The Politics of Youth Participation in Social Intervention Programmes in Ghana: Implications for Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E)

Evans Sakyi Boadu and Isioma Ile[*]

School of Government, University of the Western Cape, South Africa

Abstract: Participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) in project evaluation has gained impetus in recent literature. This paper interrogates youth participation in intervention programmes in Ghana with special reference to Local Enterprise and Skills Development Programme (LESDEP). With the aid of primary and secondary data, this paper unpacks the questions around programme target beneficiaries, their mode of participation and the impacts of current models on PM&E. The study reveals the key constraints of youth participation in PM&E, the evolving disapproval of the top-down approach while probing into the existing opportunities. The case study reveals that youth intervention programmes in Ghana are not only confronted with uncoordinated and overlapping ministries, department and agencies, but also there are power dynamics between stakeholders, in particular, target beneficiaries and programme implementers. The elusive intersection between beneficiaries and the implementing agency impacted negatively on the programme sustainability. The poor PM&E in youth intervention programmes in Ghana is a key reason that has hampered mainstream socio-economic development. The key lesson to be drawn from the case study is the need for matching perspectives of PM&E as well as a recognition and management of power disparities between target beneficiaries and programme implementers. Thus, realizing desired programme objectives will require a different approach to structuring, implementing and monitoring of youth intervention initiatives in Ghana.

Keywords: Evaluation, Intervention, Monitoring, Participation, Youth.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the upsurge in the number of youth intervention programmes in Ghana, the lasting uncertainties surrounding youth unemployment is patent. There is an increasing recognition that the national youth interventions projects christened in the last two decades have performed remarkably well in improving the income-earning of the youth (Amankrah, 2006; Palmer, 2009), but more still needs to be done. The notion of youth as the future of Ghana has long been recognized in policies, programmes, initiatives, and ultimately in the constitutions of Ghana. Different ministries, departments, institutions, and organizations have been established since independence for the purposes of developing the youth (social, economic and political) to actively participate in Ghana's development agenda. A key element for success is the extent of youth participation in the various process and not only as beneficiaries. The African Youth Charter (AYC) emphasizes on active youth participation in decision making seeks to highlight the need for all Member States party to the Charter to involve young people in social, political and economic development agenda (African Union Comiission, 2006:6). Thus, the exclusion of target beneficiaries (youth) from participating in the development of youth-oriented intervention programmes may have some negative implications on the programme sustainability. While emphasis has been laid on youth participation in the mainstream economic development, it has been argued that youth participation is vague and mostly 'elite-prescribed' (Gyampo 2012:15). Thus, this paper seeks to interrogate the politics of youth intervention programmes in Ghana, its nuances for policy-makers and pathways for youth participation in PM&E processes.

Ghana attained political independence in the late 1950s and has struggled to develop a harmonized youth agency for the purposes of employment, education, nationalism and above all to eradicate poverty in the country. A few youth organizations exist such as the Young Pioneers (Botwe-Asamoah, 2013: 12), Catholic Youth Organization (CYO), Young Christian Students (YCS), Ghana National Association of Adventist Students (GNAAS), Ashanti Kotokoli Youth Association of Ghana (AKYAG), Ashanti Youth Organization (AYO), Wenchi Youth Organization (YWO), Anlo Youth Organisation (AYO), National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS), Boys Scouts, and well-established youth wing of the various political parties including the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) Youth Wing, Convention People's Party (CPP) and Youth League. They were all claiming to advance the interest and the well-being of young people.

Some have argued that the numerous youth policies under different state ministries, department, institution,

*Address correspondence to this author at the School of Government, University of the Western Cape, South Africa; Tel: 021-959 3829; Fax: 021-959 3849; E-mail: iile@uwc.ac.za

organization and agencies are disjointed and tend to have very narrowly defined objectives (The Constitutional Review Commission Report 2011: 749). This study argues that it is not about Ghana having too many or too little ministries, departments and agencies driving these youth intervention programmes, rather, are the policies or initiatives working in themselves and are they enhanced by youth participation?

The majority of these programmes are left unattended to once there is a change of government, hence, it became difficult to distinguish between those initiatives that work and should be supported and those with little or no impact for which funding should be curtailed. While several previous studies on youth have examined gender disparities and participation, mobility, political participation and unemployment challenges in sub-Saharan Africa in general and Ghana in particular (examples: Rhoda, 1980; Sylvia & Gareth, 2005; Amankrah 2006; Aryeetey & Baah-Boateng, 2007; Serneels, 2007; Sylvia & Gareth, 2009; Langevang & Gough, 2009; Okojie, 2003; Palmer 2009; Gyampo 2012a; Gyampo 2012b; Nyamekye-Boah 2014; Porter, Blaufuss & Acheampong 2007, Gyampo 2015), youth participation in the policy formulation processes and monitoring has largely been ignored. To inform policy, some insights of youth participation in monitoring and evaluation in social intervention programmes in Ghana were explored. Also the consequences on the intervention programme as well as anticipated objectives is examined.

2. CONCEPTUALIZATION OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION SINCE GHANA'S INDEPENDENCE

Emphasis has always been placed on the dichotomous debate: 'top-down' or 'bottom up' participation in the development literature (Corneille & Shiffman 2004; Sabo 2001). The goal of modern development practitioners is to create people-centered participation that are heavily focused on orienting local behaviors and perceptions towards the success of any social intervention programmes. The practice (top-down) over the years by practitioners has been to orient local people on these perceptions and behaviors towards the success of project outcome typically differs from the bottom-up approaches (Macdonald 2012: 1). True participatory approach in development projects should entail proper redistribution of power among various stakeholders including young people because a lack of it will ultimately leave the powerless no voice to influence the processes as well as the outcome of the project (Auriat, Miljeteig, and Chawla., 2001; Cahill,

2007; Harper and Jones 2009). Arnstein (1967) eight typology of participation remains relevant in the development literature in understanding people's participation.
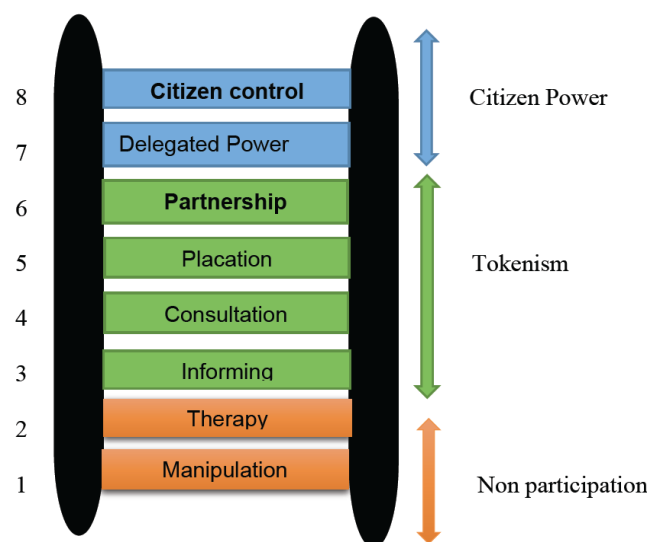

Figure 1: The eight typology of participation by Arnstein (1967).

Source: Arnstein's ladder (1967) Degrees of Citizens participation.

The actual goal of the bottom two (therapy and manipulation) is not to incorporate local people to actively participate in development processes (planning, designing and implementation of the programme), rather it focuses on project initiators "educating" the beneficiaries, which was termed by Arnstein as "Nonparticipation', but unfortunately misconstrued as genuine participation (Arnstein 1967:217). Thus, citizens (in this case the youth) are allowed some level of participation but the extent is mostly determined by the project implementers, therefore, it lacks the needed control which she describes as having no assurance of changing the status quo - 'tokenism' as it was called. Whereas the last two (Levels 7 & 8) grants the citizens total control in the decision making processes and implementation (Citizen Power). Youth have been neglected in numerous development programmes (local and global) but Zeldin, McDaniel, Topitzes, & Calvert (2000: 6) argued that irrespective of how they are marginalized, when given the chance to participate meaningfully in any development project, the youth can bring in their unique contribution to ensure the project effectiveness (Zeldin, McDaniel, Topitzes, & Calvert 2000: 53). There is evidence pointing to the fact that such involvement in decision-making, in the long-run, will greatly benefit the youth (Zeldin, S. Camino, L. and Calvert, M. 2012:82).

2.1. Youth Participation in Ghana: Echoes of the Past and Present

Youth participation in national and specific intervention programmes are as old as the country Ghana. The critical question is how has these evolved over the years and how are they wrapped up in the competing 'imaginaries' of national development and progress? How are they embedded in local, national and regional policies? How does the youth participation in national or community development connected to state control, and the exercise of political power? Evidently, the literature patently reveals some youth participation and mobilization in national development irrespective of the political administration in place since independence till date. Youth participation in Ghana's socio-economic development has evolved over the years, from the traditional governance system (chieftaincy) in the pre-colonial era to present western political dispensation.

Ghana's traditional institution (Chieftaincy) have since time immemorial been part of the country's development agenda. In the pre-colonial times, chieftaincy constituted the axis for the exercise of executive, legislative and judicial powers, therefore, it is worthy to note that, the chieftaincy institution has been the embodiment of political power during the pre-colonial era (Boafo-Arthur, 2001; 2). Evidently, youth participation in the traditional administration that existed then was critical for the development of the various traditional territories. Datta and Porter (1971) argued that prior to the contact of colonial rule there existed various forms of traditional youth association with the ultimate aim to partner with the local, regional and national development entities. While these associations vary depending on one's territorial region and traditional values, the Akan traditional arrangement allows for youth association known as the *Asafo groups* mainly established for defence, political participation, and communal service (Chazan, 1974, Owusu, 1970:42-43).

It is worthy to note that the leader of the Asafo groups was either chosen by election or hereditary. In the case of the latter, the leader needs prior approval from the whole group prior to the assumption his or her position (Shaloff, 1974; Datta and Porter, 1971). This obviously suggests some level of democratic tenets in the selection of the Asafo groups among the indigenous people along the coastal areas of Gold Coast (Ghana) (Chazan, 1974:165). Also, in the middle belt of Ghana, within the Asafo companies, it was

obligatory for all the youth to actively participate in community decision making (Manoukian, 1971:50). Further north, age associations (young adults) were the custom and it was solely for military and economic obligations. Thus traditional Ghanaian societies endorsed youth participation either in decision making processes or as the main implementation arm of the traditional government headed by the chief and the elders of that particular traditional area (Busia, 1968:10).

Reasoning from the above explanation ultimately defeats the notion that youth participation in the national development was a feature of the imperialist administration that existed from 1874-1957 in the Gold Coast (Ghana) (Datta and Porter, 1972). However, it has been revealed that cross-ethnic youth organizations sprang up during the colonial administration (Ibid). The formation of youth associations such as the Boys Scout, the Girls Guide, and the Red Cross Society in Ghana during the colonial era tend to have similar associations in Britain (Kimble, 1963:471). The majority of these youth organizations were established by the educated elites through the conversion of the Asafo groups into what the colonial imperialist deemed fit as youth participation (Chazan, 1974:172). The early missionaries that planted religious organization along the coast of Ghana were also actively involved in the youth organization during this era. For instance, the Methodist Church established youth associations such as the Girls and Boys Brigade. Obviously, youth associations such as the *Asafo companies*, predated colonialism, however, without any prejudices the colonial imperialist enhanced youth participation in the planning and development of Ghana.

The British colonial administration (Indirect Rule System) gave political, economic and social authority to the traditional heads (chiefs) to the detriment of the youth. The chiefs rather became the implementers of social intervention policies (chiefs even became tax collectors) which took away the duties of these youth organizations as the implementing bodies. It created a rift between the Asafo groups and the traditional chiefs which degenerate into insubordination towards the chiefs and the colonial administration (Chazan, 1974). This worsened the cordial relationship that has existed between a local chief and the growing educated elite who formed these youth organizations. This favoured the colonial administration in their divide and conquer strategies. The radical approach used by the youth also led to the dethroning of some affluent chiefs in the

Kwahu and Akim Abuakwa traditional areas (Kimble, 1963:467). The political and socio-economic dynamics during the colonial era propelled the youth to request for self-governance in the shortest possible time from the colonial administration.

2.2 Youth Participation in Ghana's Independence. The Paradoxes of Self-Reliance

The colonial imperialist for ages deliberately ignored the youth because of their vociferous demands. Thus, they resorted to the indirect rule which gave credence to the traditional leaders at the time at the expense of the economically active population (youth). The conservative approach by the leaders of the first political party (United Gold Coast Convention, UGCC) in the Gold Coast to a very large extent failed to recognize the zeal of the youth for self-governance. However, Kwame Nkrumah who was more radical towards the attainment of Ghana's independence was able to mobilize the youth who was also impatient and willing to use any possible means for the attainment of political independence. Short after his resignation Kwame Nkrumah formed the Convention Peoples Party (CPP), on June 12, 1949. The membership of the party was predominantly the youth wing of the first political party in the Gold Coast. The aim of the party was "fighting relentlessly by all constitutional means for the achievement of full self-government now for the chiefs and people of the Gold Coast" (Boahen, 1979:167).

The youth declared their support for Nkrumah and his "Positive Action" mantra in early 1950 to demand self-rule from the colonial administration (Boahen,1979:171). Having attained independence, the Ghanaian youth who were mobilized by the Convention People's Party (CPP) under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah was rewarded with the needed recognition by the first independent government. The youth became major players in the decision making processes as well as its implementation (Fhah, 1954; Boahen, 1979). In fact, the pivot of the CPP was the Asafo youth groups that existed prior to the contact of the colonizers. Nkrumah regime actively engaged the youth in the development of the country to curb the ills of unemployment by encouraging the youth to actively participate in Ghana's agricultural sector to produce enough food and industrial raw materials for the industrialization take-off (Shillington, 1992:6; Hodge, 1964). The formation of Young Pioneers as the youth wing of CPP further strengthened the youth organizations in the county. The youth really became pioneers for government policy implementation (Goody, 1968) a duty they were performing before colonialism.

A little over a decade, the toil of these enthusiastic young people were cut short when Nkrumah's administration was overthrown by a military cum police junta, 24 February 1966. The leaders of the coup immediately saw no need to maintain the youth organizations that Nkrumah and his political apparatus formed. All the youth groups that were in an intimate relationship with the CPP government including the Young Pioneers were suppressed by the military administration until they were mooted as irrelevant in the development of the country. Having handed over to a civil administration in the late 1960s, the second Republican administration led by K. A. Busia establishment of the National Service Scheme (NSS), which is still in existence today after over four decades. However, the Busia-led administration failed to witness the fruition of the NSS that was established to curb the debilitating economic situation of the youth since they were also mooted out of office by the Acheampong-led military coup in the 1972 (Hodge, 1964; Chazan, 1974:198).

The Acheampong-led military government is popularly known for its food sufficiency policy called *"Operation Feed Your Self"* which was of the notion of total participation in the agriculture sector to ensure food security as well as economic development. The youth were actively involved in the formulation and implementation of the national agricultural programme (Obosu-Mensah 2002; Hansen, 1989). Patriotism and voluntarism became the order of the (Oquaye, 1980:12). However, the military regime failed to sustain its good work and the country began to experience bad economic challenges which led to a series of student protests in the various university campuses and this gave birth to another military regime (Shillington, 1992:22). The Acheampong-let Supreme Military Council (SMC) (I) was ousted in what become known as the *"palace coup"* led by General F.W.K. Akuffo who later became the chairman of the SMC (II). The new SMC (II) regime committed a political suicide by continuing with some of the unpopular Acheampong-led SMC (I) policies, particularly the Union Government (Oquaye, 1980).

NUGS and other youth groups in the country protested against a number of the policies implemented by SMC (II) and were also ousted from office by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) in 1979 (Shillington, 1992 :25). The AFRC gave political power back to the civilians which led to the 1979 national elections that saw the Limann-led People National Convention (PNC) winning the national election. The

administration inability to manage the country's socio-economic problems resulted in another youth-led military junta that brought the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) into office in the popular 31st December, 1981 uprising led by Jerry John Rawlings (Boahen, 1992:126).

The PNDC regime also won the support of the youth which also facilitated the implementation of the regime's policies. The era also saw active youth participation in national development (Shillington, 1992:85). According to Boahen (1992), the voluntary activities of the youth continued to the construction field where he actively participated in the construction of road and repairs, drained choked open trenches in the cities, while assisting in the regulation of commodity pricing (Boahen, 1992:129). The regime's effort to mobilize youth for national development led to the establishment of the Workers Defence Committees (WDCs) and Peoples' Defence Committees (PDCs) (Graham, 1989:48). However, the authoritarian posture of the PNDC amidst the failure of the Economic Recovery Programme to arrest the economic hardships in early 1980, pushed youth to protest against PNDC administration (Shillington, 1992). Both internal and external events forced the military regime to compromise the power its wills which unshed in a democratic political dispensation (the Fourth Republic, 1992).

The promulgation of the 1992 Constitution began the current phase of the evolution of youth participation in Ghana's national development agenda. The PNDC has metamorphous into a civilian party called the National Democratic Congress (NDC). The party ushered the country into a civilian administration in the early 1990's. The enthusiastic youth once again got the opportunity to actively participate in the new political dispensation. Irrespective of the mushroom of political parties that sprang up after the ban on political parties was lifted, the NDC and New Patriotic Party (NPP) became the two vibrant parties judging from their alliances with other smaller political parties. The tradition of political party's youth wings continued in that portfolios for the party's youth organizer were formed at the grassroots', institutional and national level. The NDC has The Tertiary Institution Network (TEIN) while NPP student wing is called Tertiary Education and Students Confederacy (TESCON). These student wings have altered many electoral outcomes and continue to do so in every election that has been held in Ghana since 1992.

The developmental structures in the fourth republic, prevent the youth from active participation in the formation and implementation of development policies and programmes. The position of the Ghanaian youth in the first phase has greatly been altered in the current political dispensation in that implementation of policies and programmes are not within the ambit of these youth organization. Thus, government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs), as well as the National Development Planning Commission have taken charge of this responsibility. However, policy implementation is just one aspect of the policy processes and the youth have their voice heard in various ways. Whether deliberate or otherwise the current structures for the implementation development programmes and policies tend to relegate the youth to the background which will ultimately have some negative consequences on participatory monitoring and evaluation of these policies.

The launch of the National Youth Employment Policy (NYEP) and the subsequent the National Youth Policy (NYP) in the year 2006 and 2010 respectively. These policies and the numerous other youth-oriented intervention programmes are all premised on altering the ongoing youth marginalization in national development planning. That notwithstanding, the established structural arrangement continues to hinder active youth participation in the decision making stage, implementation, and evaluation of these policies. Unfortunately, Ghana has played politics with many national development issues and programmes. From the health sector, education, sports, employment and many others for which youth employment is no exception. Ghana has a youthful population, therefore the country cannot afford to condone the rampant weaknesses in youth policies and intervention programmes.

In the recent Population and Housing Census in Ghana, the population growth rate between 2000 and 2010 was 28.1%, and the youth population is about 56.4% (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). The neglect of this critical population will only derail development of the country given the youthful potentials that are going waste. Rather than tagging them with all the negative connotations and the so-called danger they pose to the political stability. Policy-makers should ascertain how resourceful the economically active population is and the integral role they can play in the national development agenda. When this population is managed well, the nation can reap of the population

Table 1: Youth Interventions Programme and Ministries in Charge (1992-Date)

YOUTH INITIATIVES	MINISTRIES IN CHARGE
NYEP: National Youth Employment Programme	Ministry of Youth and Sports
GYEEDA: internship - based training ostensibly to facilitate self-employment but in reality also to vacancies informal sector institutions	Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations (MELR), previously Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS), and before that Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare (MESW)
YEPS: Youth Enterprise Support Programme: entrepreneurship training, and venture capital	Office of the President with support from; Ministries of Youth & Sports, Ministry of Trade & Industry, Ministry of Finance
LESDEP: Local Enterprises and Skills Development Programme. Technical and internship – based training**.**	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD); Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP), Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations
YESDEC: Youth Enterprises and Skills Development Centre	Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare (MESW) now Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, (MELR)
MASLOC: entrepreneurship training, venture capital	Office of the President/ Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MoFEP)
YIAP: Youth in Agriculture Programme	Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA)
NYA: National Youth Authority, policy coordination, skills training and leadership training	Ministry in Charge: Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS)
DSIP*: Development of Skills for Industry Project-apprenticeship and institution – based technical training	Ministry of Education (MoE)
***NYA*:** National Youth Policy*	Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS)
SADA*: Savannah Accelerated Development Authority- youth employment and skills training*	Office of the President

NYA, NYP and SADA* are institutions rather than intervention programmes but has some overlapping responsibilities.
Source: Gyampo (2012); GoG, (2006); Boadu & Ile, (2017).

dividend, however, a failure might cause this country its future productive potentials and waste of human resources if the youth are consistently neglected by policymakers.

3. METHODOLOGY

The paper unpacked the complexities regarding programme target beneficiaries' participation in PM&E, using a mixed-methods approach. Data were collected during the periods of August-November 2016. The data was generated through a questionnaire survey administered out to 120 target beneficiaries while in-depth interviews were conducted with programme officials from three districts out of the sixteen districts in the Greater Accra region, Ghana. The study adapted a process analysis approach (Leeuwis, 2004) by detailing how youth participation in development programmes and policies in Ghana have evolved with special reference to LESDEP participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E). The study used different sampling procedures to select samples out of the population. A simple random sampling technique was resorted to during the individual interviews. Empowerment has many dimensions. Its measurement may be done

through the use of proxies and direct indicators (Kishor 2000). The study employed proxies such as education and employment. Purposive sampling was utilized in the in-depth interviews These interviews were supported by reviews of pertinent documentations and PM&E guidelines. Employing thematic and content techniques approach, the in-depth interviews were analyzed while the descriptive data and the outcome analysis offered were tilled out from the individual interviews. Utilizing the dual research approach and pointers, this paper assesses programme target beneficiaries' participation in the PM&E process of the Local Enterprise and Skills Development Programme (LESDEP), Ghana.

4. MOVING BEYOND THE POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

In the past two decades, the framers of Ghana's development policies have consistently reiterated a set of argument in support of youth participation in the country's development agenda. Over the course of these years, various political administration in the century have implemented quite a number of youth-oriented programmes to either fulfill a political campaign promise or genuinely to curb the debilitating

conditions of the economically active population. The past fourth republican governments have echoed the merits of youth participation and continue to pursue its realization through various youth development intervention programmes as well as policies. The irony is that government rhetoric has failed to accompany by any significant changes in youth participation policy formulation in practice. Comparatively, the level of youth participation differs slightly in the current dispensation, its more tilted towards 'empowerment', 'democratic governance', 'rights-based approaches', and 'social accountability' which shine a light on the causes of unemployment, poverty and inequity than the military administration from 1989-1992.

Generally, PM&E approaches may appear to be the accepted practice in the development discourse. Yet, in practice, it tends to differ in international and national development programmes. This study has highlighted the differences as well as the links to the current discourse. The paper has sought to unpacked the ideas in the literature as whether international or national development programmes will ever create the opportunity for economically excluded populations such as the youth to actively participate in the decisions making process that affect their well-being.

4.1. Implementers Experience with PM&E: The Place of Youth

Participatory monitoring and evaluation can have some impacts in any social intervention initiative if all the necessary stakeholders are actively involved. The lack of it may have some negative implications especially on the successes of such intervention programme. Principal stakeholders of such initiatives in most of these intervention project are either left out or have a very minimal voice in the programme monitoring and evaluation. A direct involvement of these principal stakeholders or target beneficiaries of these programmes may be the best pathway to mitigate any of the challenges that may confront the programme implementers in the future. To better understand the progress or the impact of such initiatives, monitoring and evaluation are unavoidable and beneficiaries of the programme are in the best position to reveal some of the challenges or otherwise the successes of the initiative, thus the need to ensure their presences in the monitoring and evaluation process. There are numerous factors that influence the involvement of stakeholders in such programme. Stakeholders who are considered to be "dormant" by programme implementers are more likely to be ignored as revealed in the participatory monitoring and evaluation literature.

4.1.1. Programme Challenges with PM&E

The numerous youth intervention programmes in Ghana are heavily reliant on government funding and LESDEP is no exception. Programme implementers tend to limit the role of recipients in many other activities that will surge the cost of implementation. This makes it difficult for an equally important process such as PM&E. A participatory approach to evaluation has no watertight procedure and classification. This makes it possible for programme implementers to loosely define the approach to fit their understanding of what participation should entail. Even though the methods, approaches, and techniques abound, there are well-accepted principles that are deemed relevant in PM&E. These include but not limited to knowledge and information sharing, co-ownership, complete consultation, the involvement of target beneficiaries in the policy process, project design and implementation action (Hilhorst and Guijt 2006).

Despite these delineated principles and the importance attached to them in theory, in practice, it remains a challenge for most project implementers and LESDEP is no exception. The challenges are long-standing. All-inclusive stakeholder's participation in the PM&E processes remains elusive. Whilst the literature prescribes a more bottom-up approach in developing intervention programmes, a sizeable number of programmes PM&E tends to have a top-down approach. The field results confirmed some of these pitfalls. There are three key challenges namely ;(1) those that are embedded within the term 'participation'- the concept is loosely defined in some instances, (2) donor or programme implementers requirements which tend to limit active participation of some stakeholders and (3) the willingness of the programme target beneficiaries to partake in the processes. The project design stage demands the involvement of the various stakeholder. It should intent to develop the recipients of the projects and not development agency itself.

4.1.2. A Clash between Programme PM&E and Youth Skills

The designers of the PM&E assumed that the programme target beneficiaries have no skills relevant enough to actively participate in the process. This was affirmed during the in-depth interview. The majority of the evaluators were the district and regional programme field staffs to the detriment of the beneficiaries. The staff member interviewed opined that:

The youth don't have the technical eyes to do some of the things we do because you need experts to come up with all that you need to make the evaluation processes work somehow perfect and most of the beneficiaries do not have these skills to assist us in that but then at certain stage in the process you need the little they can offer you, to be able to go ahead with everything (R₁LESDEP Staff, November 2016).

However, during the field study, the programme PM&E assumptions were contested. The target beneficiaries (youth), asserted that by and large, have the necessary skills to actively participate in the programme PM&E. The finding from the in-depth interview was not consistent with the individual interviews (see Table **2**). This paradox is best explained by the initial erroneous viewpoint from programme implementers to assume that the target beneficiaries have limited knowledge of PM&E. Njuki, Kaaria, Chitsike, and Sanginga (2006), in their study in Kenya using PM&E systems to ascertain both the community and project levels within the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI), opined that the onus lies on programme implementers to develop the skills of the various stakeholders. PM&E processes must value the contributions or views of all the stakeholders. The programme implementers admit the lack of skills on the part of the project recipient, yet, failed to equip them with the needed skills to participate in the PM&E processes. Similarly, Bandre (2001) study in Burkina Faso, revealed that for reliable data collection, recipient, as well as local resource people must be part of the PM&E process. Therefore, the skills and expertise of beneficiaries and other stakeholders become crucial in PM&E (Kimweli, 2013). Besides, it has been time-consuming and costly, PM&E also and requires additional skills development (see Thomas, 2013), thus the need for programme implementers to equip the various stakeholders the needed skills. In instances where it falls beyond the operational ethos, the programme implementers or donor partners must alter their approach to accommodate the various stakeholders of the programme.

4.1.3. The Assumption of Cost and PM&E

The design of PM&E was premised on an assumption of cost-effective. Particularly, programme implementers resorted to 'pick and choose' of a few target beneficiaries to participate in the PM&E to avoid

the cost. Over 85% of the youth perceived that financial constraints on the part of the implementers may have attributed to their non-involvement in the PM&E activities (see Table **2**). However, this defeats the idea of representative in PM&E process. The idea of 'true' representation was tempered with and narrowed due to the cost of involving the various stakeholders. The target beneficiaries must have the privilege to elect their representatives-tasking them to report back to them after the process has been completed. The notion that involving all the stakeholders will surge the human, capital and material resources limited the scope of the participatory M&E.

If we want to involve all of them, you need money to do that. It will be better to target few... There is always a huge cost if you really want to do a participatory monitoring and evaluation, everyone is involved and it will cost more than just a few experts doing the same thing. (R₁ LESDEP Staff, November 9, 2016).

Further, many of the target beneficiaries of LESDEP, especially the illiterate presumed that they were not involved because of their inability to comprehend the PM&E process and were therefore sidelined at the expense of the literate recipients. In contrast, some of the literate beneficiaries expressed their disbelieved regarding the indifferent posture of some of the literate and illiterate beneficiaries to participate in the PM&E process. The evaluators stressed that establishing a meaningful participation in PM&E will incur some amount of financial capital. Participatory monitoring and evaluation approach is a gradual process; it must be cost-ineffective. Irrespective of the cost involved, project implementers must ensure that their participatory approach entails a restructuring of power among various stakeholders because a lack of it will eventually leave the beneficiaries who are least recognize no clout to impact the PM&E processes and ultimately the project (Tisdall, 2008).

4.1.4. The Assumption of Beneficiary's Interest in PM&E

Project beneficiaries may not be interested but a good PM&E can shape their interactions; thus diminishing some of the uncertainties that confront recipients in most development projects when it comes to PM&E. The finding is not consistent with other studies in other parts of Africa (Holte-Mackenzie *et al.* 2006). In their study in Kenya, the authors posited that

recipient of development initiatives always express their enthusiasm to participate in the monitoring and evaluation processes. Again, extensive studies from other part of the world on participatory monitoring and evaluation approach stress that, granted the opportunity, the project beneficiaries, group of individuals or a community would graciously participate in any decision-making or processes or actions that directly affect their well-being (Larrison 2000; Rifkin & Kangere 2002; Nelson & Wright 1995; Jackson & Kassam 1999: Holte-Mackenzie *et al*. 2006).

Unfortunately, the PM&E was based on the assumption that, the target beneficiaries are only interested in seeking for job and not to participate in the evaluation process. The quality of interaction between the various stakeholders is key to the success of the PM&E process. To harness the key principles of PM&E: learning, sharing of knowledge, co-ownership, and mutual agreement among others (Hailey, 2000) there must be a better cooperation between the target beneficiaries and programme implementers. An official from the programme secretariats expressed this position:

> *I really doubt the beneficiaries themselves will even want to participate in the processes at all because even our structured questions, we sometimes find it difficult to administer all, they don't see the importance of it, all that they want is that they are not out of the market and whatever the organization promised they are at their disposal (R₁ LESDEP Staff, November 9, 2016).*

The finding from the field study presupposed that the PM&E was premised on assumption that the target beneficiates will not be enthused with the process of collating information, designing the instruments, analyzing the data collected, and implementing the outcomes of the PM&E.

> *The beneficiaries really don't even have the enthusiasm for things like project evaluation but we have to do it to know where we were and where we are going, is there any progress at all?... they want job and they have gotten one so what is monitoring and evaluation to them? it is "nothing." (R₁ LESDEP Staff, November 9, 2016).*

The quoted statement above from the in-depth interview is certainly not a mutual agreement that emerged from both the programme implementers and target beneficiaries. Thus when asked during the individual interviews, the youth expressed some frustration regarding their exclusion from the existing monitoring and evaluation in that they were interested in the process, however, the general outcome of the study revealed otherwise since 69% of the youth were not interested in the monitoring and evaluation process (see Table **2**). The PM&E approach should seek to appreciate the interest as well as the holistic involvement of all levels of the project management and project beneficiaries. There must be a deliberate creation of a conducive environment that allows the stakeholders to discuss the pros and cons of the project and why they are relevant to the present programme and future strategies. In a multi-stakeholder setting, devolution of responsibilities and strict adherence to standards as well as all the key elements of PM&E gradually becomes a challenge.

4.1.5. The Assumption of Target Beneficiaries' Associations and PM&E

Theoretically, participatory monitoring and evaluation are premised on some ideas that tend to hold in high esteem the voices, wishes, and positions of the least dominant stakeholder or the grassroots beneficiaries. Contrary to the popular notion, the respondent clearly admitted that the youth (the most affected stakeholder) were not involved in the monitoring and evaluation processes due to their failure to form a beneficiaries' associations. The youth also admitted that their inability to form beneficiaries' association may have affected their involvement in the various activities including the PM&E (see Table **2**).

> *The beneficiaries don't even have associations and is not like we prevented them from doing that in fact, we encouraged them to have a general associations or even a module association, so it could be called barbers association, tailors association or beautician association, because ones you have these you can bargain as a group which is more effective than an individual(s) … we have some experts from the office who work on the evaluation but not with beneficiaries associations., just even a few of them representing their members can also help them if really they*

Table 2: Distribution of Challenges that Hindered Youth Participation in the PM&E

What challenges have hindered the youth participation in the existing PM & E system or processes;	Frequency (Percentages %)		
	Responses		
	Yes	No	Don't Know
Categories			
is it lack of institutional PM&E framework?	58 (44.2%)	2 (1.7%)	65(54.2%)
is it lack of expertise on the part of the youth	10(8.3%)	109(90.8%)	1(0.8%)
is it lack of fund needed for PM &E activities	103(85.8%)	5(4.2%)	12(10.0%)
is it absence of beneficiaries association	112(93.3%)	5(4.2%)	3(2.5%)
inability on the part of initiators to implement the stipulated PM &E	64(53.3%)	9(7.5%)	47(39.2%)
failure of LESDEP management to involve the beneficiaries	80(66.7%)	9(7.5%)	31(25.8%)
is it the geographical location of beneficiaries	55(45.8%)	14(11.7%)	51(42.5%)
lack of interest on the part of program beneficiaries (youth).	83(69.2%)	13(10.8%)	24(20.0%)

Source: Field data, 2016; N=120.

want to be part of the evaluation processes … they can be forced to reckon with (R$_1$LESDEP Staff, November 9, 2016).

The data from the field indicates that the PM&E committees excluded the beneficiaries in the existing processes. Despite this uncertainty, the literature reveals that local beneficiaries' involvement in PM&E enhances accountability, co-ownership, knowledge sharing, medium of learning among others which can provide significant values that can result in positive outcomes of the programme as well as the general improvement in those benefiting from the initiative (World Bank, 2002). The non-existence of youth association should not serve as a limitation to prevent them from participating in the existing PM&E. Notwithstanding, the involvement of the various PM&E committees including the beneficiaries or local people can help to check the different viewpoints within and among the various stakeholders which can ensure the success of the development intervention programme.

5. CONCLUSION

Despite the sharp increase in the economically active population in Ghana, and in the face of the country's economic challenges, it is not surprising that various political administrations have implemented a number of youth intervention programmes. Moreover, the different perspectives on the part of programme

implementers and target beneficiaries influenced the level of beneficiary's participation in these youth-oriented programmes. PM&E has the potential to empower target beneficiaries (youth) in an intervention programme such as LESDEP, however, the varying interest between the youth and programme implementers undermined the process. The existence of the progress or impact evaluation processes which sought to incorporate the youth attest to the fact that, programme implementers took some effort to involve the youth in the participatory process. While the PM&E activities and impact may have varied accordingly, however, if the majority of the of target beneficiaries were made to be involved in the various stages in the process, the shared intent of the implementers would have been a good place to start from.

The power relation between programme implementers and beneficiaries in the PM&E process is common in the most development programme. Some scholars have argued that PM&E has been on 'bottom-up' over the years (Winter, 2003; Pasudel, 2009). Contrary, Maguire (1987) have expressed that, the failures in most economic development projects are as a result of the emphasis on 'top-down' PM&E and therefore needs to be more bottom-up. For instance, PM&E has been explained as: "a process of self-assessment, collective knowledge production, and cooperative action in which the stakeholders in development interventions participate substantively in the identification of the evaluation issues, the design of

the evaluation, the collection and analysis of data, and the action taken as a result of the evaluation findings. By participating in this process, the stakeholders also build their own capacity and skills to undertake research and evaluation in other areas and to promote other forms of participatory development. The participatory evaluation seeks to give preferential treatment to the voices and decisions of the least powerful and most affected stakeholders 'the local beneficiaries of the intervention'" (Jackson and Kassam 1998). However, the field study and subsequently the analysis of the exciting PM&E revealed that: 'collective sharing of knowledge', 'setting common reference point for evaluation', 'common voice', 'beneficiaries representation' and 'given the least stakeholder a voice' are usually determined by the parameters set by programme implementers at the expense of target beneficiaries. This obviously deviates from a true consensus due to the extreme positions, interest, and perspectives of stakeholders and programme implementers.

Post-independence Ghana has witnessed numerous youth intervention programmes. The number has been unprecedented in the past two decades. Paradoxically, there are still discrepancies with regard to youth-oriented programmes and employment among the youth and the case study programme was no exception. Despite the huge informal sector in the country, youth without formal education continue to struggle to find decent employment prospects, while those with formal education are not guaranteed job opportunities in the labour market. While the entrepreneurial programme permitted both the former and the immediate group to be trained in varying modules, it was evident that the immediate group were neglected during the policy process (from project design to the impact evaluation) except data collection activities. The illusive youth participation in the formulation of youth-oriented intervention programmes continue to hamper the national socio-economic development agenda. It undermines sharing of knowledge, co-ownership, accountability, and ultimately programme sustainability. These have some adverse effects on the mainstream socioeconomic development agenda.

In addition, the number of youth intervention initiatives are premised on curbing the socio-economic challenges among the fastest growing generation, however, the success of these projects is questionable due to challenges which do not exclude project PM&E. It is, therefore, essential that policymakers embed

PM&E in various youth-oriented programmes not forgetting national policies. The emphasis on PM&E in the intervention programme was a more of rhetoric on the part staff and management rather than practical, where both the project beneficiaries and implementers benefit from the process. Finally, irrespective of the existence of PM&E unit in LESDEP, the need for support and building of capacity of the units with regards to finance, skills development and equipment in order is of great importance. While there was some form of consensus between beneficiaries and implementers, structured to empower the beneficiaries, it was tilted towards literate beneficiaries. The programme beneficiaries must take an active role in the PM&E, select their own representatives and not imposed on them by the implementers, which was revealed in the case study

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