. During this period, corps members live a relatively regimented life. They wake up at 6.00 a.m. for early morning drills. After this, they have classes for about 3 - 4 hours and spend the afternoons attending special lectures and discussions.[2]

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1. The Leadership and Citizen Centre is a federal government sponsored voluntary youth organization. The organization has branches in all the universities and institutions of higher learning.
2. NYSC Handbook, Section 22, p. 3.

They are held on a wide variety of topics including the history, culture, customs and government of the states to which they are assigned. Local languages are also taught to the corps members.

The primary assignment takes the greatest part of the service year, about nine months. Corps members are deployed to work on assignments relevant to their field of study. The scheme has provided a regular, though temporary, source of manpower in areas such as teaching, medicine and legal aid. An examination of primary assignment postings show that the schools take about 70% of the corps members annually, see Table 3.3.

TABLE 3.5

NYSC: Primary Assignments 1980/81

Activity	No. of Participants	%
Schools	16,127	70.0
Health Centres	899	3.9
Ministries	2,005	8.7
Parastatal Corporations	2,373	10.3
Private Sector Firms	1,635	7.1
	23,039	100.00

SOURCE: Data Bank, NYSC Directorate Headquarters, Lagos.

Corps members are assigned to teach mainly in secondary schools and in states operating the "Free Education Programme." Participants are allocated to firms functioning in the private as well as in the public sector of the economy. The private sector took 7% of the total number of participants in 1980. About 19% of the participants were absorbed by the federal and state services.

The third phase of the service year is the 2 - 3 weeks which the corps members spend on the community development projects. The participants come together from their primary assignments to build roads, drains, culverts, erect hospitals, classrooms, market stalls and carry out immunisations and health education campaigns. Participation in these community development activities is supposed to instil the dignity of labour and also develop of a sense of

social responsibility. The community development period is also seen as a forum for public awareness of the NYSC scheme. The presence of a large number of corps members in rural areas is intended to promote greater understanding of the scheme among rural Nigerians.

Corps members return to their primary assignment on completion of the community development project. They return to camp again in mid-July for two weeks for the Passing-Out and Winding-Up activities, which is the last phase of the scheme.

The Directorate issues a discharge certificate to all participants who successfully complete the service year. The certificate is essential for employment. It is the duty of every prospective employer to demand and obtain from any Nigerian who claims to have obtained a first degree at the end of 1973/74 or at the end of any subsequent year following, a copy of the discharge certificate or a copy of any exemption certificate issued in accordance with Section 15 of the Decree.1.

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1. NYSC Decree, ibid.

Participants whose performance during the service year has been judged by the State Committees to be outstanding are given special honours. Three national and nineteen state Honours Awards are conferred on deserving participants annually.

Some participants have their service extended for various offences ranging from absenteeism and maternity to dishonesty. Service extension may range from eight days to six months. Table 3.6 shows that the 139 corps members (0.7% of total participants) had their services extended in the 1979/80 service year.

TABLE 3.6

NYSC: Extension of Service 1979/80

Reason for Extension	No. of Participants	%
Absenteeism and overstaying leave	76	54.7
Travelling without permission	14	10.0
Misconduct	36	26.0
Maternity leave	6	4.3
Not stated	7	5.0
Total	139	100.0

SOURCE : Compiled from NYSC Annual Reports.

The most common offence was absenteeism. About 55% of the participants had their services lengthened for absenteeism and overstaying leave, while 26% (36, 26%) were punished for misconduct including offences such as fraud, insubordination

and theft. About 10% (14, 10%) received extensions for travelling without permission. These data indicate that, by and large, corps members accept the discipline imposed on them by the scheme. They have responded better than might have been anticipated in light of the violent student protests of early 1973.

Summary

The NYSC scheme in Nigeria was started in 1973 by the Federal Military Government as a measure of reconstruction after the civil war. University graduates are deployed to undertake community development in the rural areas where most Nigerians live and are obliged to serve for one year in parts of the country other than their state of origin. While most of the participants are assigned to teach in primary and secondary schools, others participate in rural health care schemes, legal aid and in various other activities. The scheme is intended to promote national unity and integration as well as to redistribute high-level manpower which is unevenly distributed in the country. Participation in community development projects brings the participants in closer contact with the less privileged members of society and is supposed to instil in them the dignity of manual labour and a sense of humility.

The number of participants in the scheme has increased more than tenfold since its inception ten years ago. This increase in the number of participants has been due to three main factors; the expansion of the scope of the scheme to

include holders of the Higher National Diploma and Nigerian Certificate of Education; an increase in the number and enrolment of institutions of higher education whose graduands participate in the scheme; and, lastly, the increase in the number of foreign trained Nigerians who return home to fulfil their service obligation.

CHAPTER IV

THE NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE CORPS: IMPACT AND PROBLEMS

In this chapter, I shall examine the outcomes of the NYSC scheme with emphasis on the development of common ties among Nigerian youths, the promotion of national integration, and the mobilization of high-level manpower. The impact of the scheme results from the exposure to the life-style of other ethnic groups and the assignment of participants to tasks which have meaning in terms of national development. I shall also consider some of the problems associated with the organisation and operation of the scheme. Reference will be made to the NYSC Four Year Evaluation Survey of 1977, my interviews with 82 participants who served between 1975 and 1982, and to the assessments of Nigerian political leaders.

Impact of the Scheme

The NYSC's primary objective, enunciated in Section 1 (2) of the Decree establishing the NYSC, is the "encouragement and development of common ties among the youths of Nigeria and the promotion of national unity."[1] Subsection 1 (3d) of the NYSC Decree indicates how this goal will be achieved. It stipulates that the youths should be assigned to jobs in states other than their own state of origin, so that they would

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1. NYSC Decree No. 24, ibid.

have an opportunity of knowing other parts of the country.

Tura and Akin are typical of corps members I interviewed in 1983. Tura was born in Lagos in 1958, the place of birth of her parents. She received all her education(Kindergarten, Primary, Secondary and University) in Lagos within a radius of five kilometres of her home. Akin was born at Ibadan in Oyo State. His parents came from a town, Gbongan, a few kilometres from Ibadan. Akin, too, obtained all his education at Ibadan. He did not travel outside Oyo State until after his university education when he served in NYSC scheme in Bendel State. Eighty per cent (80%) of past corps members I interviewed had never visited their states of deployment prior to being posted there. These findings are consistent with Dr.Folayan Ojo's evaluation of the NYSC Scheme. He found that 70% of the 850 corps members he interviewed in 1977 had not previously visited the state to which they were assigned, while 74% of the 666 participants serving in 1976/77 had not.1

Many participants I interviewed felt that the scheme enabled them to better appreciate the ethnic problems facing the country. Benjy, a participant who served in Cross River State, remarked that "the scheme has widened my horizon in that it made me know that the world does not begin and end in my own village. While in Ogoja, I became aware that there are other people who have good things. During my stay, there

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1. Dr. Ojo, F., NYSC Four-Year Evaluation Report 1977, p. 104.

was never a day I did not drink palm wine with some of the local people. When you move out of your state of origin, whether you appreciate that new environment or not, you are bound to leave the place with some positive impressions." In a similar vein, Sola, a participant from Kwara State who served in Anambra State as an engineer, commented that: "Ignorance of each others' way of lives was the cause of our suspicion of each other. Some of my deep seated prejudices have now been resolved." There are many examples in my research of the success of the scheme in affording corps members the opportunity of becoming more aware of the similarities and common ties among Nigerians.

Social interaction is very important in the development of national unity and integration. The attitudes of participants towards other Nigerians are clearly affected by the degree of contact and perceived friendliness of local inhabitants and other participants. According to Yomi, a corp member from Ogun State who served in Oyo State,

> "The objective of mixing with other Nigerians is achieved by the scheme. Though I went to the University of Ibadan, the three years were confined to the campus. But during the (NYSC) year which I spent at Eruwa, I knew more about the people and the Yoruba culture and language. In the school where I did my Primary Assignment, there were many corps participants from Anambra, Bendel, Borno, Imo, Kaduna and Plateau

states. I made many friends and we still exchange letters."

Most participants I interviewed (60, 73%) claimed they were able to make friends and many (49, 60%) have kept up these friendships. A majority (42%) have subsequently visited their friends while some (39%) exchange regular correspondence and many (63%) indicated that they are now more willing to live in parts of the country other than their state of origin.

Dr Ojo, who carried out an evaluation of the scheme in 1977, also found that most corps members felt that the scheme contributed significantly to their awareness of similarities and common ties among Nigerians. Table 4.1 shows that 79% of the corps members he interviewed agreed with the statement that the scheme helped to strengthen the common bonds among Nigerians. In response to a related question regarding the contribution of the scheme towards achieving national understanding and integration, 82% agreed that the scheme was positive influence in this respect.

TABLE 4.1

Attitudes Toward Effectiveness of NYSC Scheme in Promoting Common Ties and National Understanding

RESPONSE	Increase Awareness of Similarities and Common Ties		Increase National Understanding and Integration	
	No.	%	No.	%
Strongly Agree	252	29.9	257	30.5
Agree	410	48.6	436	51.7
Disagree	126	14.9	74	8.7
Can't Say	56	6.6	77	9.1
Grand Total	844	100.0	844	100.0

Source: NYSC Four-Year Survey Report, Lagos, 1977.

A. Manpower Mobility

One objective of the NYSC scheme is to enhance the mobility of university educated Nigerians by encouraging "members to seek at the end of their corps service, career employment all over the country ...." and by inducing "employers, partly through their experience with corps members, to employ more readily qualified Nigerians irrespective of their state of origin."[1] High-level manpower has been concentrated in the southern and urban parts of the country due to the highly uneven pattern of educational development.

1. Ibid.

[illegible] mobility. [illegible] Nigeria, however, [illegible] the colonial period, government workers in Eastern and Western Nigeria were dismissed en masse on the grounds that they were not indigenes of the region where they were working. All of the regional governments established shortly after Independence practised "localization" of their civil service. Quite unfortunately, this spread to the private sector where even expatriate employers adopted discriminatory employment policies. As Professor Yesufu noted in this connection, "private employers particularly the large expatriate firms, have largely adopted this regionalist approach in labour recruitment in deference to the sensibilities of the Regional Governments who might otherwise withhold important economic concessions".2

Shortly after the Nigerian civil war (1967 - 1970) and in the wake of a charged political atmosphere, twelve states were created out of the former four regions. The creation of states further reduced the free movement of skilled persons between parts of the Federation with the result that states with serious manpower shortages resorted to the recruitment of expatriates whilst others had surpluses in certain categories of manpower. Besides the uneven distribution of high-level manpower among the states, there is, in addition,

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1. Yesufu, T.M., An Introduction to Industrial Relation in Nigeria, London: Oxford University Press, 1962, p. 145.
2. Ibid.

[illegible] concentration of high-level manpower in the urban areas. A survey conducted by the National Manpower Board in the early 1960s, for instance, indicated that about 40% of Nigeria's 7,000 most highly qualified workers (excluding teachers) were employed in the former federal territory of Lagos.1. The situation was about the same in the late 1960s when 38% of the country's skilled manpower was employed in Lagos State which, at present, means the Lagos metropolitan area.2.

The urban concentration of skilled manpower is evident in the professions. About 70% of Nigeria's medical and para-medical personnel provide services in a few urban areas (principally the university cities and some state capitals. Only 30% of the population live in urban areas.3. There has been great difficulty in correcting the urban-biased distribution of medical personnel in the country. This is evidenced by the migration of a large number of doctors from Lagos State when notices of transfer to rural areas were served on them in 1971.4 The problem of attracting high-level manpower to work in the rural areas is also serious in the teaching profession. There are many secondary schools in rural areas that do not have a single graduate teacher.5

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1. National Manpower Board, Nigeria's High-level Manpower 1963-1970, Manpower Studies No. 2, 1964, Table 5.
2. National Manpower Board, Survey of Manpower Shortages and Surpluses 1968-1969, p. 20.
3. Ibid.
4. Daily Times, September 11, 1971, p. 24.
5. Annual Abstract of Statistics, Nigeria, 1968, p. 158.

[illegible] are deployed to all the states of the federation. The distribution of participants is skewed in favour of the states with the greatest shortage of highly educated manpower. Due to lack of data on the distribution of graduates by state of origin, the student enrolment at the universities can be used to indicate the extent of regional disparities. In 1975/76, for instance, more than half of the university students (55%) were enrolled in institutions in the western and East-central states. These two states produce more than 55% of the graduate manpower for the country. Only 2% of the students were attending university in Rivers state. But 7% of the NYSC participants in 1975/76 (See Table 4.2) were assigned to this state. In contrast, only 17% of NYSC participants were assigned to the Western and East-Central states. The less developed states like Rivers, Kano and North-West (Sokoto and Niger States) would not have been able to attract university graduates were it not for the NYSC scheme. Thus, given the uneven supply of high-level manpower and the problem of inter-state immobility, the NYSC has distributed high-level manpower to states where there is the greatest need for graduates.

TABLE 4.4

Student Enrolment by State Compared to NYSC Deployment

1975/76

STATES	% of Total University Enrolment Undergraduates	% of Total NYSC Participants Deployed to the States
North - West	2.5	7.2
North - Central	3.3	9.5
Kano	2.3	7.4
North - East	4.1	7.6
Benue Plateau	4.6	7.7
Kwara	6.7	7.5
West	29.6	9.7
Mid-West	11.9	7.9
Lagos	2.0	13.9
East - Central	25.7	7.4
South - East	3.9	6.9
Rivers	1.7	7.3
* Non - Nigerians	1.7	-
Total	100.0	100.0

* Non-Nigerians are not obliged to serve in the NYSC scheme.

Source : Compiled from data from NUC and NYSC, Lagos

Some states offer corps members permanent appointments on completion of their service year. But few stay on. At the end of the 1975/76 service year, it was reported that only two non-indigene corps members took up career appointments in Ondo State, twelve in Kwara State, one in

Niger State, five in Borno State and twenty with the Sokoto Public Service. This represented less than 1% of the total number of participants for the year.1 In 1979/80, out of 984 corps members offered permanent employment, only 2% accepted the offer. In 1981/82 service year, Sokoto State offered to employ about 200 participants who served in state but only five took up appointments.2 Still, the scheme has been beneficial in providing skilled manpower on short term rather than on long term basis at little cost to the least developed states.

B. Promotion of Socio-economic Development

Most corps members, I have noted in the previous chapter, are deployed to teach especially in the educationally under-served rural areas. The scheme has been beneficial insofar as the implementation of the Universal Primary Education Programme is concerned. The Universal Primary Education scheme popularly known as "UPE," was launched in September 1976 throughout the country. The importance of the scheme, was explicitly stated in the Third National Development Plan, 1975-1980; "UPE is a pre-requisite for equalisation of opportunities for education across the country in all its facets."3 In 1973, before the scheme was launched, there were nearly 5 million primary pupils in the schools. Three years later (1976), there were 8.3 million, an increase of 66%.4 In 1977

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1. Compiled from NYSC Annual Reports.
2. Ibid.
3. Third National Development Plan : (Lagos Government Printers, 1975), p. 246.
4. Information from Federal Ministry of Education, Lagos.

enrolment rose to 9.5 million and by 1981 it had reached 15.6 million.1 The rate of expansion was much greater than envisaged particularly in the educationally backward states. In Kano State, for example, enrolments jumped from 160,340 in 1975/76 to 341,806 the following year.2 Such expansion has been facilitated by the assignment of NYSC participants to teaching positions.

The Youth Corps has also made an important contribution to the Legal Aid Scheme. Established in 1977, the Legal Aid Scheme is aimed at providing professional legal aid to poor Nigerians who cannot afford the cost of securing the services of lawyers to defend them. And Youth Corps doctors have contributed greatly to health care delivery especially in the rural areas of the country. With the mobilization of health personnel - doctors, pharmacists, nurses, and laboratory technologists - the rural areas of the country have witnessed significant improvement in health care delivery.3

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Tijanni, A. and Williams, D. (ed.), Shehu Shagari My Vision of Nigeria, Frank Cass, London, England, 1981, p. 255.

TABLE 4.3

Community Development Programme Projects 1980/81

Type of Projects	1980/81 No.	%
Road construction and improvements	338	52.7
Schools	126	19.6
Health Centres	53	8.2
Other public facilities	125	19.5
Total	642	100.0

Source: Compiled from NYSC state reports on community development 1980/81

Through the Community Development projects, Corps members are involved in activities such as the construction of roads, bridges, drainages, schools, market stalls, health and maternity centres. During the 1976/77 service year for example, 285 projects were undertaken by the 5,944 participants.1 Road construction was carried out in sixteen of the nineteen states. Closely linked with road projects is the construction of bridges and culverts. As shown in Table 4.3, more than half (53%) of the activities involved road construction. Provision of health services and other public facilities accounted for the remainder.

The two main objectives of the community development are to instil in corps members the dignity of manual labour

1. Compiled from NYSC Annual Reports.

and to endear participants to their host community by requiring them to contribute to local development. Governor Clement Isong of Cross River State, commenting on the community development, noted that such activities were made a vital aspect of the scheme because it was realized that not all members of the community would derive direct benefits from the primary assignment of the corps members whereas they would surely benefit from the roads, bridges and market stalls which the corps members usually help to construct.1

In 1979 in a similar vein, the Kwara State Military Administrator, Colonel Sunday Ifere, commended participants in the state for their community development projects. The corp members built a postal agency and a maternity centre. The views of the participants I interviewed concerning community development activities, varied enormously. Some (15, 18%) were very critical when asked whether the objective of the Community Development was achieved. Most (48%) took pride in having made a tangible contribution to development in rural areas. One participant who served in Kwara State in 1979, noted with a sense of achievement that, "We built a bridge at Abayawo, a village near Ilorin and this has brought the people of Abayawo closer to Ilorin...I'm proud of the fact that I am able to contribute to the development of my country." But another who served in Rivers State during the same year said: "The objective of

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1. Daily Times, Lagos, April 16, 1983.

the community development was not achieved by our group. The money spent...would have been better utilized if experts were given the work to handle." He added that what he "liked about the community development was the social interaction between the local community and corps members."

The major criticisms of this phase of the scheme are centred on inadequate planning and supervision, bad timing and lack of publicity. In some cases the preliminary arrangements are inadequate. Materials like blocks, cement, gravels and tools are not often provided in time and where these are available, they are often inadequate.

University graduates are perceived as incumbents of elite positions in the society and might not until the establishment of the NYSC scheme, have engaged in such work as building roads and bridges. By and large, the scheme has been an effective way of taking the educated elites to the rural areas and instilling in them a sense of humility as well as the notion that privilege carries with it important social responsibility.

Operational Difficulties

The NYSC scheme is plagued with a host of problems, one of these is the acute shortage of funds to run the scheme coupled with the inability to cope with the increasing number of foreign and local graduates being called up for service. The NYSC has since its inception ten years ago,

maintained a relatively static organisational structure, such that the staff allocated to it are no longer adequate for current demands. In early years of the scheme, the Directorate had to rely on the assistance of the State governments for posting staff to the state secretariats. In order to minimize this problem, fifteen inspectors were appointed in 1977. There are nineteen chief inspectors and twenty-four established vacancies, and twenty-seven senior inspectors with thirty-six sanctioned.1 The staff shortage at the Inspectorate level has militated against effective supervision. A corps member who served in Bendel State during the 1978/79 service year remarked in this connection that:

> We were not visited by the NYSC officials. The directorate just relied on the assessment reports of our employers. I feel the state secretariat should at least visit all institutions where corps members are serving to have a more acurate assessment of the scheme.

Shortage of support staff has also been one of the problems facing the scheme. An examination of the senior staff situation reveals that there is an acute shortage of administrative staff which makes it difficult for the scheme to cater effectively for the needs of the increasing number

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1. Compiled from statistics on the establishment, NYSC Directorate Headquarters, Lagos. May 1983.

of corps members, or to make plans for expansion in any form.

In the previous chapter, the major activities of the scheme were described, namely the Orientation Course and the Primary Assignment. The purpose of the Orientation course is twofold: to introduce the corps members to the objectives of the scheme; and, to inculcate self-discipline and self-reliance in the participants. Participants I interviewed held a generally positive (80%) view of the Orientation course. But almost two-thirds (62%) would like the Orientation course to be better organised and to include more military training. Thirteen per cent (11) felt the whole scheme should be more military in nature so that the country will not need to maintain such a large standing army. "To make the service produce more and better disciplined youths," one participant suggested, "some weapon training should be included so that if the need ever arises, the country can mobilise all the youths."

Local languages are taught during the six weeks orientation programme. Knowledge of other languages fosters geographical mobility and also enhances the effectiveness of participants, especially those teaching in primary schools. The north is more linguistically homogeneous than the south in the sense that Hausa has become the lingua franca. It is spoken either as a first or second language. In the south several languages are widely spoken; Yoruba in Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Oyo and Kwara States; Igbo is spoken in Anambra, Imo,

parts of Bendel and Rivers States, and Edo and Efik in Bendel and Cross River States, respectively. However, the language training which participants receive is brief (six weeks) and many (33, 40%) felt that it was insufficient.

The Primary Assignment accounts for the greatest part of the service year. Participants are deployed to work all over the country and in all sectors of the economy. The main issue in respect of the Primary Assignment is the degree of utilization of the training and skills of participants. Of the professionally trained graduates participating in the scheme, only the teachers and medical personnel are routinely assigned to jobs that require use of their skills. Another problem is the negative attitude of some employers towards the corps participants. Some participants find themselves in situations where they are not given a freehand to accomplish their assignments. Mr. Cla, an accountant, was assigned to an office where his training was needed, but he felt that he constituted a threat to the other employees because of his competence. The situation in the office was so bad that he had to ask for redeployment. Many employers do not understand the concept and philosophy of the scheme nor the expectations of the corps members. Corps members are often called government labourers, students, unarmed soldiers and 'olopa Jakande' (Governor's policemen).1 Special efforts have not been made to educate the public about the objectives of the scheme leading to frequent

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1. Lateef Jakande is the first civilian governor of Lagos State. Youth corpers are called 'Jakande policemen' because they are serving the state.

misunderstandings.

Political Acceptance

Despite its shortcomings, the NYSC has enjoyed the support of three successive governments since its inception. It survived the rigours of military rule and the present period of financial exigency. As a recent editorial which appeared in the New Nigeria pointed out that the scheme is "an institution not only for forging national unity but also a means of redistributing cheap and qualified manpower." 1 The states are able to get skilled manpower which they would not have been able to attract. However, the Unity Party of Nigeria leader, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, in a campaign speech in the 1979 general election said that if he won the election he would phase out university graduates from the scheme and replace them with secondary school leavers who would serve near their homes. But the views of Chief Bisi Akande, the Oyo State Deputy Governor, are more typical of the present political leadership. He called on the National Assembly to look into the law establishing the scheme and amend it to allow secondary school leavers to serve in the scheme. He said there was need to change the structure and organisation of the Service to emphasize military training. Akande observed that if secondary school leavers were trained in the art of soldiering, Nigeria would no longer need to maintain a large standing army as people could be mobilised at any time to fight an external aggression

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1. New Nigerian, Kaduna, July 23, 1980.

or incursion.[1] President Shehu Shagari described the scheme as "one of the greatest and most beneficial achievements of the Federal Government." He added that the scheme "is an important vehicle for uniting the people of the country and of tremendous assistance in solving the problem of lack of trained manpower in the rural and less developed areas of the country."[2]

The idea of introducing military training into the scheme is now being given official consideration. According to the Director of the NYSC, Colonel F. K. Obasa, "minor weapon training may be introduced into the scheme. This will enrich the corps members' orientation activities and make the scheme more meaningful and discipline-oriented."[3] The NYSC Directorate is considering expanding the scheme in other ways. For example, instead of sending agriculture graduates to teach as is the case now, the NYSC is thinking of starting farms where agriculturalists will be more meaningfully deployed.[4]

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1. Daily Sketch, April 15, 1983.
2. President Shagari, National and State Honours Award Ceremony, Dec. 8, 1981.
3. Sunday Times, October 17, 1982.
4. Ibid.

Summary

The NYSC scheme has contributed to a more even distribution of high-level manpower in the country. It has also enhanced rural development by making skilled manpower available through the community development projects undertaken by the participants and through the deployment of teachers and doctors.

The scheme's contribution to remediating disparities in the distribution of graduates is readily visible but the impact on attitudes or national integration is more difficult to assess. However, there is some evidence that the scheme has contributed to feelings of national unity among youths. The exposure to other parts of the country, to the culture and traditions of other ethnic groups has helped to promote better understanding.

The NYSC has been described as one of the boldest plans of the military administration towards the realisation of unity of the country.1. When the scheme was started, it generated negative reaction from student groups. Students were suspicious of the Military Government's intentions and felt the scheme was punitive. To date, the scheme has generated positive reaction from participants.

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1. Nigeria Tide, April 25, 1983.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The National Youth Service Corps was created to promote a more even distribution of graduates throughout the country, foster national integration and instil humility and social responsibility in university graduates. By and large the scheme has been successful in achieving its objectives from the responses of participants and in the assessment of leading politicians as I have shown in previous chapters.

The scheme was established in 1973 as part of the Federal Military Government's efforts of reconstruction and reconciliation after the civil war. Since the colonial period the southern part of the country which had earlier contact with Christian missionaries had more exposure to western schooling than the north. As a result, the southern region had a concentration of educated and skilled manpower. The post-independence era has been characterised by ethnic rivalries and mutual distrust which has its roots in the uneven pace of educational and economic development under colonialism.

Notwithstanding the establishment of universities in each state of the federation, many of the inland states have serious shortages of skilled manpower. The National Youth Service Corps scheme has redistributed high-level manpower at least on a temporary basis and made a profound

contribution to the less developed states, especially in such areas as primary and secondary education and health care. In addition, it has encouraged better understanding of other ethnic groups among participants in the scheme.

Nigerian university students, like their counterparts in other African countries, constitute a privileged class. They have participated in several protests and demonstrations on issues ranging from student concerns to national policy. Their protests have brought them into conflict with the government and prompted the introduction of national service initially on a voluntary basis. A year after the serious student unrest of April 1978, the government decided to make participation of graduates in the National Youth Service Corps obligatory.

Graduates are deployed to rural areas to provide services for the less privileged segments of the population. Initially, university students opposed what they perceived to be the punitive features of the scheme. This study as well as Dr. Ojo's Evaluation Survey of 1977 have shown that the service now receives widespread acceptance. This may be, in part, attributable to the fact that the scheme provides graduates with job experience and employment opportunities at a time when graduate unemployment is increasing.

The service has also been endorsed by many political leaders who perhaps see it not only as a way of ameliorating

student unrest, but also as a means of pacifying the military. The military has now been brought into close relationship with the educated class through their direct responsibility for the administration of the NYSC programme. The national Directors of the Service since inception have been military officers and two of the past four national chairmen were military officers. Although the structure, administration and staff of the NYSC are civilian, the scheme has always had a military orientation and this may become more pronounced with the introduction of weapons training.

Proposals to further military training in the scheme will meet the approval of both students and politicians and this may have a stabilizing effect on civilian rule in the country. University graduates who pass through the scheme see themselves as civilians and not soldiers. But more highly educated youths may be drawn into the Armed Forces thus promoting more professionalism within the military. Ultimately, this may make the military more reticent to intervene in elected civilian government. It is perhaps no accident, in that the two other African countries which have compulsory, para-military youth services, Tanzania and Zambia, have the longest tradition of stable civilian government.

APPENDIX I

NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE CORPS (AMENDMENT) (No. 2) DECREE 1979

Decree No. 42

[8th May 1979] Commencement.

THE FEDERAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT hereby decrees as fc :–

1.–(1) The National Youth Service Corps Decree 1973 (as amended by the National Youth Service Corps (Amendment) Decree 1979) is hereby amended as follows :– Amendment of National Youth Service Corps Decree 1973. 1973 No. 24.

(a) in subsection (2) of section 2 thereof for the words "January 1977", there shall be substituted the words "1st July 1977" ;

(b) for subsections (2) and (3) of section 3 thereof, there shall be substituted the following new subsections–

"(2) The Directorate shall comprise the following members, that is–

(a) a Chairman ;

(b) five persons to represent the universities in Nigeria in rotation, so however that no two of them shall come from one university at the same time ;

(c) one member of the armed forces of Nigeria

(d) one member of the Nigeria Police Force ;

(e) a representative of the Nigerian Employers' Consultative Association ;

(f) the Director appointed under section 5 of this Decree;

(g) one representative of the Cabinet Office ;

(h) one representative of the Federal Ministry of Education ;

(i) one representative of the Federal Ministry of Labour, Youth and Sports ;

(j) two representatives each of the following, that is to say–

(i) polytechnics or equivalent institutions,

(ii) advanced teacher training colleges ; and

(k) three other persons, at least one of whom shall be a woman.

(3) The Chairman and members of the Directorate shall be appointed by Head of the Federal Military Government.

(4) A member of the Directorate who is not a public officer shall hold office for a term of three years from the date of his appointment and shall be eligible for re-appointment for one further term only."

Citation and commencement.

2. This Decree may be cited as the National Youth Service Corps (Amendment) (No. 2) Decree 1979 and shall be deemed to have come into force on 8th May 1979.

MADE at Lagos this 3rd day of August 1979.

GENERAL O. OBASANJO,
Head of the Federal Military Government,
Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces,
Federal Republic of Nigeria

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note does not form part of the above Decree but is intended to explain its purpose)

The Decree further amends the National Youth Service Corps Decree 1973 to make it clear that the removal of the age requirement for compulsory service in the Youth Corps was effective from 1st July 1977 and not January 1977.

APPENDIX II

Questionnaire Results (Summary)

Respondents' Characteristics	No.	%
1. AGE		
20-29 years	56	68.3
30-39 years	23	28.0
Over 40 years	3	3.7
	82	100.0
2. SEX		
Male	55	67.0
Female	27	33.0
	82	100.0
3. STATE OF ORIGIN		
Anambra	4	4.9
Bendel	7	8.5
Cross River	3	3.7
Imo	3	3.7
Kwara	8	9.8
Lagos	5	6.1
Ogun	21	25.6
Ondo	15	18.3
Oyo	14	17.0
Plateau	1	1.2
Rivers	1	1.2
	82	100.0
4. STATE OF DEPLOYMENT		
Anambra	5	6.1
Bendel	6	7.3
Borno	3	3.7
Cross River	6	7.3
Imo	1	1.2
Kaduna	1	1.2
Kano	1	1.2
Kwara	5	6.1
Lagos	24	29.3
Niger	1	1.2
Ondo	5	6.1
Oyo	8	9.8
Plateau	4	4.9
Rivers	7	8.5
Sokoto	5	6.1
	82	100.0

5. FIELD OF TRAINING

Teachers	27	33.0
Doctors	9	10.9
Accountants	7	8.5
Engineers	6	7.3
Lawyers	8	9.8
Others (Arts & Science graduates)	25	30.5
	82	100.0

6. FIELD OF DEPLOYMENT

Teaching	44	53.7
Health Centres	9	10.9
Ministries	13	15.9
Accountancy (including Banks)	10	12.2
Private Sector (Firm)	1	1.2
Parastatal Corporations	5	6.1
	82	100.0

7. Did you visit your state of deployment prior to assignments there?

YES	16	20
NO	66	80
	82	100

8. Does the NYSC promote national integration?

YES	75	91.5
NO	7	8.5
	82	100.0

9. Has experience contributed to better knowledge/ understanding of the problems of rural development?

YES	71	86.5
NO	8	9.8
CAN'T SAY	3	3.7
	82	100.0

10. Has experience developed more positive attitudes towards other ethnic groups?

VERY POSITIVE	55	67.1
FAIRLY POSITIVE	19	23.1
NO DIFFERENCE	8	9.8
	82	100.0

11. Was your training utilized?

YES	75	91.5
NO	7	8.5
	82	100.0

12. Did you make friends during the service year?

YES	60	73.0
NO	22	27.0
	82	100.0

13. Have you maintained contact with friends since completion of service? (Yes to Q. 12 above)

VISITS	25	42.0
CORRESPONDENCE	24	39.0
NO CONTACT	11	19.0
	60	100.0

14. Did you consider the language training received during the orientation period useful during the service year?

USEFUL	52	60
INSUFFICIENT	30	40
	82	100

15. Was the organisation of the orientation course adequate?

ADEQUATE	31	38
SHOULD BE REORGANISED	51	62
	82	100

16. Were the objectives of the community development programme achieved?

YES	39	48
PARTIALLY	28	34
NO	15	18
	82	100

17. Are you now more willing to work in a state other than your state of origin?

MORE WILLING	67	82
CAN'T SAY	15	18
	82	100

18. Should the NYSC scheme be continued?

YES	76	92.7
NO	-	-
INDIFFERENT	6	7.3
	82	100.0

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