The Capability Development and National Development in Nigeria: Towards a Youth Transition Model

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Abstract

This paper adapts a qualitative-dominant mixed method approach by utilizing policy documents, semi-structured interviews (SSIs), a focus group discussion, and structured questionnaires (SQs) to explore the transition-related bottlenecks that impede capability development processes across the education-work transition pathway, with a specific focus on the national youth service corps (NYSC) route. This paper reveals that youth's (aged 18-30) ability to navigate the formal education phase, partly depends on multi-stakeholder contributions that provide support structures to ensure youth obtain a tertiary degree before they reach age 30. Successful completion of the formal education phase makes them eligible to be mobilized into the one-year mandatory NYSC route. While in the NYSC, youth capability development programmes (YCDPs) ensure that youths are further developed and deployed to opportunity structures needed to address national development needs. The challenge however is that both mobilization processes and deployment policy frameworks create restrictive bottlenecks that impede the effective functioning and freedoms for youth capabilities to thrive. This paper broadly contributes to human resource development practice by utilizing a youth capability analytic framework to better understand how well youth capabilities can be further developed and strategically aligned/misaligned in addressing complex national development challenges as youth navigate the education-work transition pathway.

Key Words: Capability Approach, Youth Capability Development, Education-Work Transition, National Development

Introduction

Due to rapidly changing youth demographics, unstable economic structures, social unrests, poor governance infrastructures, as well as politics of globalization in the developing world in particular (AERC, 2013; Arubayi, 2015a), governments and policy makers are constantly pressured to address these concerns. This is without exception, the four 'e' global youth challenges; education, equal opportunities, entrepreneurship, and employment creation that affects youth development in Africa (UNECA 2011). The reality is that despite the large cohort of youths entering Africa's labour force – which is by far the best educated the continent has seen, the formal-wage-structure negates their educational achievements (World Bank, 2012; Filmer and Fox, 2014). Indeed, with 38 of the 40 youngest countries in the world predicted to be African countries by 2050, youth unemployment and underemployment continues to remain a fundamental development challenge (AfDB, 2016). Perhaps, if the target of the 'jobs agenda' that requires over 600 million jobs to be created over the next decade is considered, this will not only prove to be transformational to the lives of young people, it will also improve living standards, economic productivity, social cohesion and human development (World Bank, 2012; UNDP, 2014; ILO, 2016; UNESCO, 2016). However, whilst the quantity of jobs is important, the future skills development in Africa in particular needs to be aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education and the Strategy for Technical and Vocational

Education and Training (TVET) (2016-2021) to spearhead an ICT-driven knowledge economy in Africa (Robinson-Pant, 2016; UNESCO, 2016). WEF (2017: i) report affirms:

> Education and work in Sub-Saharan Africa will determine the livelihoods of nearly a billion people in the region and drive growth and development for generations to come. As one of the youngest populations in the world, it is imperative that adequate investments are made in education and learning that holds value in the labour market and prepares citizens for the world of tomorrow.

In this regard, not only is education a critical component of human capital development, but its 'value' could become a means, an end, and even a conversion factor to expanding the capability freedoms of youth to make choices that they value (Ibrahim, 2006; Chiappero-Martinetti and Sabadash, 2014; Egdell and McQuaid, 2016). Arguably, the quality of education that graduates in Africa today receive, should be able to allow them to compete in the global labour market as they mobilize strengths (bundles of knowledge, skills, attitudes, biographical agency and so on) and strive to succeed in making themselves the right kind of candidate for employers (Tholen, 2015; Walker, 2015). Despite the fact that obtaining an education degree or getting a job might be a crucial 'outcome' or 'end' in ensuring improved education-work transitions. This argument builds on recent findings that advocates for a capability informed approach to employment activation that would not only be able to measure success solely by youth transition into work, but also by whether it has improved the young person's capabilities that can further enhance employability (Chiappero-Martinetti and Sabadash, 2014; Walker, 2015; Egdell and McQuaid, 2016; Walker and Fongwa, 2017). Perhaps if education is viewed as a means and a conversion factor, and employment as an end, then Pool and Sewell (2007: 278) suggests that:

> Current interpretations of employability....such as whether or not a graduate has secured a job..... provides a very vague and imprecise indication of what the student has gained [i.e. capabilities]. Questions need to be asked about whether or not the graduate is using the skills, knowledge and understanding gained in their degree studies in a "graduate level job", which in turn opens up a whole new debate about what exactly a "graduate level job" entails [in other words the value of the degree obtained].

Citing Hillage and Pollard (1998:2), Pool and Sewell (2007) agree that there needs to be a focus on 'employability assets' during formal education that should consist of: (1) KSAs – knowledge, skills and attitudes; (2) Deployment – career management skills, including job search skills; (3) – presentation – job getting skills e.g. CV writing, work experience, and interview techniques. From the foregoing arguments, it is plausible to contend that not only are capabilities like KSAs critical for securing decent work, but the application/deployment of these capabilities will in-turn create a ripple effect on national development. In this regard, it is pertinent to note that these arguments which reaffirm theoretical tenets that explain the interwoven nature of human resource development and human development discourse respectively, is also philosophically underpinned by the ethos of the capability approach (Nafukho et al., 2004; Kuchinke, 2010; Wilson, 2012). As Metcalfe and Rees (2005:456) aptly observes that HRD, from a national viewpoint, involves government skill formation and employment policy, institutional development and partnerships for development that affect socio-economic development in different nation states.

Today however, a paradox exists in the Sub-Saharan African context as capability development initiatives and educational programmes do not necessarily improve transition from school to work for young people under age 30 (AERC, 2013). Arguably, education systems in Africa

have been unable to provide young people with the skills they need to move into or compete in the labour market, and has resulted in the phenomenon of waithood (Honwana, 2013). This paper draws from the Nigerian case, analysing perspectives from policy documents and narratives of 9 key informants – who are top National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) management officials, as well as data and narratives from 123 youth respondents who participated in the NYSC programme in the 2013/2014 service year. The NYSC scheme is a one-year mandatory national service youth programme that aims to bring about national unity, integration and development in Nigeria. Hence, this paper seeks to better understand capability development processes in the education-NYSC-work pathway, with specific focus on the NYSC route. In particular, this paper utilizes some of the philosophical components of the capability approach (Sen, 1999; Alkire and Deneulin, 2009; ChiapperoMartinetti and Sabadash, 2014) as embedded in Narayan-Parker (2005) empowerment framework to develop a youth capability analytic framework in order to better understand how youth agency is: mobilized (after completion of the formal educational phase); developed (in the NYSC through youth capability development programmes (YCDPs); and deployed to areas of national development needs. However, before delving deeper into discussions on the capability development that occurs across the education-NYSC-work pathway; with specific focus on the NYSC route, the next portion of this paper presents the methodology and analytic framework that underpins this study.

Methodology: Qualitative-Dominant Mixed Methods
The overarching research design of this paper is informed by a mixed methods approach (Johnson et al, 2007; Tashakkori and Teddie, 2008; Doyle et al, 2009; Creswell, 2014). The mixed method approach can be viewed as a product of 'paradigm dialogues' broadly referred to as the 'third methodological movement' or the 'pragmatic paradigm' (e.g. Denzin, 2008; Tashakkori and Teddie, 2008). Unlike the 'qualitative-quantitative' paradigm divide, this third research paradigm is pragmatically driven because the 'research problems and questions that need answers' precedes the choice of methods (Punch, 2014). Although 'pragmatic paradigm' is envisaged by Creswell (2014) as an underlying philosophical framework for a multiphase mixed methods research, other scholars (e.g. Mertens, 2009) note that mixed methods research also informs transformative mixed methods designs. This research therefore adopts a qualitative dominant mixed methods approach (Qual-DMMA) (Johnson et al, 2007).

On the one hand, qualitative data was obtained through three (3) methods which include; document analysis, semi-structured interviews (SSIs) and a focus group discussion (FGD). For document analysis, this paper drew on policy documents and current research as it pertains to the NYSC scheme in order to set the contextual premise on which this paper is developed. To reinforce/challenge document analysis findings, 9 SSIs were conducted with NYSC officials who were key informants that provided perspectives on the history and contemporary changes in policy prescriptions and programmes relating to youth capability development of the NYSC scheme. For more qualitative data, 18 SSIs and a FGD of 7 participants were collected to ensure that the youth (individual and collective) voices was captured. In all, qualitative data was collected from of 25 youth respondents and 9 Key informants across research sites. On the other hand, quantitative data was collected through Structured Questionnaires (SQs). 100 self-administered questionnaires were given out, returned and checked for inconsistencies, after which, 98 were used for the analyses. Since this paper adopted a Qual-DMMA, it should be noted that quantitative data was only analyzed using simple descriptive statistical tools to be able to provide a more robust view on the assets and capabilities that youth respondents possessed prior to their entry into the NYSC route and how they were deployed by the scheme. It should therefore be noted that the purpose of obtaining quantitative data was solely to describe qualitative findings.

In coding of qualitative data, youth respondents who participated in the SSIs were anonymously coded as youth respondent 1, youth respondent 2,......, youth respondent 18, while the 7 youth respondents who participated in the FGD were coded as youth respondent 19, youth respondent 20,...., youth respondent 25. Furthermore, qualitative data from key informants who were the NYSC officials was coded as NY1, NY2, ..., NY9. These codes were used to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of all research participants who volunteered to participate in this study.

In all, 123 youth respondents and 9 key informants, making a total of 132 respondents who participated in this study. The sampling criteria used to decide both the 123 youth respondents and 9 NYSC officials (key informants) was informed by purposive and snowball sampling technique (Mertens, 2009). With purposive sampling and the reflexive knowledge of the research context, the researcher was able to decide on the country (Nigeria) as well as specific cities in Nigeria as study sites (Lagos, the previous headquarters and Abuja the current headquarters of the NYSC scheme) for data collection These cities would be able to provide focused policy perspectives and ideas on the history and contemporary relevance of the NYSC scheme to both youth and national development respectively, in connection with the NYSC Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) advocacy programme. Snowball sampling technique was then used to identify community development service youth groups who had embarked on capability development training programme. The Federal Ministry of Youth Development [FMYD] (2014) states that in 2013 alone, the NYSC MDGs advocacy programme trained and nationally deployed an average of 13,551 corps members. The implication of this therefore is that on an average, 366 corps members are trained and deployed to 36 states and the country's capital, Abuja. Given that there were three batches in the 2013/2014 NYSC service year, a minimum of approximately 122 youth corps members were trained and deployed within each batch. For this study, 123 youth respondents voluntarily participated. The analysis of data was done through a youth capability analytic (YCA) framework (see Figure 1) developed to between understand youth capabilities, their capability development processes through programmes of the NYSC, and how they are deployed for national development, which will be discussed next.

The Youth Capability Analytic (YCA) Framework
The conceptual foundations of the Capability Approach (CA) has ensured that it is a new theoretical framework about well-being, education, human development and social justice (Saito, 2003, Robeyns, 2016). The underlying argument of the CA is that freedom to achieve wellbeing is a matter of what people are able to do and be, which also determines the kind of life they are effectively able to lead (Sen, 1999; Clark, 2005; Robeyns, 2016). Alkire and Denulin (2009) assert that the CA contains three central concepts: functioning, capability and agency which underpin some key components of the YCA Framework used in this paper. On the understanding of functionings and capability, Sen (1987:36) contends:

> A functioning is an achievement, whereas a capability is the ability is the ability to achieve. Functionings are, in a sense, more directly related to living conditions, since they are different aspects of living conditions. Capabilities, in contrast, are notions of freedom, in the positive sense; what real opportunities you have regarding the life you may lead.

Furthermore, Sen (1999:19) states that while agency is the ability to pursue goals that one values and has reason to value, an agent is someone who acts and brings about change. In a nutshell, the Sen's CA to education amongst others, conceptualises human development as a means, end and conversion factor in ensuring that inequality and poverty reduction strategies seek to create an environment that improves human wellbeing and expand peoples choices,

capabilities and freedoms (Sen, 1999; Clark, 2005; Alkire and Denulin, 2009). Although the philosophical and theoretical debates of the CA are beyond the scope of this paper, it should however be noted that the aforementioned concepts of capability, functioning and agency underpin the YCA framework in this paper (Figure 1).
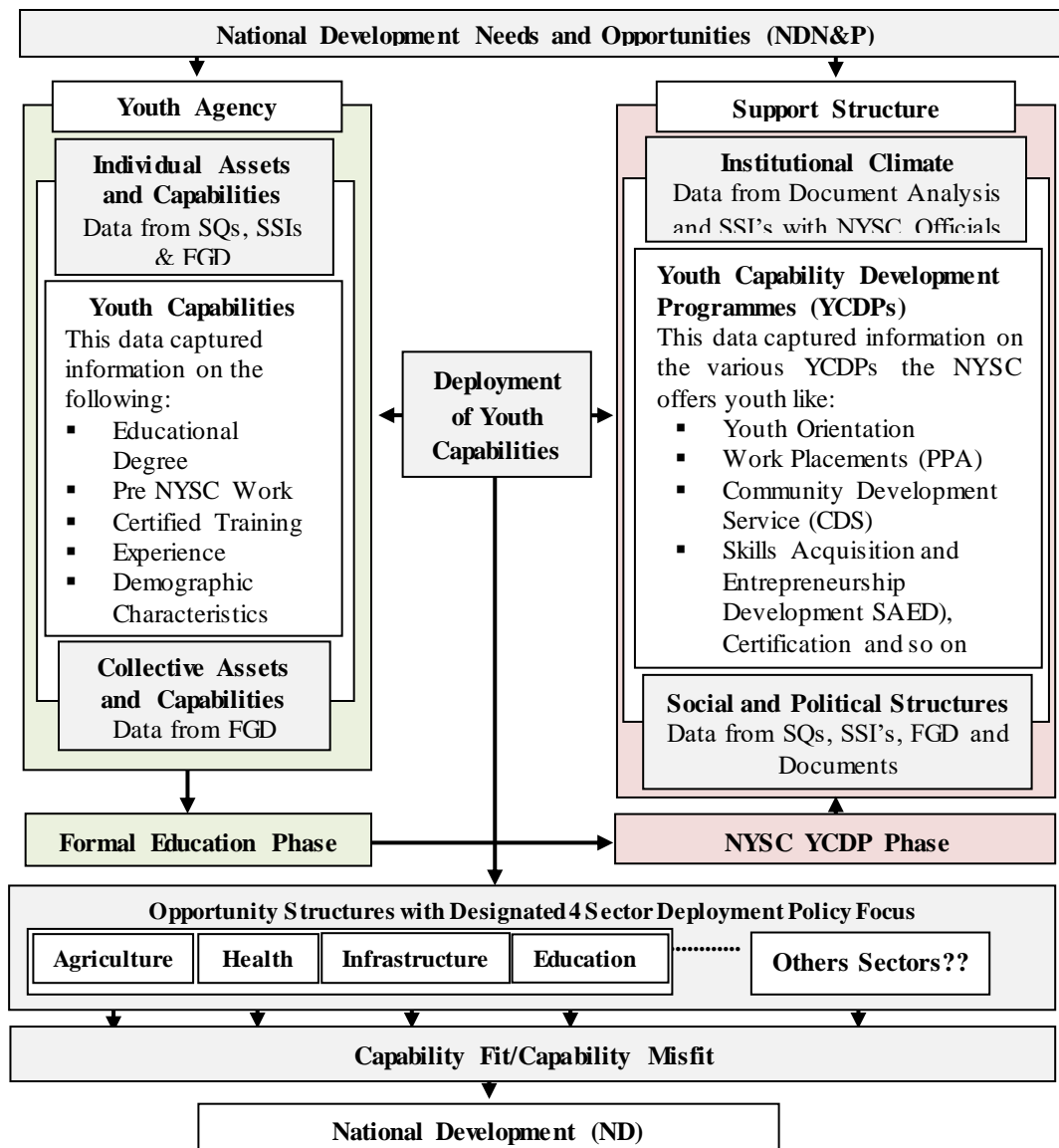

Figure 1: Youth Capability Analytic Framework

This framework adapts aspects of Narayan-Parker's (2005) empowerment model, that is informed by the components of capability approach (Sen, 1999; Ibrahim, 2006; Alkire and Deneulin, 2009; ChiapperoMartinetti and Sabadash, 2014). Unlike Nussbaum capability approach – where she adopts a fixed list to reflect universal common human values in suggesting a basis for determining a decent minimum variety of capability areas (Nussbaum, 2011), the YCA framework does not necessarily adopt a Nussbaum (2011) list format. Instead understanding capabilities for this study embeds itself within the skills template suggested in human resource development and management practice (Armstrong, 2012; Wilson, 2012; WEF, 2016) as well as conceptual components of the capability approach as adapted in both Narayan-Parker (2005), while critically examining NYSC practice. Below are brief descriptions of the conceptual components of the YCA framework used in this study.

1. National development needs and opportunities create the premise for formal educational development of youth and mobilization process of youth and their capabilities to be deployed for the National service (Arubayi, 2016).

2. Formal education of Nigerian youths then create a pool of graduates who after completion of an undergraduate degree before age 30, become eligible to be mobilized to the NYSC route for further skills development.

3. The concept of agency when understood as a key component of Narayan-Parker (2005) empowerment framework, which this study builds upon, is defined by the capacity of actors to take purposeful action that is a function of both individual and collective assets and capabilities. Youth agency is captured in this study as individual and collective capabilities which is characterised by formal educational qualifications, certified training, pre-NYSC work experience and demographic characteristics. Data collated on the individual and collective capabilities were done through a mixed method approach of SSIs, a FGD and SQs which capture the aforementioned characteristics.

4. The support structure aspect of the framework is viewed through the institutional climate as well as social and political policy structures that define the NYSCs youth capability development programme (YCDPs). It should also be noted that support structures are resources made available by different stakeholders during formal education of youth in Nigeria.

5. The capability development aspect of the NYSC scheme highlighted in the above framework occurs through relevant support structures like the 4-cardinal programmes (i.e. the youth orientation programme, work placement in PPA, community development service and passing out) and Skills Acquisition and the Entrepreneurship Development (SEAD) programme.

6. Deployment is a policy and practice that ensures that youth capabilities are placed in the areas/sectors of national development needs.

7. Opportunity structures are those either created by the NYSC deployment policy or the national development framework. The scheme currently has a primary focus on aligning youth capabilities to four (4) sectors of Agriculture, Education, Health and Infrastructure (NYSC, 2017).

8. On the one hand, 'capability fit' are youths capabilities that match the NYSC 4-sector deployment strategy. In other words, their course of study/area of specialization aligns with work they are assigned to do in places of primary assignment. On the other hand, 'capability misfit' are youths capabilities that do not align with the NYSC 4-sector deployment strategy. That is, their course of study/area of specialization is not relevant to the work they are assigned to do places of primary assignment.

Furthermore, in order to better position within a context, the research context of this paper provides a backdrop for understanding the country profile and the NYSC as case.

The Research Context
The research context are explained under the following: (1) Nigerian country profile, and; (2) The NYSC: a review of History and Contemporary relevance in Nigeria.

- *The Country Profile*
This study was conducted in the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) geographically located between latitudes $10^o\ 00'$ N and $8^0\ 00'$ E. The country is bounded to the west by the Republic of Benin, to the east by Cameroun, to the north by Niger Republic and Chad, and to the south by the Atlantic Ocean. With a total area of 923,768 km^2, Nigeria stands as the 32nd largest

country in the world (AfDB, 2013a; AfDB, 2013b). The 2006 Population and Housing Census reported Nigeria's population to be 140,431,790 (NDHS, 2013). With average growth rate of 3.2 percent (NBS, 2010; NESG, 2012), and current estimated population of 174 million people, Nigeria is the 7th most populous country in the world and the largest single black nation (AfDB, 2013a; NDHS, 2013). Further demographic statistics reveal that 70 percent of the Nigerian population are under the age of 30 years (Awogbenle and Iwuamadi, 2010; NESG, 2012; WEF, 2014).It is projected that by 2050 Nigeria will be one of the largest suppliers of youth workforce globally (NESG, 2012). This represents a major rationale for choosing Nigeria as the study area of this research. The study utilizes the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme as the primary case for investigation which will be discussed next.

- ***The NYSC: A Review of History and Contemporary Relevance in Nigeria***

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme in Nigeria was established by Decree 24 of 1973 (NYSC, 1999). This Decree was later revised to Decree No. 51 of 1993 and enacted as an act of parliament in the NYSC ACT, Cap. 84 of 2004 (NYSC, 1993, 2004). The NYSC scheme operates under the oversight of the Federal Ministry of Youth Development (FMYD, 2013a, 2013b). The history of the NYSC builds on the post-civil war (1967-1970) 3R policy of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reintegration (FRN, 1975). The Scheme was underpinned by the idea and condition that for post-war Nigerian graduate youth under the age of 30 to make the passage of rite to adulthood and eventual employment, they must participate in the NYSC (Arubayi, 2016). The NYSC (2011) policy document states that the 3 core aims of the NYSC is to ensure: (1) proper encouragement and development of common ties among youths of Nigeria; (2) promote national unity, and (3); the development of youths of Nigeria and Nigeria into a great and dynamic economy. In this regard, it becomes pertinent to observe that not only is national integration and national unity respectively key pillars of the NYSC scheme, but also, youth development for national development and economic growth has become an embedded facet of the programme (Arubayi, 2015b).

Although the historical relevance of the NYSC scheme in terms of national unity and integration cannot be overemphasised in averting another civil war, some of the contemporary relevance of the NYSC has shifted to ensure a youth capability development processes and programmes improve transition prospects to employment or self-employment (Graham and Perold, 2013, Arubayi, 2015b). For instance, establishment of the Skills and Entrepreneurship Development (SEAD) department in 2012 reinforce the paradigm shift toward a capability development related policy of the scheme in recent times. As UNESCAP (2017) affirms, the purpose of the SAED department is to ensure that youths are taught to be job creators, self-reliant, and not just job seekers when they cannot find employment. To this end therefore and since the 2000s, the third aim (the development of youths of Nigeria and Nigeria into a great and dynamic economy) of the NYSC programme reinforces the ethos of youth learning, training and capability development – which this paper argues are crucial for smooth education-NYSC-work transition. In line with this third aim, the following objectives of the NYSC are to:

(1)Inculcate discipline in Nigerian youths by instigating in them a tradition of industry at work and of patriotic and loyal service to the nation in any situation they find themselves; (2) Raise the moral of our youth by giving them the opportunity to learn about higher ideals of national achievement, social and cultural improvement; (3) Develop in the Nigerian youths the attitudes of mind, acquired through shared experience and suitable training, which will make them more amenable to mobilisation in the national interest; (4) Enable Nigerian youths acquire the spirit of self-reliance by encouraging them to develop skills for self-employment; (5) contribute to

accelerate growth of the national economy; (6) develop common ties among the Nigerian youths and promote national unity and integration; (7) remove prejudices, eliminate ignorance and confirm first-hand the many similarities among Nigerians of all ethnic groups; (8) to develop a sense of corporate existence and common destiny of people of Nigeria.

NYSC (1999: 4)

Buzzwords like 'inculcate', 'raise', 'develop' 'enable' 'remove' all point to a process of capability development that the NYSC's 4-cardninal programmes are built on. The cardinal programmes include: a 3 week youth orientation programme (YOP), and an 11 month and 1 week programme that incorporates work placements – through the Place of Primary Assignment (PPA), Community Development Services (CDS); and certification – symbolized by a passing out certificate (NYSC, 2004, 2017). The NYSC therefore operationalizes its aims and objectives by making the scheme a one-year mandatory service programme. This requires young Nigerian graduates under age 30 – from polytechnics and universities and from Nigeria and abroad – are state mobilized and deployed to 4 primary areas of national development that now narrowly include agriculture, health, education and infrastructure (NYSC, 2017). Therefore to further ensures that the NYSC attains institutional effectiveness, section 1(3) of Decree No. 51 of 1993 highlights seven (7) more objectives of the scheme (NYSC, 1993, 2004). These objectives are captured in table 1 below, were NYSC specific strategies are expected to bring about both skills development for national development respectively.

Table 1: The NYSC Mandate, Strategies and Expectations for Youth and National Development in Nigeria			
NYSC Objectives	NYSC Strategy	National Dev. Expectations	Skills Dev. Expectations

1. Ensure the equitable distribution of members of the service corps and effective utilization of their skills in areas of national needs	1. State Mobilization 2. Deployment to PPA and CDS programmes	1. National integration for national development 2. Equality 3. Capability utilization	**National Dev. Skills Requirement** The strategy of state mobilization of youth capabilities to places of national development needs is initiated from an NYSC policy skill requirement premise (that youths must have a minimum BA/BSC or its equivalent from any institution of higher learning in Nigeria/Abroad). This is to ensure that these skills are readily available for utilization and strategic alignment to areas of national development needs, which has been identified by the NYSC 4-sector deployment policy.
2. That as far as possible, youths are assigned jobs in states other than their states of origin	1. State mobilization	1. Appreciation of ethnic diversity 2. Employment 3. National development	**Diversity Management Skills** Again the strategy of state mobilization seeks to ensure ethnic and religious integration of young Nigerian graduates. Enhancing youth diversity management skills enables them to appreciate equality and ethno-religious differences while having empathy for cultural practices different from theirs. Strategies like the YOP, CDS deployment to PPA ensures that these skill is further developed.
3. That such group of youths assigned to work together is representative of Nigeria as far as possible	1. YOP 2. CDS 3. Deployment to PPA	1. Equality 2. Employment	
4. That Nigerian youths are exposed to the modes of living in different parts of Nigeria	1. YOP 2. Deployment to PPA 3. CDS 4. SAED	1. National integration 2. Enhanced interethnic awareness and cultural tolerance	**Learning Skills** The exposure of youths to different modes of living in different parts ensures: 1. Cultural learning which mobilization provides 2. Military defence learning and personal development training which programmes from the YOP provides 3. Work training which the PPA provides 4. Skill learning which programmes like SAED provide
5. That the Nigerian youth is encouraged to eschew religious tolerance by accommodating religious differences	1. YOP 2. PPA 3. CDS	1. Appreciation of ethnic diversity 2. Enhanced interethnic and religious tolerance 3. Citizenship and leadership development 4. Conflict management	**Social and Leadership Skills** Understanding the ethno-religious structure of Nigeria, requires the development of new cohort of Nigerian graduate youth that can spearhead the political economy of Nigeria after the civil-war and lead the nation with minimized ethno-religious clashes. The NYSC YOP, CDS, and PPA programmes ensure that youths are able to develop this leadership quality of looking beyond their ethno-religious inclinations, while appreciating others and managing conflict.
6. That employers are induced partly through their experience with members of the service corps to employ more readily and on a	1. Deployment to PPA 2. NYSC certification	1. Improved employment security 2. Improved youth transition from NYSC to probable employment	**Business Management Skills** From a HRM recruitment perspective (Armstrong, 2012), these skills include but are not limited to: 1. KSA's – Knowledge, Skills and Abilities 2. Behavioural competence

permanent basis, qualified Nigerians, irrespective of their state of origin			3. Qualification and training, and 4. Experience Also a primary focus on, complex problem solving abilities, analytical and critical thinking skills, creativity, people management, emotional intelligence, judgement and decision making, and service orientation (also see WEF, 2016), will further enhance employment prospects of young Nigerian graduates
7. That members of the service corps are encouraged to seek at the end of their one-year national service, career employment all over Nigeria, thus prompting free movement of labour	1. Deployment to PPA 2. SAED 3. NYSC certification	1. Improved employment security 2. Spatial labour mobility 3. Improved youth transition from NYSC to probable employment	**Employability Skills** The deployment of young Nigerian graduates places of primary assignment (PPA) ensures that they develop a work-culture that improves their employability prospects or work retention post-NYSC. The evaluation of this skill depends on the following factors. 1. Educational qualification and level of experience. 2. Youths ability to improve their personal development through for instance: CV and cover letter writing, obtaining further professional certifications and training offered during the NYSC service year. This could further aid employment and employment retention. 3. Whether/not the employer deems the capabilities the youths have to be valuable to its business development. 4. Also stating a self-employed business after training from YOP and SAED programmes may also enhance employability.

Sources: NYSC, 1993, 1999, 2004; Armstrong, 2012; Arubayi, 2015; WEF, 2016.

Although various studies (Eberly and Gal, 2007; Obadare, 2010; Raimi and Alao, 2011; Bodley-Bond and Cronin, 2013; Perold et al., 2013; Olaiya, 2014) highlight some of the skills development benefits or expected outcomes for youth development, the understanding of skills development programmes/inputs from these NYSC-based researches have ignore a human resource development (HRD) perspective. Indeed, the deconstruction of these objectives especially from a HRD perspective would reveal the following skill sets that young Nigerian graduates are expected to have on completion of the NYSC programme. They include:

- National development skills requirements
- Diversity management skills
- Learning skills
- Social and leadership skills
- Business Management Skills, and
- Employability Skills

Although developing the aforementioned skills for national development purposes appears to be a laudable expectation, the emergence of insurgency groups like Boko Haram in the North, separatist groups in the South like the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) and militant groups

in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria, persistently reinforce a call for a review of the NYSC especially in fulfilling mandates of integration, unity and nation building (Abibe, 2017).

- ### *The NYSC's Institutional and Capacity Development Challenges*

The NYSC like many public sector institutions in Nigeria is faced with a number of challenges that undermine its organizational performance. Although a couple of challenges affect the effective functioning of the NYSC that threaten the current NYSC model, one of the major challenges affecting the NYSC scheme is the insecurity challenge in Nigeria, particularly in the North-East. Responses from key informants suggests that:

For instance, talking about how the Boko Haram insurgency in particular has affected the focus and deployment strategy of the NYSC scheme is that what we now have is that a significant number of corps members in reality are not in the north. To be specific, most of the corps members are not in the North East. Similarly, there are tribes and people that are peculiar to the North-east. The question the NYSC has sought to address is how the NYSC gets the youths to appreciate the culture of Kanuri's[1]?... However before getting the answers to this question ... the first thing the NYSC has done is to de-emphasise the posting to areas that are largely known to be insecure.

NY2 and NY5

The above narrative highlights a dual challenge emerging for the NYSC as a result of the growing insecurity in Nigeria. Firstly, this security situation in the North-East region is increasingly undermining the NYSC's strategy of fostering cultural integration and interaction of Nigerian youths through state mobilization and deployment. Secondly, there is the creation of a *youth-flation – i.e. more youths chasing limited opportunity structures* in the other 5 geopolitical zones. The implication is that while the north-east losses out on youth capabilities for development, the other 5 'stable' regions are awash with varied dimensions of youth capital. This will in the end, hamper even and integrated development in Nigeria. A comprehensive strategy that thereby incorporates not exclude all security threatened zones in Nigeria needs to be at the fore of the NYSC's policy review.

Furthermore, when NYSC officials – from 9 of the 11 departments of the NYSC, were asked about how they ranked the overall operational performance, on the average these respondents argued that these departments performed at 68%, with only the finance and accounts department performing at 40% (see Arubayi, 2015b: 145). In this, a couple of areas of institutional needs that are crucial to optimise the organizational performance of the NYSC scheme were highlighted by different NYSC officials. They contend amongst other things, a need to:

- **Increase Public-Private-Partnerships** – where there is clarity of stakeholders interests, roles and responsibilities toward the NYSC
- **Improve funding** – engage more Credit Granting and Financial Institutions (CGFIs) that can support the skills acquisition agenda of the NYSC scheme
- **Address Human Resource Management and Development** – involves staff training, develop a learning culture, encourage capacity building in areas of human relations, review performance appraisal system, improve motivation and employee welfare packages.

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[1] Recent findings suggest that the Boko Haram Sect mostly comprises of ethnic Kanuri's (Ojojo, 2013; Onuoha, 2014). Olojo's (2013) research also reinforces the US Homeland Security Report (2013) argument by citing anti-colonial movements of the 1950s which was spearheaded by the Kanuri-led Borno Youth Movement as the genesis of popular support for Boko Haram which simply interprets as 'Western Education is Bad'.

- **Have an ICT-driven NYSC –** develop a data management base system (DBMS), institutionalise staff training in the use of ICTs, provide ICT infrastructure after training
- **Improve institutional synergy -** between the NYSC, the Federal Ministry of Youth Development (FMYD) and other Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs)
- **Take into cognisance the growing youth demographics in Nigeria**

Despite these highlighted challenges, the NYSC if restructured proactively will not only become a institution that seeks to move beyond it predominately service-oriented doctrines, but will move into more robust areas of capability development that eases transition from education-to the NYSC-to probable employment. In this regard therefore, conceptualizing service as a pathway for youth capability development that eases transitions toward eventual employability and national development respectively (Graham and Perold, 2013, Arubayi, 2015) should be the contemporary focus of the NYSC scheme as this paper argues. To this end therefore, whilst there is one education to work transition pathway for young Nigerian graduates, there are four prerequisite stages that they must navigate, which include: (1) formal education phase ; (2) mobilization from formal education training; (3) to capability development in the NYSC programme phase, and (4) NYSC certification and transition toward employment which will be discussed next.

Formal Education and the Development of Youth Agency

Education in Nigeria is constitutional right for all citizens including youths. Preparing youth toward understanding their roles, responsibilities and strategic national development importance is at the centre of youth development policies and programmes in Nigeria. as envisioned in the National Policy on education (NPE), the philosophy that underpins education in Nigeria affirms that:

> Education is an instrument for national development and social change; education is vital for the promotion of progressive and united Nigeria; education maximises the creative potential and skills of the individual for self-fulfilment and general development of society; education is compulsory and a right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion, colour, ethnic background and any peculiar individual challenges; education is qualitative, compulsory, functional and relevant to needs of the society.
>
> FRN (2013: 1)

The foregoing suggests that the process of capability development through formal education is expected to develop knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) in youths as they prepared for the NYSC route. The focus of educating young people in this regard, is not only seen as an 'instrument for national development', 'social change' and 'unity', but is viewed as a platform for 'maximizing the creative potentials and skills' of young Nigerians (FRN, 2013) which resonates with the ethos of the capability approach. Therefore, the development of youth capabilities in the Nigerian formal education context in particular is underpinned by global and local policy frameworks like the UNESCO Education for All (EFA), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) encapsulated in both National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) and Transformational Agenda (TA) which focuses on Human Capital Development, and most importantly the National Policy on Education (NPE) (ILO, 2005; FRN, 2013; UNESCO, 2015; McGrath and Sowell, 2016). In meeting international targets set by the current Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the indigenization of the SDGs as part of the Nigeria Economic Recovery and Growth Plan [NERGP] (2017-2020) focuses on improving human capital by investing in health and education in order to bridge the
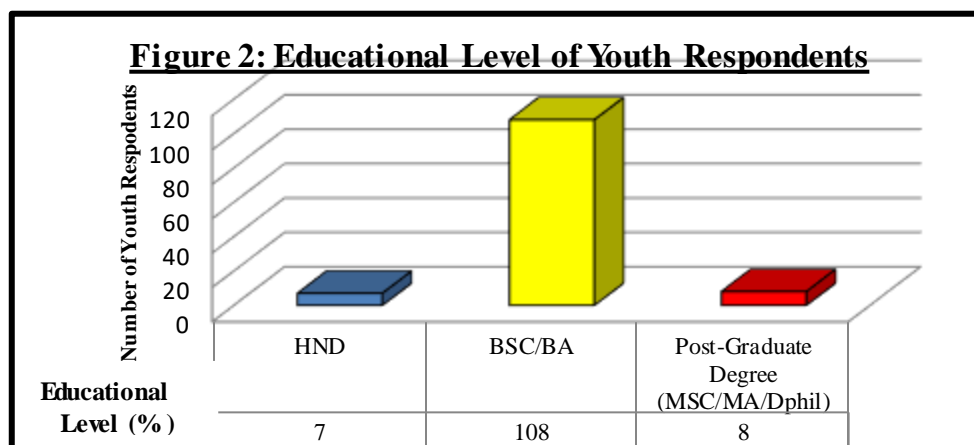
skills gap in the economy (FRN, 2017a, 2017b). For educating youths in Nigeria, the NERGP policy focus on investing in academic candidates that specialize in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) as a step to building a globally competitive economy. It is worth noting, that this current policy on raising STEM-oriented graduates from formal education phase is not holistically embedded in the NYSC 4-sector deployment policy that aligns youth capabilities to 4 key human development areas in Agriculture, Education, Health and Infrastructure.

From the formal education viewpoint, the NPE document, states that the Nigerian educational system is structured into:
- Early Child Care and Development aged 0-4 years;
- Basic Education aged 5-15 years, it encompasses Pre-Primary 1 year, 6 Years of Primary education and 3 years of Junior Secondary Education;
- Post-Basic Education of 3 years in Senior Secondary Schools and Technical Colleges; and;
- Tertiary Education provided in colleges of Education, Monotechnics, Polytechnics, and the Universities.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013:iv)

Arguably, young people are expected to dedicate their lives to a course of formal education of a minimum of approximately 16 years with all things been equal. The success of youth transition in Nigeria from the educational phase is therefore determined by a couple of factors including poverty, the availability/lack of support structures, the number of examinations they undertake across their life course (examination bottlenecks), the success rate in completing each level of formal education, and the absorptive capacity of tertiary institutions to take them in (Sanusi-Lamido, 2012; Ezekwesili, 2014, Arubayi, 2015b). In order to better understand the educational status/qualifications and youth agency for the 123 youth respondents who participated in this study, Figure 2 elaborates below.

Figure 2: Educational Level of Youth Respondents

| Educational Level (%)	HND	BSC/BA	Post-Graduate Degree (MSC/MA/Dphil)
	7	108	8

Source: Fieldwork Data from 2013

As expected from a NYSC-based research, all participants in this study were graduates with a minimum qualification of Higher National Diploma (HND). Juxtaposing the courses studied by youth respondents with Nigeria's current rebased GDP that functions on twenty-two (22) key activity sectors, this study found out that the capability pool of all 123 youth respondents would readily fit 50 percent (11 key activity sectors) of the 22 activity sectors that directly contribute to the GDP of Nigeria (see Arubayi, 2016: 102). However due to the restrictive deployment policy of the NYSC scheme that advocates for a 4-sector focus on education, agriculture, health and infrastructure, the opportunity structures for youth capabilities to

'freely' thrive across the 22 activity sectors is grossly undermined. In specific terms, youth capabilities would only fit 18% (4 out of 22 sectors) of the available opportunity structures available for youth deployment. In reality, the deployment policy of the NYSC scheme acts as a bottleneck that impedes the freedoms for youth capabilities to be able to thrive and bring about national development change. Indeed, while the focus on the these 4-sectors as Arubayi (2016) argues is a laudable effort to improve human development indicators in the Nigerian state, it however undermines the fluidity of youth capabilities in Nigeria and thus this policy needs to be reviewed.

- ***Limited Access to available Support Structure***

The education policy by the government that are translated into action, programmes, and youth-specific projects, goes a long way to define support structures available to ease education-NYSC-work transition. In the context of this research, there is indeed no gainsaying that governments budgetary allocations and investments in human capital development has increased over the last decade and a half, with critical focus on human capital development in education and health and youth development in particular (Arubayi, 2015a). In order to ascertain the major stakeholders involved in their development, of all 25 youth respondents that participated in the SSIs and the FGD when asked 'who funded their education', 80% of the youths were family/self-funded, 12% were sponsored by multinational corporations/NGOs and only 8% by the government (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Primary Stakeholders for Youth's Educational Development

- Family and Self
- Multinational Corporations/NGOs
- Government
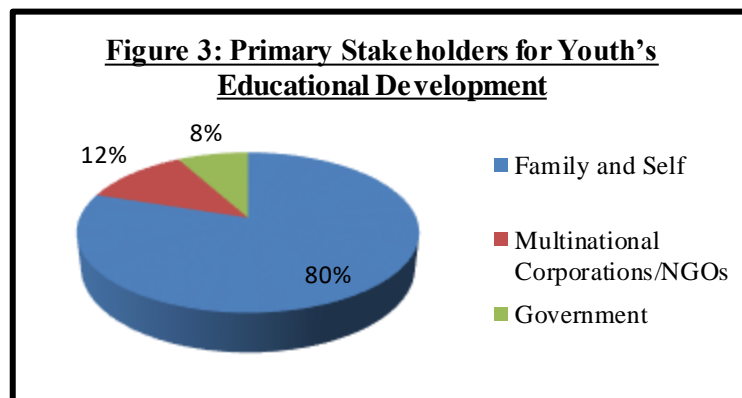
Source: Fieldwork Data (2013)

These findings suggests disconnects in what government policies on youth capability development interventions professes and point to the reality of lack of government support structures during formal schooling years (Moja, 2000; NBS, 2012; Okeke et al, 2015). In this regard, the government's inability to provide the necessary support structures needed to obtain higher education was questioned by Youth Respondent 22 who opines that:

The irony of youth challenges in Nigeria is that, while I am equally aware of the provisions of chapter 3 of the Nigerian constitution and how it instructs the government to ensure that education is a right and easily accessible to Nigerians at all levels… I fail to understand why there was no education for me at 'all levels', given that there was no ambiguity in that statement to warrant further interpretation by a law court.

This affirms the aphorism that while African countries (Nigeria inclusive) have the constitutional and policy mechanisms to ensure inclusive growth and economic prosperity especially for young Nigerian graduates, they lacks a comprehensive approach to implementation (Lintelo, 2012). The above narrative further highlights the inadequacies of government to ensure that robust support structures and social safety nets are made available

for youth development during formal schooling years (Holmes et al., 2012). It also suggests an obvious admission of the limitations of the Nigerian educational system and the need for improved funding of the education sector to forestall the brain-drain of Nigeria's brightest minds. The CRISIS that bedevils the Nigerian educational system is on that needs a curriculum, realignment, institutional and systemic, invigoration and sanitization attention (Ezekwisili, 2014). To this end, the next portion of this paper will in detail explore the youth capability development programmes that occur within NYSC route.

State Mobilization from Formal Education to the NYSC Route

From the formal education phase and to the NYSC route, the practice of mobilization can be conceptualised as a practice that guides the process of deploying youths and their capabilities across the 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory for national service. It is an integral strategy designed to facilitate the effective deployment of youth capabilities to places of national development needs (NYSC, 2014). The strategy of mobilization involves a process of identifying young Nigerian graduates – local and international, who meet the education criteria – must be a graduate from either a university or polytechnic, and age criteria – must be between age 18-30, with no previous work experience in the security service institutions in Nigeria (NYSC, 1999, 2004). Several key informants note that:

> *...the 'process of youth mobilization' hinges on dialogues between multiple stakeholder groups including tertiary educational institutions, state governments, employers, and community leaders'.*

<div align="right">NY1, NY3, NY4</div>

These dialogues on mobilization as NY8 argues'*...to states and places of national service, occurs outside the cleavages of youth control and powe*r'. In other words, the question of how youths are mobilized to states of national service, occurs without the biographical agency (Heinz, 2009) and of choice of young Nigerian graduates. Mobilization however offers the youth a 'rite of passage' with symbolic significance into new status and positions (WYR, 2003), to take advantage of available opportunity structures across the national service passage and in the political economy of national development in Nigeria. With this, NY6 opines that:

> *After mobilization dialogues with different stakeholders with universities and institutions in need of young graduates across Nigeria has occurred, the instrument for mobilizing youth* [from the education] *toward national service is the 'call-up letter' – which when received, activates the process of State deployment.*

This interwoven discourse of mobilization and state deployment is portrayed as reinforcing strategies underpinned by the human resource development practice (Wilson, 2012) in ensuring recruitment and equal opportunities for Nigerian graduates (Akobo, 2016). As NY8 observes:

> *For instance, if we have a thousand law graduates we would try to ensure that they are all deployed to the 37 locations in Nigeria 'equally' because we expect each sector of the economy to grow and receive manpower... While doing that, we also bear in mind, where they are coming from [i.e. their state of origin], so that when the figures [of young graduates] are put together and they are split and you find out that sometimes 1,500 going to Lagos, 1600 going to FCT, 1450, going to another state and so on to ensure even distribution.*

Although this assertion portrays the practice of enforcing 'equal opportunity' for youth (FRN, 1999, 2009), the disciplinary control of the NYSC mobilization practice undermines the

broader philosophy of the human capability approach by dictating and controlling where youth capabilities can be mobilized and deployed to (Arubayi, 2015b). NY6 opines that:

> *The Nigerian government made the scheme militarised and regimented so that we [the NYSC] can have control, because if youth, immediately after they finish university get thrown into the society* [without discipline] *they are going to have more problems. So therefore, the one year* [of compulsory service] *is a way of stabilising them so that after they have seen* [sic] *life in the university... the NYSC can enforce some little discipline in youths using the military and then have a lot of control on what youths do.... This is a way of actually addressing youth restiveness in Nigeria... The NYSC is just coming in to see how it can address youth restiveness by actually bringing in discipline into the system.*

This mechanism of controlling youth behaviours and thereby their capability development processes, allows for what Fournier (1999) calls control at a distance that negates the concept of capability freedoms which the Sen's Capability Approach professes (Sen, 1999). In examining further the *process of State mobilization/deployment,* NY2 notes that:

> *Deriving directly from the major aims of the NYSC scheme [which is integration and national unity], and given that the nation is divided into 6 geopolitical zones, it is expected that a youth corps member does not serve in his own geopolitical zone* [coded as GPZ] *because it is assumed that youths are already knowledgeable about their own area... 'State deployment' is therefore done in such a way that it will ensure that youths do not serve either in their state of origin* [coded as (SO)] *or their state of education* [coded as (SE)]. [Stressing further he suggests that] *...Perhaps, if a person did not study in their own GPZ, it is the programme's responsibility through deployment to eliminate the GPZ that the youth graduated from.*

With this, it is indeed crucial to note that the purpose of State mobilization/deployment is for youth to 'expand their knowledge' of other Nigerian cultures, different from their experiences from their 'State of education –SE' and 'State of origin-SO'. In a country like Nigeria where there are 6 geopolitical zones (GPZ) – the South-South, South-East, South-West, North-Central, North-East, North-West (FRN, 2010), the analysis of this mobilization and State deployment criteria reveals that youth can only be deployed either to 4 out of 6 GPZs – that is for youths whose SO is different from their SE; and 5 out of 6 GPZs for youths whose SO and SE are same. In this regard, youth capabilities can only be State-mobilized to either 83% (5 out of 6 GPZs) or 67% (4 out of 6 GPZs) respectively of the remaining geopolitical zones (GPZs) in Nigeria. This represents the 'mobilization opportunity 1' of youth agency whose SO and SE are the same, and 'mobilization opportunity 2' for youth agency whose SO and SE are different (see Figure 4).

Therefore, whilst mobilization creates these two mobilization 'opportunity' passages for young Nigerian graduates to be expand their knowledge of a cultural experience different from theirs, these 'opportunity structures' act as bottlenecks and limit youth capability freedoms to address the multifaceted challenges of Nigeria's national development needs. Also, though the foregoing analysis acknowledges that the practice of mobilization initiates youth entry into the national service route, a retrospective understanding of what occurs in 'formal education phase' prior to the 'mobilization phase' needs to be explored. As NY 5 notes:

> *In summary, the family foundation* [that youths come from] *has to be solid. Solidity is determined by the quality of parenthood. Where parenting stops, religious organizations continues with the process of youth character development. I strongly*

believe that doctrines of religious practices should be part of the parental makeup in child or youth development. With the level of moral decadence amongst youths in Nigeria today, I can categorically say that the missing link between parenting and religious development is the real cause of deviant youths. Actually the failure of parenthood abdicates responsibilities of parents who have failed to contribute to their children's development to other institutions [like the NYSC] *in society, and this decreases the possibility of arriving at 'moral Nigerian youth'.*

The foregoing narrative provides the context to understand the capability gaps that need to be bridged by different stakeholders (family, religious organizations, formal education institutions, the government) and in different phases (in formal education, mobilization, and NYSC youth capability development phase) of youth in Nigeria (See Figure 4).
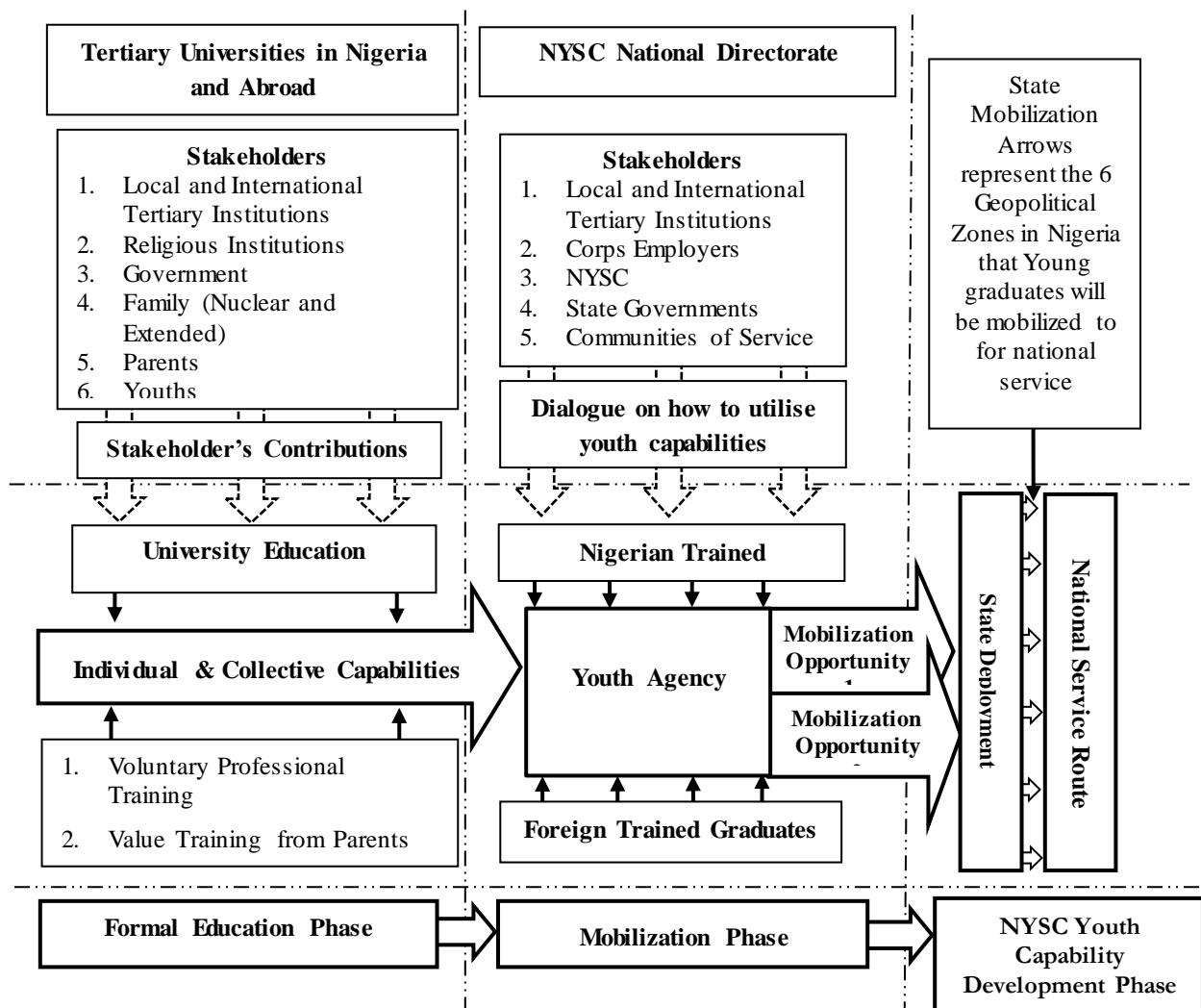

Figure 4: Mobilization of Youth toward National Service Route
Source: Conceptualized from Authors Fieldwork (2013)

In this regard, the measure of how successful youth transition from the 'formal education phase' to the 'mobilization phase' that kick-starts the 'NYSC capability development phase' depends on the presence/absence of multiple stakeholder's contributions across youth life course. It also depends on the level of 'support structures' available for youth development, and accessed by youth during formal education phase. This support structures may include but

is not limited to parenting, religious character development, educational conscientization and governmental financial backing like scholarships. With this, youth's ability to navigate the different examination bottlenecks across their formal education phase (as Ezekwesili 2014 argues), while ensuring that they meet the age criteria of participating in the NYSC programme, are those that are considered eligible and thereby given the 'opportunity' to be mobilized for the NYSC route where further youth capability development processes and programmes occur.

The NYSC Route: Voices on the Youth Capability Development Programmes (YCDPs)
The main purpose of transitioning young graduates from the formal education phase into the NYSC route is to align youth agency to available opportunity structures, through deployment, so that they can engage with youth capability development programmes (YCPDs) while meeting national development needs. Comparing narrative perspectives from both NYSC officials and youth respondents concurrently, will help unveil the process of YCDPs – through the youth orientation programme (YOP), place of primary assignment (PPA), community development service (CDS) programme, and the NYSC certification, that is often taken-for-granted in the education-NYSC-work pathway.

1. Youth Orientation Programme (YOP)
After State mobilization to states of national service, corps members undergo a 3-week orientation in a paramilitary camp training where virtues of discipline, resilience, and ethnic tolerance are inculcated (NYSC, 2017). The orientation programme is designed to achieve the following objectives:

> (1)To give Corps Members a better understanding of the objectives of the NYSC Scheme and enable them internalise its ideals; (2) To acquaint members with their environment in their political, cultural, social and economic setting; (3) To prepare corps members for their particular roles in the Scheme; (4) To equip them with practical social and leadership skills that will enable them meet the challenges of the service year ahead; (5) To inculcate in the corps members the spirit of national consciousness as a basic ingredient in nation building; (6) To instil discipline in the youths; (6) To give Corps members adequate physical and mental training, and; (7) imbibe them with the Spirit of collective responsibility.
>
> NYSC (2011:4)

In examining how these youth capabilities (which reinforces some of the identified skills development expectations identified in Table 1) are developed while in the NYSC route, two key informants opine that:

> *The orientations objective seeks to introduce youth corps members to their new environment. In order to achieve national unity and integration, youths participating in the NYSC scheme are posted to work together in groups that are varied* [i.e. diversified] *– having people from different backgrounds working in the same group. This is how we work* [through the orientation exercise] *to ensure that the youth get to: know each other; understand each other's norms, customs and traditions of the communities where they are posted, and; imbibe the spirit of team work. Orientation… therefore focuses on giving them a general overview of what the scheme is about.*
>
> NY2 and NY4

This narrative suggests that the YOP of the NYSC scheme fosters a common Nigerian identity and engenders interethnic tolerance in ensuring that they are able to develop diversity management skills. NY4 further notes that:

If Nigerian youths are able to live, work, have an objective and achieve together, and most importantly, if youths are able to collectively work as a team to get results [in other words, co-exist] *because as you know "together each achieves more", then they will inherently build new skills, that enhances their tolerance and levels of interaction with other youths with different cultural orientation.*

This intercultural competence as Campbell-Patton and Mattero (2009) suggests, enhances youth collective capabilities to be able to work as a team. In addition, it a critical aspect of the whole person development framework identified by the FMYD (2012). The framework is aimed at ensuring that youth's enhance their social and emotional capabilities, otherwise referred to as soft skills (McNeill et al, 2012). In further bridging the youth capability gap in Nigeria, during the youth orientation programme, SAED programmes, language seminars, socio-cultural and traditional lectures, development workshops, career mentoring programmes and religious activities are offered together with Man-OWar paramilitary training (NYSC, 2011). Corroborating these policy view, several youth respondents reveal that the NYSC empowers them to become self-reliant through:

MDGs advocacy training workshops, subsidized professional exams organized by the Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM) and skills acquisition programmes that ensures youth engagement in national development.

Voices from Youth Respondent 7, 12, and 13

Furthermore, the expected outcomes of participating in these activities are to: reduce fear of the unknown; enhance knowledge of the country's development agenda; imbibe the culture of professionalism/work-ethic, and; make youth self-reliant entrepreneurs (NYSC, 2004, 2014, 2017). The reinterpretation and replacement of the MDGs to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is now part of the national SDGs advocacy and campaign programme in partnership with the NYSC that seeks to 'train youth into becoming SDGs champions in their local communities in various areas of deployment for national service' (FRN 2017:2).

Although there is an obvious attempt to ensure that young people's capabilities are enhanced by the NYSC scheme, several youth respondents are critical of the relevance of these capacity development programmes they partake in. As they argue that:

While the NYSC has positively impacted on my current skills through a variety of not so relevant training programmes ... on how to become entrepreneurs in bead and hat making, costume and make-up artistry... It is absurd to think that, after spending 4 years in the University, it is only now the Nigerian government feels that making entrepreneurs out of youths is the way out of our current situation. Why did we go to school then? Actually if entrepreneurship is the new education, then the Nigerian government should have advocated for this earlier.

Youth Respondent 11

Employers of labour seek some form of experience from a fresh graduate – who just left school and passed through the NYSC programme. Even with the NYSC programme, you cannot boast of having hands-on training in your area of specialisation. For instance as a lawyer I was sent to a primary school to teach. Imagine that after one year, let's say I naturally would want to go back to the ministry of justice or I want to go back to a law firm to practice and they ask me what experiences have you got and I say 'I taught in the primary school'.... If you are my employer would you be keen to hire me?

Youth Respondent 3

These narratives negate the definition of 'life opportunity' as a combination of access to education, quality of education received, and the relevance of educational qualifications (Ezekwesili, 2014: 14). In other words, although the different youth orientation programmes provide some kind of training for youth, the issue of access, the quality and relevance of these programmes to youth capability development and freedoms remains the bigger question. In this regard, the YOP's on offer, instead of becoming a positive, act as a bottleneck as the question on their relevance to enhancing the current skill-set of some young graduates remains unanswered.

2. *Work Placement – Place of Primary Assignment (PPA) Programme*

At the end of the YOP, youth corps members are posted to places of primary assignment (PPA) where they undertake an 11 month training in private and public sector companies across various sectors in the Nigerian economy (NYSC, 2017). NYSC (2017) however reiterates that though posting of youth to PPA takes into cognisance the areas of specializations – i.e. youth's courses of study, as 'emphasis is placed on rural posting to sectors in agriculture, infrastructure, health and education sectors'. In other words, the PPA are spaces that youths and their capabilities are deployed to for work, in an attempt to address national development challenges (Arubayi, 2015b:90). In this regard therefore, it is important to highlight that while mobilization activates the process of state mobilization, deployment is a strategic tool utilized by the NYSC to ensure intra-state posting in order to ensure that youth capabilities are streamlined to places of work and areas of national development needs. As NY3 states:

> *'Posting' or 'Deployment' to places of primary assignment/work placements offer NYSC youths the opportunity to demonstrate the work ethics and professional life-skills gained during formal education and the orientation programme.*

This narrative resonates with findings from other studies (Hahn, 2002; Roth and Brooks-Gunn, 2003) where they suggest that the development of youth 'life skills' whether for work in the political economy or for community service, empowers youth with a sense of agency, independence and sustainable livelihoods. In the contemporary NYSC scheme, the development of life skills builds on economic philosophies (UNESCAP, 2017) that informs skills acquisition and entrepreneurship which challenges youth corps members to be more 'self-reliant' *so that they can become: independent and entrepreneurs; resourceful and have initiatives, and; employers of labour* (NY7). In contrast to this view which reinforce the current policy position of the NYSC scheme, the PPA is seen as a 'waste of talent'. As explained by Youth Respondent 2:

> *Deployment to institutions where your skills and training give you a competitive edge... If for example I read medicine and I am deployed to go and work in a local government, and not as a medical personnel, but as an administrative officer for instance, that is a waste of talent as far as I am concerned. If someone read law and the person doesn't find himself practicing law in the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), nor in the legal department of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), nor in the Ministry of Justice nor in a private law firm, I wonder what they [The NYSC] are trying to do with the person's skills. The person's skills that he has acquired over the years – 4, 5, 6, years of studying law, would begin to retrogress rather than improve. So I think that what you studied should determine where you are deployed to. So you would not only be achieving the*

goals of the NYSC, you would also be improving the skills of corps members so that when they finish they have hands-on training in their area of expertise.

Youth Respondent 2

Again the question of relevance of the PPA programme to youth capability development creates disconnect and mismatches between the capability possessed by young graduates and whether these capabilities fit to address national development needs. With this it becomes pertinent to note that though deployment of youth capabilities to the NYSC's 4-sector priority sectors, it is critical to look beyond these and consider other youth-dominated sectors like ICTs, creative industries, and services (FRN, 2017a). It is also important for the current Nigerian Economic Recovery and Growth Plan that focuses on training young graduates in STEM related areas of specializations by 2020 at least, refocuses the NYSC's 4-sector policy so as not to create a pool of capability misfits – whose skills are neither relevant, nor enhanced, nor do the skills make them get closer to their desired career goals.

3. *Community Development Service (CDS) Programme*

The CDS programme as a crucial cardinal programme of the NYSC scheme, is aimed at harnessing the skills, creativity and innovativeness of youth corps members by obliging them to identify the needs of their host communities, and undertake at least one community development (CD) project that will be beneficial to their host community (NYSC, 2012, 2014). Akume et al (2012) asserts that:

> The CDS requires that corps members use their acquired skills to provide services like education, health care delivery, rural infrastructural and community development, agriculture, science and technology, and enlightenment campaign for the benefit of their host community… As such, ensuring the success of the CDS imposes on the corps members to wear a spirit coated with dedication and enthusiasm irrespective of the challenges they might face in so far as they are not life threatening (p. 106).

Indeed, with capability development initiatives provided within the YOP and PPA frameworks, the CDS programme appears to be the most viable platform that directly ensures that youths are engaged in development practice. The investment in the development of youth capabilities during the CDS programme as NYSC officials argue, creates further spaces for youths to become key agents as:

> *Principals and teachers in rural schools, medical doctors and health awareness agents in rural communities, developers of rural infrastructures like roads, bridges, classrooms, and toilets for deprived communities, advocates of political development through their participation in elections, and agriculture-extension workers who acts as interfaces between policy makers and farmers on the ground*
>
> NY1 and NY5

The above narrative reinforce one of the key finding of this study, as majority (78%) of youth respondents recognise the relevance of the NYSC in youth and Nigeria's national development respectively (Figure 5). As youth respondent 24 contends, the NYSC is as an important *bridge between youth development policy and the actual realization of youth policy initiatives.*

Figure 5: Perception on the relevance of the NYSC to youth and national development in Nigeria
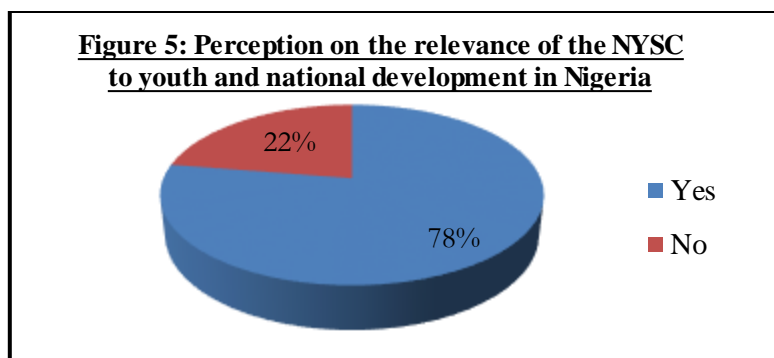
Source: Fieldwork Data (2013)

Further engagements with youth respondents on the training received during the MDGs-CDS group, reveals that they equipped youth with grounded policy knowledge as they were able to identify the various policy frameworks[2] pertaining to youth development in Nigeria. Some youths from the FGD however opine that of all 4 cardinal programmes of the NYSC,

> *the CDS programme does not only equip us with the necessary policy knowledge and skills to become Development Knowledge Facilitators (DKFs) for MDGs advocacy,...... it also gives us a sense of belonging where our skills can directly make impact on development in Nigeria.*

> Youth Respondents 19 and 25

In all, after youths have concluded capability development training through the YOP, PPA and CDS programmes respectively, the next and final stage of NYSC certification ensures that they are viable candidates for employment into the Nigerian labour market.

4. NYSC Certification and Youth Transitions toward Employment

This programme of the NYSC is usually the shortest and entails that youth corps members need to be appraised and found to have adhered to the NYSC service bye-laws of 2011 (NYSC, 2011). The reward for active participation and civil obedience across all stages of capability development in the YOP, PPA and CDS programmes respectively, is NYSC certification (NYSC, 1999, 2011b). This certification is a prerequisite for employment in the political economy of Nigeria. Until such certification or official exemption – depending on the circumstance is obtained, young graduates are exposed to exploitation by private-sector capitalist before they make it into the NYSC passage. This assertion is evident in the narrative of youth respondent 23 who argues:

> *I finished university in 2010 and when I was waiting for my call up letter, I got a job with a sporting outfit in Ikoyi Lagos. I was working there but I wasn't really paid well*

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[2] Different youth respondents identified a number of youth development policy frameworks including: (1) The National Poverty Eradication Programme which they argued was expected to focus on creation of Jobs in Nigeria; (2) The Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) of the Transformation Agenda; (3) The establishment of both the OSSAP-MDGs – Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on MDGs and OSSAP-YSM – Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Youth and Students Matters; (4) The Youth Enterprise With Innovation in Nigeria (YouWIN); (5) WAP – War Against Poverty; (6) MDGs – Millennium Development Goals; (7) NEEDS – National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (8) SURE-P – Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme, and; (9) The policy frameworks identified include: The Youth Employment In Agriculture Programme (YEAP) initiative initiated as part of Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme of the Transformation Agenda as institutionalized by the Nigerian Bank of Industry (BOI) and Bank of Agriculture (BOA) in collaboration with the Agro-industry Department of the African Development Bank; (10) The NYSC scheme.

because I had not done my NYSC service and my boss was like you are not yet a full graduate.... So to some extent, completing the NYSC programme still goes a long way to show how well employers would treat you. But now that I am about to get the NYSC certificate I know that I would be earning much better.

Further voices from Youth Respondent 4 and 5 reveal that:

Prior to the NYSC, even though I was employed in a private company and met company requirements for promotion, I was not promoted because management regarded me as a temporary staff since I hadn't completed the NYSC service... the business community in Nigeria does not really regard someone that hasn't gone for NYSC service as an accredited graduate with full employment rights in Nigeria. When you graduate and you have not served, employers will suspect whatever certificate you provide to them.

The foregoing narrative suggests the rigid preconditions that all young Nigerian graduates under 30 must go through before they obtain an NYSC certificate. Indeed, till youths attain this symbolic landmark of obtaining the NYSC certificate, they remain trapped in a web of economic surveillance inspired by the general institutional suspicion (Kelly, 2003; Giroux, 2009). In other words, their pay, welfare packages and other work-related incentives are less until they get to this NYSC 'end' of obtaining the NYSC certificate. Therefore in capturing a youth transition model in Nigeria, Figure 6 provides a detailed snapshot in the education-NYSC-work pathway that youths have to navigate. This includes support structures (through different stakeholders contributions) that are available across all levels of formal education, the YCDPs initiated by the NYSC that bridge capability gaps created from the formal education phase. Figure 6 also highlights the different the bottlenecks/traps (examination, mobilization, deployment, certification, as well as capability related bottlenecks) that impede successful transitions toward improved work prospects in Nigeria (Arubayi, 2015a, 2016).

Figure 6: Youth Transition from Education to Work in Nigeria
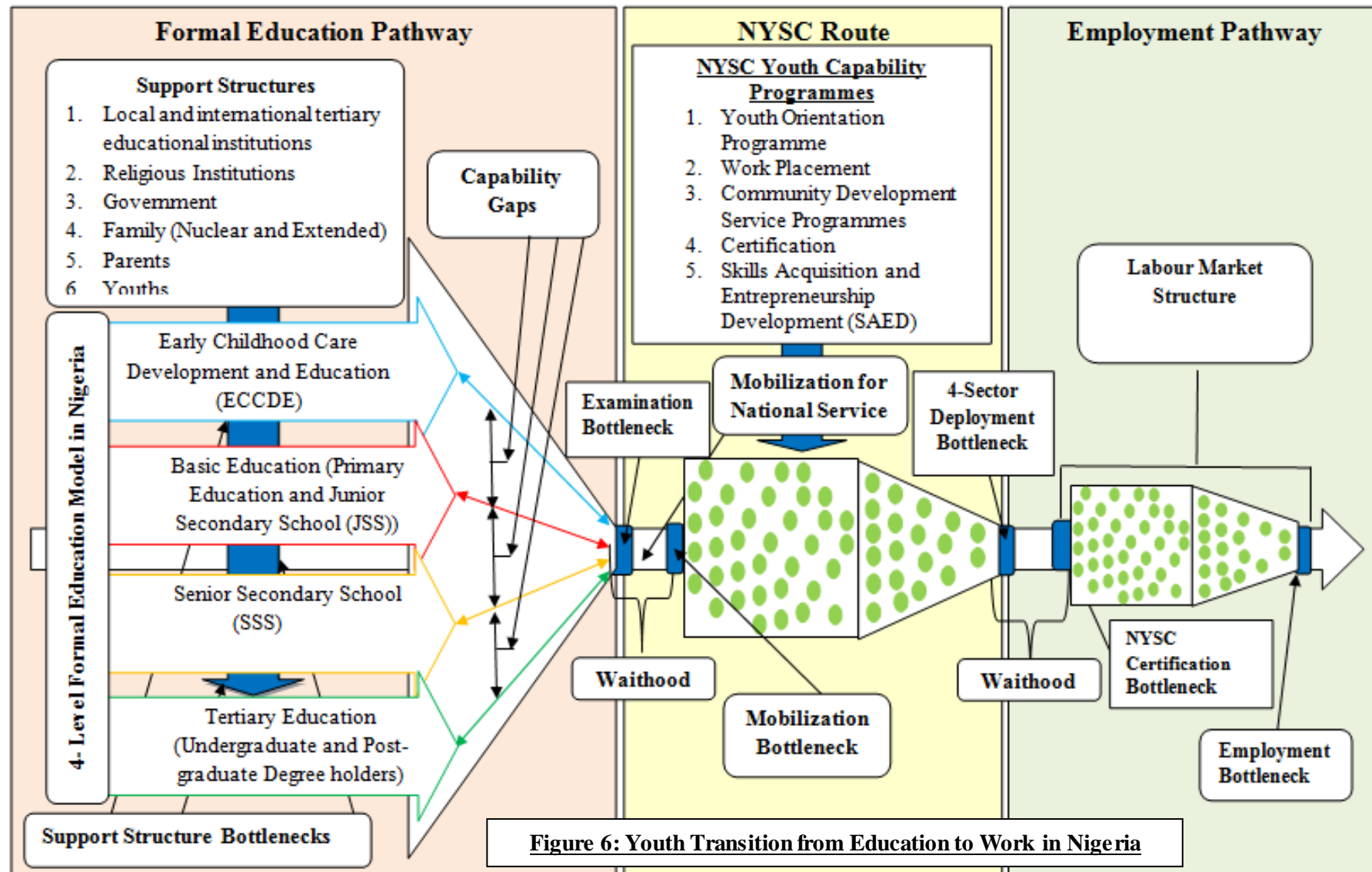
Conclusion: Toward a Youth Transition Model

Youth capability development in Nigeria is a multi-faceted system that involves people, policies, processes, institutions, strategies, programmes and projects that reinforce themselves to ensure that the necessary support mechanisms are available for young people to make smooth transitions from education to work.

In the educational route, the focus is on developing youth capabilities to be able to prepare them for life after tertiary schooling and most importantly, entry into the NYSC route for persons who can complete school under age 30. Here, a combination of the support structures provided by key stakeholders in the implementation of the National Policy on Education as well challenges that impede youth academic progression which include lack of funds, poverty, exacerbated by a skewed quota system, high schooling costs, dilapidating educational infrastructure, limited absorptive capacity of available tertiary institutions with the growing number of applicants (Sanusi-Lamido, 2012; OBG, 2013 Ezekwisili, 2014), all affect education-work transition of the Nigerian youth. These have resulted in the production of graduates, whose skills mismatch the labour market needs in driving Nigeria's competitive advantage in a globalised market economy (British Council, 2014; WEF, 2014). Also, examination bottlenecks (see Sanusi-Lamido, 2012; Ezekwisili, 2014) which determines capability gaps between and amongst Nigerian youth with the foregoing militating factors, act as catalysts in preparing youth for the NYSC route. Keeping abreast, age-related restrictions/bottlenecks that define eligibility to participate in the NYSC programme, a period of waithood for young graduates who have completed the tertiary education landmark is brought to an end by the mobilization and Call up Letter (NYSC, 2014). In this regard, successful transition for young Nigerian graduates into the NYSC passage after they have been able to navigate all examination bottlenecks at all levels in time to meet the age criteria for participation, sets them up for more mobilization bottlenecks to navigate through. The purpose of these two (2) mobilization opportunity structures is to ensure that a key philosophy of the NYSC scheme which is to ensure national integration is not lost in implementation.

Whilst in the NYSC route, an enabling environment for youth development to occur is enshrined in the NYSC YCDPs to further bridge capability gaps that have not been addressed by youth participation in formal education. From the findings of this paper, the effective utilization of youth agency for addressing national development is affected by the 4-sector deployment policy (deployment bottleneck). This further limits the freedoms of youth capabilities to function effectively in Nigeria's national development process. Indeed, the reality across this Nigerian youth transitions model reveals recurring traps that continue to bedevil the effective utilizations of youth capabilities for addressing national development needs. It reflects the following that although young Africans are increasingly educated, youth unemployment (or limited opportunity structures for youth capabilities to be utilized) is higher among young people with secondary education or above in comparison to those with no education (Cunha-Duarte et al., 2013). And perhaps if this to be addressed in a sustainable development goals era, then a multi-sectoral approach and an integrated social protection system that seeks to address multidimensional vulnerabilities (UNESCO, 2013), by ensuring equitable access to available support structures will plausibly be able to expand the freedoms for youth capabilities to be mapped toward available opportunity structures for the effective creative functioning in the national development web.

This paper concludes that despite educational qualifications from higher institutions of learning from Nigeria and abroad, and training received through the YCDPs in the NYSC route, the success of youth education-work transition in Nigeria depends on understanding: (1) how well youths are able to navigate examination bottlenecks and challenges like poor support structures

to complete school in time that makes them eligible to enter the NYSC route; (2) how well the NYSC ensures effective mobilization, and how youths are able to navigate mobilization bottlenecks that engages their capabilities for national service; (3) whether or not the YCDPs the NYSC offers enhances the capabilities of young graduates to ensure that they contribute to national development while making progress toward probable employment; (4) how the 4-sector deployment policy limits or allows for freedoms of youth capabilities to either miss or fit opportunity structures needed for addressing national development needs, and; (5) how at the end of the NYSC programme the certificate can become a leverage to get gainful employment with improved financial benefits. This paper also revealed that although the current NYSC model is relevant for enhancing and directing youth capabilities to areas of national development needs, it ignores a capability approach that advocates for increased freedoms and effective functionings of what youth agency could and should achieve offer. The NYSC needs to review its predominantly 'national-service-oriented' model to one that incorporates a 'capability-oriented' approach which institutionalises the need for enhanced freedoms, choice and effective functioning of youth capabilities.

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