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Youth Policy Development in Ghana: A Study on the Implementation Successes and Challenges of the Youth Employment Agency

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Abstract

Contemporary governments globally seek meaningful politico-social and economic intervention policies that would ensure the progress of their countries. One of such key areas has been youth economic advancement due to threats posed by unemployment. In such efforts, the Government of Ghana introduced the National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP) which is implemented by the Youth Employment Agency. However, several studies and reports show that the program has not made much impact in addressing the situation. Adopting a descriptive research approach, this study was undertaken to examine the key factors that account for ineffective implementation of the NYEP by the Youth Employment Agency (YEA) in the Kumasi Metropolis. It sampled one hundred and thirty (130) participants from a target population of 648 through random and purposive sampling procedures. Regarding instrumentation, self-administered questionnaires and unstructured interviews were employed. Some positive impacts of the YEA in the implementation of the Programme were identified to include providing jobs, training, and experience to the Ghanaian youth. However, the Agency is prone to several challenges which are attributed to party politics, highly centralized administration system, corruption, and inadequate financial resource. It is recommended that effective measures such as adequate funding and effective decentralisation of power should be considered to manage the challenges that bedevil the implementation process.

KEYWORDS:

Youth, Unemployment, Policy, Implementation, Economic Development, YEA, Ghana

1 | INTRODUCTION

Gainful employment is a key indicator in human development index towards social advancement. It promotes quality of life and the ability to provide for one's necessities. An economically sound youth will also serve as a key component in the measurement of the wellbeing of the overall progress of a country since they are considered as the utmost cradle of hope and positivity for the future of a country (YES-Ghana, 2017). Besides, unemployment among young people is inseparable from the general unemployment situation in a particular state (O'Higgins, 2001; DuToit, 2003). Hence, the need to ensure sound economic

development among youth groups, which includes gainful employment, thus unfolds as an important public economic and policy issue and a matter of apprehension to all stakeholders.

The working definition for youth in this paper takes the line of the National Youth Policy of Ghana (2010), that is, young people aged from fifteen to thirty-five years comprising the literate, illiterate, able and or disabled. However, persons below 18 years are not legally employable. Therefore, all persons without jobs but available for and seeking jobs within the age bracket of 18 years and 35 years are considered unemployed youth in this regard. As an alternative to this definition, the African Development Bank (AfDB) (2012) proposes 'NEET', which computes all persons who are "Not in Employment, Education, or Training" as a proportion of the total youth population.

Youth unemployment remains a global dilemma though the intensity differs among countries (O'Higgins, 2001). Joblessness among the youth surpasses the situation among adults in all countries globally due to the adequate on-the-job training and experience gained by the older workforce than the younger ones (McConnell, 2009), of which Ghana is no exception. The Ghana National Housing and Population census conducted in 2021, showed that the youth of the country represent a considerable section of its population, with 56 percent of the population under the age of 25, and about 35 percent between ages 15 and 35. Joblessness has remained a canker among the youth, putting a large section of them in abject poverty, income inequality, low standard and high cost of living (Gyampo, 2012). Joblessness among the youth of Ghana rose from 14.8 percent in 1992 to 16.4 percent in 2000 and reached approximately 29 percent in 2009 (Gyampo, 2012; ISSER, 2010). In 2015, youth unemployment in the country stood at 15.9 percent (Adzah, 2015) and at 8.72 percent in 2020 (ILO, 2020).

The alarming rate of youth unemployment has led to the adoption of several legislative and policy frameworks, including the National Youth Employment Program (NYEP) to promote youth economic advancement. Despite the positive impacts of the NYEP in reducing youth unemployment, the program has not yielded the desired results as evidenced in the existing literature (Gyampo, 2012; Sakyiwaa, 2019). Lack of coordination through limited interaction with key stakeholders preferably the private sector coupled with the non-availability of data on matters of the youth has woefully led to the failure of youth employment programs in Ghana (Dadzie et al., 2020). Consequently, the need for a rounded and sustainable youth employment policies and programs to enable the youth to be gainfully employed and secure their future, and as well forestall the negative implications of youth unemployment on peace, stability, and democratic dispensation in the country, has necessitated several empirical studies. For instance, Jones and Chants (2008) highlighted considerable evidence of gender equality and poverty reduction among urban youth in Ghana; Gyampo (2012) unveiled the degree of youth participation in youth programs formulation in Ghana; Baffour-Awuah (2011) studied the effectiveness of Ghana's targeted actions to promote youth employment. None of these studies point out the major causal factors responsible for such challenges regarding youth economic development policies. This study was therefore necessitated by the need to provide new empirical evidence for Ghana, by integrating the broader literature in examining the main factors responsible for the implementation challenges of youth economic programs, with reference to the Youth Employment Agency (YEA) in the Kumasi Metropolis.

2 | THEORETICAL CONSIDERATION

Governments worldwide, through their institutions, are pivotal in successful policy implementation. Effective policies and programs arrangement is desirable between national and local levels, and for implementation to be successful, 'policy has to travel via institutions' (McConnell, 2009) which may be hierarchically or horizontally arranged. In this review, the researcher assessed the government of Ghana concerning its efforts to effectively translate policies and programs into action regarding the youth and employment. To achieve this, the program (YEA) is analyzed using the Top-down and Bottom-up theories which are the main approaches to the study of implementation. That is, by top-down analysis, a policy is evaluated on how it is translated into action from the theoretical stage to the execution stage by central decision makers. The bottom-up analysis looks at how a policy is implemented through cooperation practices within networks of implementers (Pulzl and Treib, 2006:89).

2.1 | Top-Down Theories

According to the 'top-downers', including Pressman and Wildavsky (1973), Van Meter and Van Horn (1975), and Sabatier and Mazmanian (1979; 1980; & 1983), policy implementation is assumed to start with central government representatives' decisions. Top-down theories were based on "black box model" of the policy process stimulated by systems analysis (interpreting policies as input factors and implementation as output factors) (Parsons 1995; 463). The top-downers tend to disregard the influence of

policy implementers on policy delivery and emphasize an undeviating causal link between policies and perceived outcomes (de Leon, 2001:2).

Pressman and Wildavsky's work particularly tailored a 'rational model' approach. Their assumption was that policy purposes are set out by central policy makers. Hence, implementation study was to focus on examining the difficulties in achieving the policy objectives. Thus, the scholars considered implementation as an "interaction between the setting of goals and actions geared to achieve them" (1973, xv cited in Pulzl and Treib, 2006). As such, they recommended creation of enough administrative procedures for the realization of accurate execution of formulated policies. In that regard, the agencies responsible for implementation should be well endowed with resources and responsibilities should be clearly defined hierarchically to ensure effective supervision of the decisions and activities of the implementing agencies (Pulzl and Treib, 2006; 91).

Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) presented a more elaborate theoretical model, toeing the line of Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) at the initial stage. The scholars were preoccupied with the quest to know whether the outcomes of implementation corresponded to objects outlined in initial policy decisions. Van Meter and Van Horn's model encompassed six variables that influence the connection between course of action (plan) and presentation (performance), of which many of them concerned structural capacities and ordered control (Pulzl and Treib, 2006). The scholars however, deviated slightly from the "mainstream" of the top-down approach. That, the degree of a change in a course of action has a direct ripple effect on the possibility of successful implementation and the extent of goal congruence was relevant. In so respect, considerable change in policy was only likely if goal incongruence was low among the actors (ibid, 92).

In the work of Sabatier and Mazmanian (1979), policy decisions made by central government representatives were the foundation of their analysis. Their assumption was equally a clear separation of policy development from policy application as did Van Meter and Van Horn (1975). The model used by the scholars in their analysis outlines 6 principles or approaches for successful implementation, namely, clear and consistent policy objectives; a policy or program grounded on a valid fundamental or causal theory; adequate structuring of the implementation process; high commitment to policy or program's goals by implementers; adequate support from interest groups and sovereigns (executive and legislative) as well as absence of negative changes in the social and economic framework conditions (see Pulzl and Treib, 2006:2). Though Sabatier and Mazmanian (1979: 489-92, 503-4) agree that an impeccable hierarchical regulation of the implementation process is difficult to be realized in practice and that critical situations could result in implementation failure. They argue that policy makers could see to successful implementation on the basis of satisfactory policy design and an ingenious structuration of the implementation course (Pulzl and Treib, 2006).

2.2 | Bottom-Up Theories of Implementation

Another school of thought emerged in the latter part of the 1970s and the start of the 1980s that rejected the top-downers' notion that implementers of policies are expected to strictly baton to policy objectives as set and defined by the central policy makers. These scholars rather generally took the direct opposite of the views of the top-downers. This school of thought is referred to as the 'bottom-uppers'. Notable scholars among them included Lipsky (1971, 1980); Elmore (1980) and Hjern (1982), among others.

The results of studies by these scholars indicate that outcomes of a policy execution did not at all times sufficiently relate to original policy objectives rendering the assumptions of the top-downers questionable. To the bottom-uppers, what essentially materializes at the recipient level and the factors that come into play in influencing actions on the ground are key in determining the effectiveness of policy implementation (Pulzl and Treib 2006). Thus, the bottom-up theorists acknowledge the systems of actors intricate in actual policy delivery. They emphasized that discretions exercised by policy implementers (local bureaucrats) were seen as key factors in effective implementation more than central government representatives in charge of policy making, as the former were considered to be much closer to the real problems than the latter.

Lipsky (1971, 1980) examined the behavior of workers in the public service, including social workers, teachers, medical doctors, and police officers, among others. These actors, Lipsky refers to as the "street-level bureaucrats". He emphasizes the need for policy analysts to look at the undeviating connections and relations amid social workers and citizens. That, these "street-level bureaucrats" wield power that extends beyond the control of citizens' behavior, and that they more so have 'considerable autonomy' from their employers (Lipsky, 1971). And this autonomous power is noted by Hudson (1989) to be derived from the discretion that they exercise in implementation. In sum, Lipsky's works are relevant to understanding determinants of effective implementation as it justifies the need to consider hierarchical chain of command that influence implementation process. It rejects the sole focus on well-defined policy objectives as guarantee for successful implementation, as advocated by the top-downers.

Elmore (1980) in his concept of “backward mapping” equally advocated that an examination of implementation should begin with a particular policy problem and analysis of local agencies’ approaches in finding solutions to such problem (Pulzl and Treib, 2006:93).

Hjern, in association with Porter and Hull, advanced an experimental network approach in the scholarship of the implementation process (Hjern and Hull, 1982; Hjern and Porter, 1981; cited in Pulzl and Treib, 2006). The scholars suggested that an analysis of the implementation process should begin with the identification of systems of actors (multi-actor and inter-organizational characters) from all appropriate agencies working in partnership in policy delivery and moreover scrutinize the approaches such actors attempt solving their problems. In their observation, it was necessary for researchers to recognize the multi-actor and inter-organizational character of policy delivery (ibid). This methodology has been acknowledged by Sabatier (1986a) as a relevant tool for describing implementation structures.

In the work of Sabatier (1986a), this methodology suggests a useful tool to explain the “implementation structures” within which policy delivery occurs. Nonetheless, Sabatier (1986a) also criticizes the inadequacy of causal propositions as regards the connection between legal and economic factors and individual behavior.

From the foregoing discussions, it is clear that there exists a wide range of disparities between the two schools of thought in the approaches to implementation process. They discern in contending research approaches, opposing objectives of analysis, contrasting models of the policy process, varying considerations of the implementation process, and differing models of democracy (Pulzl and Treib, 2006:93). That is, top-down theory advocates start their analysis from a clear policy decision made at the “top” of the political system (central government representatives) and work their way “down” to the implementers. This is because they assume that ultimate political power is vested in central policy makers who are responsible for outlining objectives of a program and have the ability of hierarchically controlling the execution process to realize the set objectives. The bottom-up theorists (fusionists) concentrate on the “identification of actors involved in concrete policy delivery at the “bottom” of the politico-administrative system. Analysis then moves “upwards” and “sideways” in order to identify the networks of implementing actors and their problem-solving strategies” (ibid, 94). Both schools of thought attempt at emerging an effective mechanism for ensuring successful implementation.

Despite the discerning approaches of the two schools of thought, each approach influences effective implementation process positively. The top-down (stagists) and the bottom-up (fusionists) theories may therefore be used in this study to interpret possible causes of the successes and failures of a policy in its implementation, with indicators pointing at clear objectives of policy put forward by central policy makers; establishment of adequate bureaucratic procedures to ensure that policies are executed as accurately as possible; sufficient resources at the disposal of implementing agencies; a system of clear responsibilities; adequate program design; and support by interest groups and sovereigns, etc., as put forward by the top-downers. Other indicators may include acknowledging the influence of networks of actors (multi-actors and inter-organizational characters from all relevant agencies) involved in the actual policy delivery and analysis of their approaches in solving their local problems; as well as economic and legal factors, among others as the bottom-uppers including Lipsky (1971, 1980), etc. propound.

3 | RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Using a descriptive research design, this study sought to examine the key factors that account for ineffective implementation of the Youth Employment Agency (YEA). It presents findings from a total one hundred and seventeen (117) retrieved sample of participants instead of the initial one hundred and thirty (130) sample size in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana. For the purpose of the study, all the four sub-metros of Kumasi Metropolis including Subin, Bantama, Nhyiaeso and Manhyia and the Regional and Metropolitan directorates were selected.

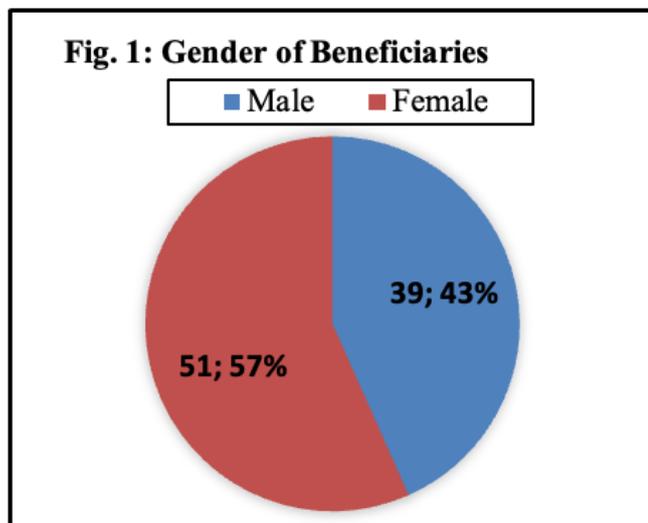
The target population for the study comprised the beneficiaries and staff of the YEA in the Metropolis. This enabled the researcher to access information from individuals who were familiar with issues as regards the subject matter under study. The target population for the study was six hundred and forty-eight (648), comprising 600 beneficiaries and 48 staff members. The study involved a sample size of one hundred and thirty (130) selected from the population of 648 for the collection of data. It included one hundred (100) young people (beneficiaries) selected from the four sub-metros, and thirty (30) staff members including five (5) members from the Regional Directorate and five (5) from each Directorate in the Metropolis including the Main Office. Sampling 130 out of 648 which is about 20% was reasonable enough for the researcher to achieve the purpose of the study, as evidenced in the work of Awad and Hussain, (2021) on the inequality of opportunity and youth employment in six Sub-Saharan countries.

The study required questionnaire and interview as instruments for the collection of data. Two (2) sets of questionnaires were designed for the collection of data. One set was used to elicit the opinions of the general staff of the YEA, and the other set was used together with unstructured interview to collect data from the employed youth (beneficiaries) of the program. The unstructured interview was conducted on respondents who could not be engaged in the self-administered questionnaire during the data collection process because they could not read and write well in the English Language.

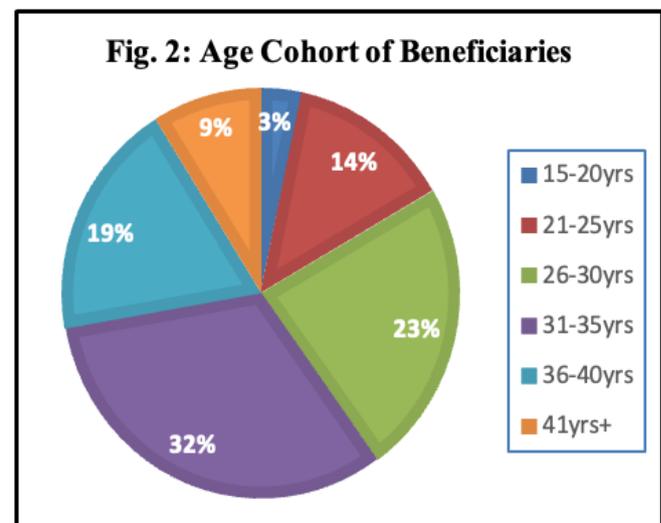
4 | DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This paper sought to examine the causal factors responsible for the implementation inadequacies of the Youth Employment Agency in the Kumasi Metropolis. The discussion is involved with the staff of the YEA who were mainly regional and metro-/municipal Administrative Secretaries, Monitoring and Evaluation Officers, Research Officers and the sampled beneficiaries. It must be noted that the discussion is based on a retrieved sample of 117 (90 beneficiaries and 27 staff of the YEA) instead of the original sample size of 130.

Figs 1 and 2 represent the gender and age cohorts of the sampled beneficiaries of the YEA in the Kumasi Metropolis. The research study unveiled that there are more female beneficiaries than there are males in the study area. Again, most of the beneficiaries were found to be within the age cohort of the youth as defined by the Agency because 72% had ages ranging from 18years to 35years, whereas the remaining 28% minority had ages above 35years. Study outcomes reveal that although the program was adopted to address youth economic challenges, some beneficiaries fall outside the age bracket of the youth because a significant 28% of the respondents are above the age limit. This questions the legality of such acts of the Authorities of the Agency in engaging persons outside the age bracket of the youth.



Source: Field Survey, 2019



Source: Field Survey, 2019

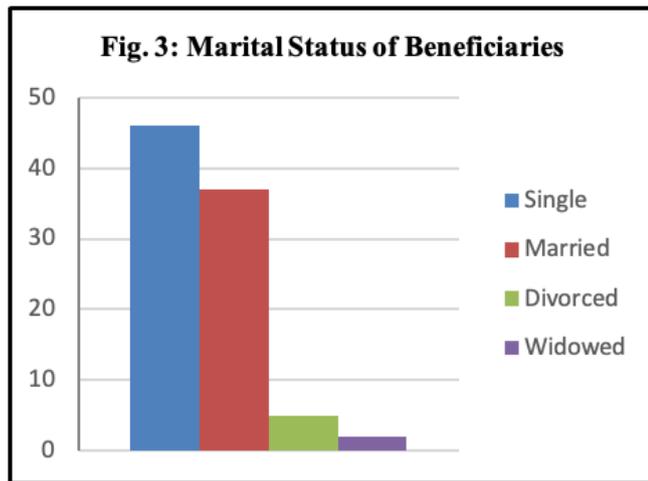
Again, the youth in the Kumasi Metropolis on the YEA program are largely semi-skilled who dwell on the modules for the needed skills for the job market. Most of them have qualifications lower than diploma. This was found to buttress the work of Mphela when he asserts that one of the determinants of unemployment is educational level of the individual. He opines that the chances of employability of an individual generally increases with academic qualification than otherwise (2012:22). Table 1 indicates this.

To determine the intensity of the economic challenges faced by the unemployed youth, the study sought for the marital status and number of dependents of the youth in the Metropolis for comparison since some of the beneficiaries are breadwinners. The outcome of the study was that although most of the beneficiaries were not married, the YEA supports the livelihood of most families in the country through the program since the average number of dependents was 3, indicating a high dependency ratio among the beneficiaries. This is shown by Fig 3 and Fig. 4 respectively.

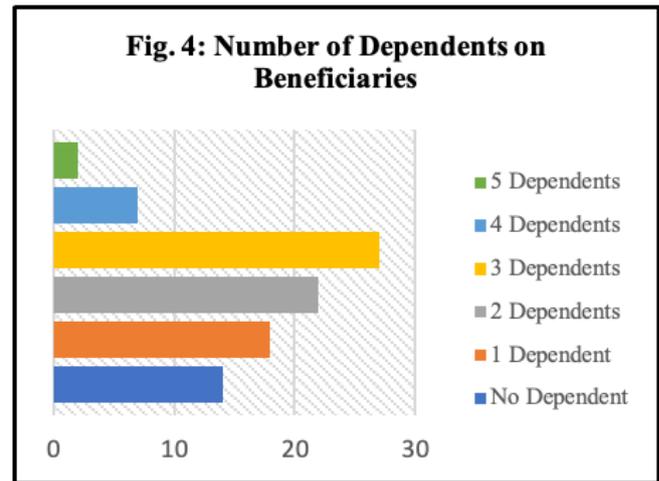
Table 1 Level of Education of Beneficiaries

Response	Frequency	Percentage
MSLC/Basic	19	21
WASSCE/SSCE	45	50
VOC/TECH	21	23
Diploma	5	6
HND	0	0
First Degree	0	0
Total	90	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019



Source: Field Survey, 2019



Source: Field Survey, 2019

4.1 | Implementation of the YEA

Table 2 and Table 3 indicate the effectiveness of the implementation of the YEA as unveiled by the study, using the outlined premises as indicators.

In respect of the indicators sought, the study found out that the guidelines governing the implementation of the program are strictly adhered to by the implementers thereby avoiding wide variations in the implementations of the various modules across the country. However, the staff sometimes exercise some discretion where the need be in the implementation process. The legality of such actions was pursued and it was disclosed that the YEA policy document, which guides its operation, gives room for the exercise of some discretion by the implementers to suit the locality. That notwithstanding, prior approval is sought from the immediate authority before any local decision can be implemented in order to ensure that implementers do not skew from the regulations in the guidelines extremely and to ensure maximum conformity. These implementation practices were found to support the top-down approach to policy implementation, such as Pressman and Wildavsky, (1973) and Van Meter and Van Horn, (1975) whereby central policymakers ensure strict adherence to policy implementation process in order to avoid goal incongruence.

The total number of beneficiaries since the inception of the NYEP and their gender ratio could not be determined by the staff in the Kumasi Metropolis. As such, the presumption was that there is no proper keeping of records, especially about the enrolment of youth on the NYEP. The study however could determine the gender ratio of the current beneficiaries from the demographic characteristics sought as shown by Fig. 1

Furthermore, the age of beneficiaries could be determined through various means. The principal way to confirm the ages of beneficiaries was voter ID card. Other ways included passport, academic certificate and birth certificates. Concerning how beneficiaries are retired from the program, the outcome was that the program is ran on two-year contract basis and beneficiaries

Table 2 Summary of the Responses the YEA Staff about Its Operation

Premise	Response & Frequency				Percentage (%)			
	Yes	No	N/A	Total	Yes	No	N/A	Total
Implementers strictly follow guidelines for implementation	27	0	0	27	100	0	0	100
Implementers exercise some discretion in the implementation process	24	0	3	27	89	0	11	100
The policy document gives room for the exercise of some discretion	24	0	3	27	89	0	11	100
Implementers seek approval in the exercise of such discretion	27	0	0	27	100	0	0	100
Payments of salaries and allowances are done regularly	16	11	0	27	59	41	0	100
All beneficiaries are within the age bracket of the youth	6	21	0	27	22	78	0	100
The Agency has mechanisms for monitoring beneficiaries	27	0	0	27	100	0	0	100
There is strict adherence to the timeframe for monitoring officials	27	0	0	27	100	0	0	100
Code of operation of the Agency allows double employment	0	22	5	27	0	81	19	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 3 Summary Beneficiaries' Responses on the YEA's Operation

Premise	Response & Frequency				Percentage (%)			
	Yes	No	N/A	Total	Yes	No	N/A	Total
Respondents have been engaged with the YEA before	90	0	0	90	100	0	0	100
Beneficiaries are engaged in other employments	27	63	0	90	30	70	0	100
Beneficiaries earn higher income from other employments than yea	9	18	0	90	33	67	0	100
Availability of monitoring mechanisms in check of beneficiaries	90	0	0	90	100	0	0	100
YEA provides social security for beneficiaries	90	0	0	90	100	0	0	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

can reapply. In that case, most of those who exceed the age limit do not apply again. Others also added that some of the beneficiaries who exceed the age but seek for reengagement are considered because of high rate of unemployment, which is not only an economic challenge but a security challenge as well. And that, most of the beneficiaries also have a lot of dependents on them. Hence, the situation compels the Agency to sometimes disregard the age ceiling and engage other people who may have the interest to be engaged on the program in the Metropolis. Herein lies some of the discretions that are exercised in the implementation process as revealed by a section of the respondents. This practice harmonizes with the views of the bottom-uppers such as Lipsky (1971; 1980), Elmore (1980) and Hjern (1982), that what actually happens on the recipient level and the factors that come into play in influencing actions on the ground are key in determining the effectiveness of policy implementation. That, discretions exercised by policy implementers were seen as a very important factor in effective implementation, since they (implementers) are considered to be much closer to the real problems than central government representatives.

Moreover, it was unveiled that the average monthly allowance paid to beneficiaries is four hundred Ghana Cedis (GH¢400.00), which was also confirmed by the beneficiaries, indicating an increase in the amount paid to the beneficiaries as monthly allowances in the year 2010. Despite knowing the monthly allowance paid to beneficiaries, the gross amount spent on beneficiaries could also not be determined by the Staff in the Kumasi Metropolis.

In respect of the beneficiaries' engagement with the YEA, the study unveiled that the popular modules of the NYEP currently are Community Sanitation, Community Service and Security, and Afforestation. The major reasons for joining the YEA were found to include unemployment (a means for livelihood) and work experience for the job market. It was also found that most

of the beneficiaries have worked for more than 3 years with the Agency, indicating the acquisition of some needed skills and experience for permanent employment. The researcher however realized that some of the modules, including education and health have become obsolete due to excess supply of qualified human resources in those sectors and the need for standards.

The study further revealed that aside the NYEP, a significant number of the beneficiaries have other private employments as a supplement to the income earned from YEA program. This was confirmed by both the staff and some of the beneficiaries. Some of the beneficiaries in the Kumasi Metropolis were found to even earn higher in the other employments than from YEA. It could therefore be inferred by the study that some beneficiaries show little commitment towards their engagement with the YEA because the allowances paid them monthly are woefully inadequate. However, such jobs are done outside the time on task of the YEA for fear of being suspended, allowance withheld or at worst, dismissed. This was expressed by the respondents who were so found to be doing other businesses, and was confirmed by the Monitoring and Evaluation officials. Besides, there was clear indication as unveiled by the study that the code of operation of the Agency does not allow the beneficiaries to engage in other employments concurrently. This was ensured to deter some recalcitrant beneficiaries from abusing the system.

4.2 | Monitoring

Monitoring of the implementation process in the Kumasi Metro was sought by the study. The findings of the study were that the Agency has mechanisms by which both staff and beneficiaries are monitored to ensure effective implementation of the program. These included the use of staff daily time-book, conduct of roll calls at some of the workplaces by their supervisors; signing of daily and monthly timesheets of staff attendance to work, and periodic validation and verification exercises to confirm the to check punctuality, timeliness proactivity of the staff and beneficiaries in the Metropolis. Besides, frequency of monitoring exercise was largely done on daily basis, although checks could also be done in the other periods throughout the year, and was effectively adhered to by the Monitoring and Evaluation Officers (see Fig. 5). This implies that effective checking and appraisal practices exist in the operation of the Youth Employment Agency in the Kumasi Metropolis.

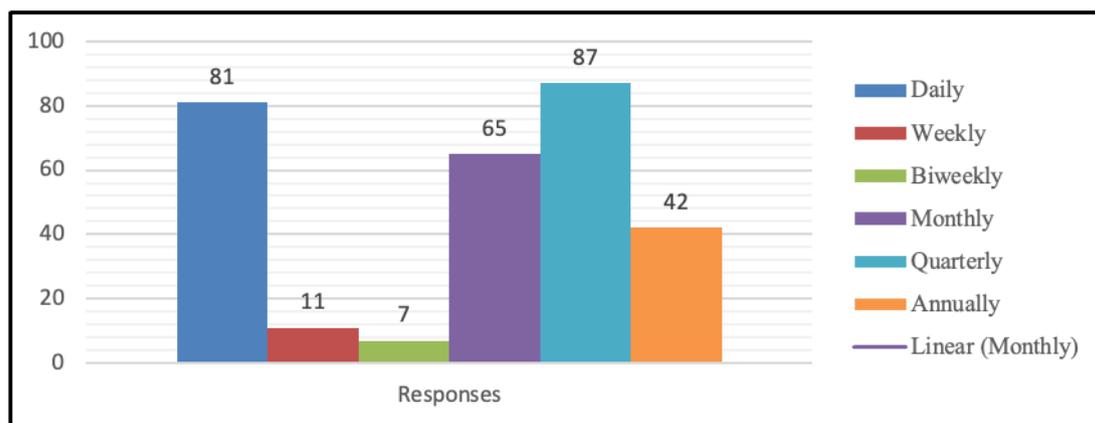


Fig. 5: Frequency of Monitoring of Beneficiaries. (Source: Field Survey, 2019)

4.3 | Evaluation of the NYEP

As regards the evaluation of the program, the study sought to measure how the NYEP has been beneficial to the youth of the Ashanti region in its inception and the challenges being faced in its implementation since the impacts of policies are determined at the goal level.

Positive Effects

Some of the positive impacts of the program in the region, though minimal, as disclosed by the study generally included reduction of unemployment among the Ghanaian populace, Gyampo (2012); contributing to the promotion of the various sectors of

economy through the modules; providing beneficiaries with the needed skills and experience for the job markets and improvement in the livelihood of the beneficiaries and their households, Sakyiwaa, (2019), Dadzie et al. (2020), Awad and Hussain, (2021) . These benefits as confirmed by both the staff and beneficiaries of the Agency were found to be in consistency with the work of Baffour-Awuah (2014) that the YEA program is partly seen as very instrumental in decreasing the rate of unemployment and making it easier for some jobless youth to find employments. However, due to the lack of clear-cut data on various sections of the youth groups in Ghana, it is difficult to determine the precise figure of the employed youth, Dadzie et al. (2020).

Challenges

In relation to the challenges bedeviling the implementation of the YEA in the study area, the study discovered that occasional delays in release of funds for payment of beneficiaries' stipends; insufficient allowances paid, limited contract period, inadequate logistics; and inadequate offices and office equipment for effective functioning of the local units. Other challenges were frequent changes of top-ranking officials which affect continuity of designed plans for execution of the program; and highly centralized system of operation from national to district level which is dogmatic and poses administrative challenges. The latter challenge was found to harmonize with Knill and Tuson's (2008:19) assertion that policies that travel vertically through various divisions of the national government breed numerous actors that interact at different levels, rendering the process challenging. See Table 4 for beneficiaries' level of satisfaction with conditions of service due to the challenges unveiled.

Table 4 Respondents Level of Satisfaction with Conditions of Service

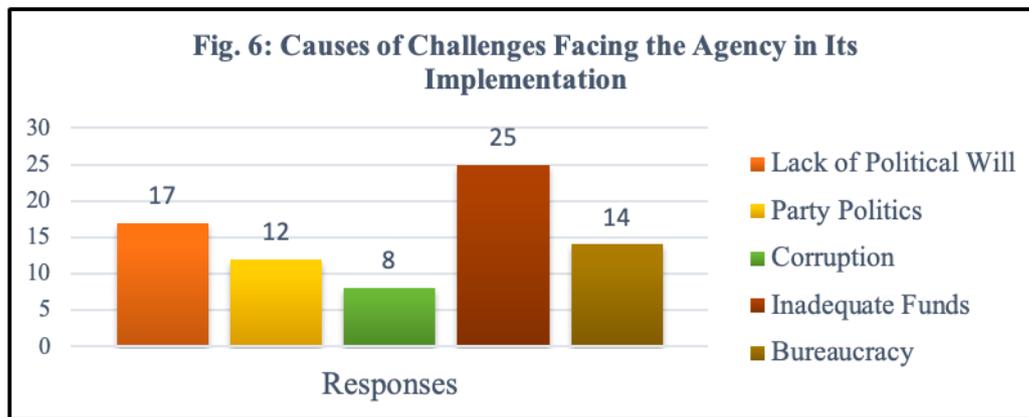
Response	Frequency	Percent
Excellent	0	0
Very good	1	1
Good	9	10
Average	30	33
Poor	37	41
Very Poor	13	15
Total	90	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Causes of the Challenges

The study moreover sought the causal factors responsible for the challenges impeding the smooth implementation of the program in the Kumasi Metropolis, as may happen elsewhere in the country. Fig. 6 indicates the causes of the challenges facing the Agency in the implementation process.

From Fig. 6, the study disclosed that party politics, lack of political will, bureaucracy, corruption among some top-ranking officials and inadequate financial resources for the Agency were the principal implementation challenges in the Metropolis. Of the enumerated causes, inadequate funds recorded the highest frequency indicating its severity in contributing to the menace, with lack of political will and bureaucratic principles following in that order. These causes were found to supplement the works of Dye (2008); Gerston (2004) that to ensure policy efficiency, implementing agencies and individuals must have among other things, adequate resources to be able to convert policies and programs objectives into 'operational framework' and remain answerable for its activities. Knill and Tuson (2008) also add that in most cases, bureaucracies emerge as main actors in policy delivery, hence, their shortfalls directly affect policy delivery. Again, the study found out that corruption, though among some of officials was least found as a contributing factor, its presence and impacts could not be overlooked due to its consequence of economic backwardness, and especially in the era where it has gained much public attention in its eradication by the Ashanti regional secretariat of the YEA and Ghana as a whole.



Source: Field Survey, 2019

5 | CONCLUSION

The study investigated the circumstances surrounding the implementation of Youth Employment Agency (YEA) in the Kumasi Metropolis using questionnaire and unstructured interviews. It examined the factors responsible for the implementation challenges of the YEA in providing employment opportunities for the youth in the Kumasi Metropolis. The outcomes from the study unveil that the YEA is in actual fact providing jobs, skills and training through its modules to the youth. Nonetheless, the Agency is prone to several challenges such as lack of database on sections of the youth groups, occasional delays in payment of employees' allowances; insufficient beneficiaries' allowances and logistical constraints. The key factors responsible for these challenges encompassed party politics, lack of political will, highly centralized system of administration, corruption among some top-ranking officials and inadequate financial resources for the Agency. The YEA has increased employment opportunities among the youth in the Metropolis, however, effective implementation has not been achieved due to the acknowledged factors. For these reasons, it is suggested that the authorities of the Agency build on its strengths by considering the following operational measures, in addressing the challenges that fuddle the implementation process.

The government should also establish both national and regional databases covering the circumstances and needs of the youth for the effective designing and implementation of youth employment programs. Again, the central government should give priority to the Agency by ensuring prompt release of financial resources for payment of all entitlements of staff and beneficiaries of the Agency without fail. This will help them to respond to their financial needs, as the Agency has been their main source of livelihoods. Again, in line with insufficient stipends paid, it is also suggested that the central government increase the budget allocation to the sector Ministry regarding payments of allowances so as to motivate the beneficiaries to increase their work output. Even though the Agency does not aim at providing permanent jobs to beneficiaries, it has become the major source of livelihood to most of the beneficiaries and their families. As such, efforts should be made by the government to cushion their income earnings so as to undertake families and other social responsibilities effectively.

Also, efforts should be made towards effective decentralization of power. The implementation authority should be highly decentralized to enable the 'street-level bureaucrats' (local implementers) to exercise greater degree of freedom in the implementation process, as strict adherence to protocols makes administration too rigid. As such, a hybrid approaches to execution of policies are highly recommended. Furthermore, it is suggested that the central government provides adequate logistics to ensure efficient functioning of the staff in the implementation process and there should be proper records keeping at the various units of the Agency. This will ensure proper accounting of all operations of the Agency, especially records of beneficiaries.

Finally, party politics continue to remain a canker in the political process in Ghana, and has found its root in the implementation of the YEA. The effect has been nerve-wracking, including lack of continuity and unnecessary modifications in the implementation process due to frequent change in the top officials of the Agency. As such, holding of positions should be based on merit rather than party affiliations. Closely linked with party politics is corruption which is also deep rooted in Ghanaian politics. Although corruption among some of the officials was least found as a contributing factor to the challenges associated with the implementation of the YEA, its presence and impacts cannot be overlooked due to its consequence of economic backwardness, and especially in the era where it has gained much public attention. As such, on the last note, the researcher suggests that government quicken its quest to reduce corruption to the barest minimum in the public sector, including the YEA.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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How to cite this article: Kwarteng, O. B. (2021), Youth Policy Development in Ghana: A Study on the Implementation Successes and Challenges of the Youth Employment Agency, *Journal of African Political Economy and Development*, 2021;06:46–58.