ANALYSIS OF PERCEIVED EFFECT OF N-POWER PROGRAMME ON CREATION OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR AGRICULTURAL GRADUATES IN ABIA STATE,NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the effect of N-power programme on creation of employment opportunities for youths in Abia State, Nigeria. Multistage sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 100 respondents. Data for the study were collected through a well-structured questionnaire and analyzed with descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, means, percentages and z-test was used to test the hypotheses. The results of the study revealed that majority of the respondents (66%) were males while (86%) were married. About (35%) aged above 50 years; 82% had tertiary education and majority (53.0%) of the respondents had family sizes of 6-10 persons. Moderate proportion (40%) of the respondents gained income of N 41,000 per month. Result further revealed that the programme had effect on labour productivity with mean rating of 2.65 > 2.50, engagement in different entrepreneurial venture (x= 2.73 > 2.50) and self-dependence of youth youth (x=2.70 > 2.50); aspect of the programme that the respondents were satisfied with was relevance of the programme and conduciveness of the training environment (x= 2.90), followed by monthly stipend received during the programme (x= 2.82); there was high level of knowledge and skills acquisition provided by the programme with mean rating of (2.55 > 2.50); the programme provided requisite skills for the beneficiaries (x= 2.61> 2.50) with grand mean 2.35. Result of hypothesis one showed significant relationship (r = -0.267; p < 0.05) between beneficiaries' perception and their level of satisfaction on the N-power programme. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected at 0.05% level of significance. More so, result of hypothesis two showed that coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.042 with F-value of 1.050 which was however, not significant at 5% level. The study concluded that the

perceived effect of the programme has no relationship with participants' level of satisfaction and their socio-economic characteristics. It was recommended among others that economic policies should aim at enhancing creation of employment opportunities and youth entrepreneurial capability to improve socio-economic concerns of the youth.

Keywords: Youth, N-Power, Nigeria Government, Employment Creation

Introduction

N-Power is a platform where Nigeria youths acquire and develop skills. N-Power is designed for Nigerian citizens between the ages of 18 and 35.The modular programmes under N-Power ensure that each participant will learn and practice most of what is necessary to find or create work. According to Olawale (2018) N-power is a Federal Government of Nigeria sponsored programme under the social investment programme for job creation and empowerment initiatives. It is aimed to help reduce unemployment by helping the youths to create jobs and by providing a structure for large-scale and relevant work skills acquisition and development while linking its core and outcomes to fixing inadequate public services and stimulating the larger economy.

The N-Power Volunteer Corp involves a massive deployment of 500,000 graduates who will assist to improve the inadequacies in our public services in education, health and civic education. Actualizing Nigeria's economic and strategic aspirations of achieving food security and self-sufficiency was the expected outcome (http://www.npower.gov.ng/about-us.html).

N-Power is, also, a platform for diversifying the economy. N-Power is meant to prepare Nigerian youth for a knowledge economy where, equipped with world-class skills and certification, they become innovators and movers in the domestic and global markets. After the programme it is expected that Nigeria will have a pool of software developers, hardware service professionals, animators, graphic artists, building services professionals, artisans and others. N-Power also focuses on providing our non-graduates with relevant technical and business skills that enhance their work outlook and livelihood (http://www.npower.gov.ng/about-us.html).
In 2016, the Federal Government engaged 200,000 N-Power Volunteers and 300,000 in 2017. The N-Power programme is divided into classes such as: N-power . N-power teach, N-power tech software, N-power creative, N-power tech hardware, N-health, N-build, N-

tax. N-Power is linked to the Federal Government's policies in the economic, employment and social development arenas (http://www.npower.gov.ng/about-us.html).

The main objectives of the programme include: to reduce the rate of unemployment in the country; to bring about a system that would facilitate transferability of employability, entrepreneurial and technical skills; to bring solutions to ailing public service and Government diversification policy. N-Power Agro volunteers are to provide advisory services to farmers across the country. They will disseminate the knowledge that has been aggregated by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in the area of extension services. They will also gather data of Nigeria's agriculture assets (http://www.npower.gov.ng/about-us.html).

According to Division of Research Moore School of Business University of South Carolina (2010), employment is commonly understood as a measure of economic activity. Badejo (2015) stated that intellectual discourse and research in public policy, particularly in respect of youth empowerment, is engendered mainly by policy failures caused by lack of political will, corruption and negligence on the part of government to harness the potentials of the youth among other things. Youth unemployment has thus provoked studies aimed at resolving this menace given the immense role that can be played in the country's national development drive by the youth. Badejo (2015) further stated that in Nigeria, policies have been enunciated and implemented in a bid to correct certain perceived neglect of youths in terms of gainful employment by previous and current administration in the nation. Of all government policies deliberately put in place to address problems of unemployment among youths in Nigeria through affirmative action, the policy of N-power under National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) occupies a pride of place but there is the need to assess it to identify if there is gap between its expected end and achievements so far in Abia State from 2016 till date.

The driving forces of economic growth and social development are skills and knowledge. Despite the current high level of unemployment, harnessing Nigeria's young demography through appropriate skill development efforts provides an opportunity to achieve inclusion and productivity within the country .Agary (2010). Large-scale skill development is the main policy thrust of the N-Power Programme. N-Power is aimed at addressing the challenge of youth unemployment by providing a structure for large scale and relevant work skills acquisition and development while linking its core and outcomes to fixing inadequate public services and stimulating the larger economy

(http://www.npower.gov.ng/about-us.html).

Creation of employment opportunities has been a long term issue in Nigeria. International Labour Organization (ILO) reported that the employment rate in Nigeria between 2007 and 2017 was 13.41% which shows a poor level of employment opportunities for youth who are qualified to work and had reduced from 13.41% to 9.85%recently (ILO survey study, 2018).

Most youths in Nigeria have been self-employed; however, with the continuous decline in providing opportunities for the youth in Nigeria, it does appear that population of youths who are currently available for work, but without work is on the increase leading to greater unemployment rate annually by 15.3% according to National Bureau of Statistic (NBS), (2017). Not much intellectual resources have been deployed to assessing N-power policy as a vehicle for job creation in Abia State as well as tool for youth empowerment. However, the study is interested in knowing if jobs are created, youths are empowered and unemployment rate reduced with the implementation of N-power programmes such as N-power Agro.

The Government of Nigeria has formulated and implemented Social Investment policy to harness the potentials of the youth and address the problem of unemployment (Azikiwe, 2006). Whilesimilar patterns of this scheme have been formulated by past successive governments, much of these schemes if not all, have failed to achieve their expected outcomes. Based on this regard, it was necessary to assess the effect of N-power programme on creation of employment opportunities for Agricultural Graduate in Abia State.

The aim of this study was to analyze the effect of N-power programme on creation of employment opportunities for youths in Abia State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were to:

    i. describe the socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents in the study area.

    ii. .deterrmine the effect of the programme on Agricultural Youth employed in the study area

    iii. determine the level of employment opportunities created by the programme in the study area.

    iv. ascertain the level of achievement of the objectives of the programme in the study area.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Abia State of Nigeria. Abia State is inhabited by the Igbo people. **Abia** is an acronym formed from the initial letters of four groups of people, namely: Aba, Bende, Isuikwuatoand Afikpo. These constituted the major groups in the State at its creation. The State is made up of twenty-seven (27) Local Government Areas EkweanyaMbah, Odoh, andNwankwo, (2019). The major ethnic group is Ibo and thus the Igbo language is the local language widely spoken in the area. Abia State is richly endowed culturally. This is evident in the people's mode of dressing, dancing, arts and crafts, as well as festivals and the widely known in lbo traditional hospitality.

The major tree crops grown in the area are palm, cocoa and rubber, while food crops such as yam, cassava, rice, plantain, banana, maize and cocoyam are produced. The Bende agricultural zone is a major producer of rice and yam. Fishing is, also, carried out by people who live along the Imo River. Large areas of forest can be found in all the Local Government Areas. They provide raw materials for the pulp and paper industry (http://www.abiaState.gov.ng, 2015). The State is one of the 36 States of Nigeria and it is located in the South- Eastern Geopolitical Zone or region of Nigeria. Abia State lies between longitudes $7^{\circ}23^{1}$ and $8^{\circ}2^{1}$ East of the equator and latitudes $4^{\circ}47^{1}$ and $6^{\circ}12^{1}$ North of the Greenwich Meridian (Ekweanya *et al*, 2018).

The State shares boundaries with Enugu and Ebonyi States in the North, Rivers State in the South, Cross River and Akwa – Ibom States in the East and Imo State in the West respectively. Abia State has a total population of 2,845,380 out of which 1,430,298 were males and 1,415,082 were females respectively (NPC, 2006). The population density of Abia State was put at 486 persons per km^{2} and 49.3 % of the total population of the State was actively employed out of which 42.6 % was in agriculture or agriculture-related (Ekong, 2010). About 60-70% of the people in the rural areas engage in non-agricultural activities such as Road Transportation, Trading, Processing of agricultural commodities, Bar or Restaurants, Craft Making, Dye and Weave, Electronic repairs, Hairbarbing, Technician or Artisan, Traditional Healing, Soap making, Hairdressing, etc. and agricultural activities such as arable crops and minor livestock production (Obinna, and Nwaobiala, 2015,).

A multi-stage sampling technique was used in the selection of the sample from the population. The first stage involved the purposive selection of the three (3) agricultural zones of Abia State namely;Umuahia, Aba and Ohafia. The reason being that ADPs zonal

offices are located in those agricultural zones. The second stage involved simple random selection of respondents from the Abia ADP zonal offices. This reason was that the beneficiaries meet at ADP zonal offices for their training.

Table 1 below shows random selection of the respondents in the selected ADP zonal offices was adopted during data collection from N- beneficiaries which gave a total sample size of 100 respondents. Frequency of respondents as shown in each of the location of the ADP

ADP Zones	Respondents	Percentage
Umuahia	30	30
Ohafia	30	30
Aba	40	40
Total	**100**	**100**

Data for the study were collected from primary source. A structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents. Information was collected from journals; internet browsing etc. that is relevant to the study. Questionnaire used was divided into sections based on the specific objectives of the study and administered personally. Data collected for the study wereanalyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics (such as frequency distribution, percentages and mean) was used to realize objective i, ii, iii and iv as follows:

To determine the mean, Likert scale levels of each item was calculated by multiplying the frequency of each response pattern with its appropriate nominal value and divide the sum with the number of respondents to the items. This can be summarized as follows:

$$X = \sum fn/N \qquad \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots (1)$$

Where: X = Mean score;

$\qquad \sum$ = Summation;

$\qquad$ f = Frequency; and

$\qquad$ N = number of the respondent

The decision was based on the mean score on the Likert scale.

The following hypotheses were tested at 95% confidence level using correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis:

Ho$_1$: There is no significant relationship between the perception of the beneficiaries and their level of satisfaction on the N-power programme.

Ho$_2$: There is no significant relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of

the respondents and their perception on the N-power programme

Model specification

The correlation analysis model for hypothesis one above is expressed thus:

$$r = \frac{n(\Sigma xy) - (\Sigma x)(\Sigma y)}{\sqrt{[\, n\Sigma x^2 - (\Sigma x)^2\,]\,[\, n\Sigma y^2 - (\Sigma y)^2\,]}}$$

For the test statistic 't':

t   = $r\sqrt{n-2}/\sqrt{1-r^2}$

Where:

Σ =   Summation sign

r   =   Correlation coefficient

n   =   number of observations

x   =   independent variable

y   =   dependent variable

The multiple regression analysis model for hypothesis two above is expressed thus:

$Y = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + ei$

Where: Y   =   Perception mean score on the programme

X_1 =   Age (years)

X_2 =   Educational level (years)

X_3 =   Household size (Number of persons)

X_4 =   Income level (N)

b_0 =   Constant

$b_1 - b_4$ = Regression coefficients

ei   =   Error term

Resultsand Discussion

Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

The result of data analysis on socio-economic characteristics of beneficiaries is presented in Table 1. The result on sex shows that beneficiaries were predominantly male, making up of about 66% of the total respondents while the remaining 34% were female. This

indicates that there were more males engaged in N-power programme than female in the study area, Odey and Sambe (2019) found out that males are more actively involved in labour force than women.

According to Table majority of the respondents (86%) were married. About 14% are single or separated. Great importance is attached to the marriage institution in the society and this can impact on the extent to which income is generated .Ronald (2017) observed that young adults marry at younger age there by assuming responsibilities at early stage of their life. On the contrary Odey and Sambe (2019) revealed that unemployment may be one of the reasons why most of the youth are not married. Most youth seem to be scared of marriage probably because they cannot take charge of family responsibilities

The results further revealed that 35% of the beneficiaries were above 50 years old while 34% and 31% fell within the age bracket of 41 to 50 years and less or equal to 40 years respectively. This is an indication that young adults are involved in N-power programme. On average, young adults in the area that involve in N-power were up to 46 years old. Odey and Sambe (2019) observed that the programme engaged most of the youth on the ages where they need to be empowered for improvement in their living standard and human capital development.Ekweanya**,** Mbah, Odoh, and Nwankwo, (2019).Also indicated that the active age of the respondents help them to contribute to the social capital   network among youths in Abia State.

Result on education of respondents indicates that majority of the respondents (82.0%) had tertiary education and 11.0% of the respondents had secondary education. This indicates that most of the respondents in the N-power programme had undergone one form of formal education or the other and can quickly understand and adopt new innovations for better economic growth and performance in the study area. Education is a driving force towards rapid empowerment on livelihood activities. Furthermore, Odey and Sambe (2019) findings justify the engagement of more graduates in the programme in order to satisfy the need for teaching staff in primary schools. The finding also agrees with Okoro and Bassey (2018) who appreciated "the attempt by the Federal government of Nigeria through the N-Power scheme to fill the vacuum and improve basic education delivery in Nigeria

Table 2, also, shows that 53.0% of the respondents had family sizes of 6 to 10 persons in their households while 30% had less than or equal to 5 persons. Household size with many people is likely to provide the income to satisfy their needs. The average household size in the area was 6 persons. This shows that respondents had a manageable family size

The results on income of respondents revealed that 40% of the respondents gained ≥ N

41,000 per month, 29% gained within N 21,000 to N 30,000, while 26% gained within N 31,000 - N 40,000 in their different livelihood activities. This result could be attributed to the contribution of N-power programme to income generation of the respondents.

Table 2:   Distribution of respondents by socio-economic characteristics

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Gender			
Male	66	66.0	
Female	34	34.0	
Total	**100**	**100.0**	
Marital Status			
Married	86	86.0	
Not Married/Separated	14	14.0	
Total	**100**	**100.0**	
Age			
= 40	31	31.0	
41 – 50	34	34.0	
= 51	35	35.0	
Total	**100**	**100.0**	**46.7**
Educational Level			
Primary Education	7	7.0	
Secondary Education	11	11.0	
Tertiary Education	82	82.0	
Total	**100**	**100.0**	
Household size			
= 5	30	30.0	
6 – 10	53	53.0	
11 – 15	17	17.0	
Total	**100**	**100.0**	**6.0**
Income Level (₦/Month)			
= ₦20,000	5	5.0	
₦21,000 – ₦30,000	29	29.0	
₦31,000 – ₦40,000	26	26.0	
= ₦41,000	40	40.0	
Total	**100**	**100.0**	**₦ 38,530.00**

Source: Field survey data, 2019

*Effect of N- Power programme on agricultural youth employment*Table 3presented the respondents' rating of the effect of N-Power on youth employment in the study area. The Result revealed that the programme had effect on labour productivity with mean rating of 2.65> 2.50, engagement in different entrepreneurial venture (x= 2.73> 2.50) and self-dependence of youth (x=2.70 > 2.50), but had no effect on unemployment rate (x = 2.12 < 2.50). The finding implies that N-Power programmehad a positive effect on youth employment judging from the grand mean (x=2.54). The result corroborated with Akujuru and Enyioko (2019) who revealed that N-power programmes to a great extent generated employment for the youths. According Odey and Sambe (2019) and Abin (2018) N-Power programme has made positive impact on youth empowerment which manifests itself through poverty reduction, financial independence, improved socio-economic lives of beneficiaries among others. Ronald (2017) reported that N-power programmes have collectively impacted positively on the youth by empowering them to participate in gainful entrepreneurial ventures. The result supports the findings of Bisong (2019)which indicated that there exists a positive effect on employment generation. In other words, the s c h e m e   l e d   t o   p o s i t i v e   c h a n g e s   i n   j o b   c r e a t i o n .

No.	Item				
1.	Improve the level of self-actualizations		215	2.15	Not satisfied
2.	Relevance of programme and conduciveness of the training environment		290	2.90	Satisfied
3.	Coordination of the programme	203	2.03	Not satisfied	
4.	Programme effectiveness in achieving the objectives		225	2.25	Not satisfied
5.	Monthly stipend received from the programme		282	2.82	Not satisfied
	Grand Mean		**2.43**		**Not satisfied**

Table 4: Level of satisfaction about the N-power programme

Level of employment opportunities created by the programme in the study area.
The result of data analysis on level of employment opportunities created in the study area is presented in Table   below.Table 5 presented the level of employment opportunities created by the programme in the study area. The result revealed that there was high level of knowledge and skills acquisition provided by the programme with mean rating of 2.55 > 2.50. Furthermore, the result indicated that during the course of the programme, creation of job opportunities was low with mean rating of 2.37 < 2.50. Judging from the grand mean of 2.46 < 2.50 there was low level of employment opportunities created by the

programme in the study area. This implies that while there were high positive response from the respondents, suggesting the programme had provided them with practical knowledge needed to enter into the labour market, it did not address mass unemployment Allana,(2003). It paid youth to take up vocational skills, but the industrial sector did not expand to create sustainable vocational jobs. It created a mini-population of skilled but unemployed youth. The result also may be attributed to poor coordination and execution of the programme, poor implementation of the programme policies, corruption, political interference, wilting economy, attitude of coordinators and beneficiaries among others. Victor (2016) reported that the programme is expected to provide employment opportunities for youth as teachers, agriculture extension advisors, healthcare assistants, and civic and adult education instructors, software developers, hardware service professionals, animators, graphic artists, building services professionals, artisans among others. Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS) 2018 data showed a 23.1% increase in unemployment rate for the third quarter of 2018 brought the whole figure of the unemployed in the country to over 21 million. According to Mulgunji (2014) Youth empowerment programmes of the government alone cannot successfully provide employment or reduce poverty that this country looks forward to.

Table .Level of employment opportunities created by the programme

S/N	Statements	N = 100 ∑FX	$\overline{X}$	Remarks
1.	Job opportunities provided by the programme	237	2.37	Low
2.	Knowledge and skills acquisitions provided			
	by the programme	255	2.55	High
	Grand Mean		2.46	Low

Source: Field Survey, 2019

* Decision Rule: Above 2.5 = High

* Decision Rule: Less than 2.5 = Low

Level of achievement of the objectives of the programme in the study area

The result of data analysis on level of achievement of the objectives of N-Power programmein the study area is presented in Table 6below. The result in Table 5.0 revealed the beneficiaries' perception towards the achievement of the objectives of the programme. The findings shows that the programme provided requisite skills for the beneficiaries (x= 2.61> 2.50). The grand mean 2.35 shows that the objectives of the respondentswere not

achieved. This may be attributed to constraints such as access to factors of production, poor post-empowerment support by the government, inadequate monitoring and evaluation, poor implementation of relevant policies, uncertainty over the political environment to support programme objectives, lack of technical sustainability of the programme, corruption among others.

Salako and Badmus (2014) stated that most government's empowerment programmes often fail to achieve the targeted goals due to inadequate funding. Relating to policy issue, IITA (2005) advanced that overtime policy instability, policy inconsistencies, narrow base of policy formulation, poor policy implementation and weak institutional framework for policy coordination have remained constraints to effective empowerment programmes and development.

Table 6:   Distribution of the respondents by the level of achievement of the objectives of the programme

S/N Statements	N = 100 ∑FX	$\bar{X}$	Remarks
1.Providing beneficiaries with requisite skills	261	2.61	Achieved
2.Providing work experience opportunities towards job employment for unemployed youth	235	2.35	Not Achieved
3.Linking policies towards enhancing public services	229	2.29	Not Achieved
4Providing advisory (extension) services to farmers across the country	216	2.16	Not Achieved
Grand Mean		**2.35**	**Not Achieved**

Source: Field Survey, 2019
* Decision Rule: Above 2.5 = Achieved
* Decision Rule: Less than 2.5 = Not Achieved

Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: hypothesis one states that there is no significant relationship between the perception of the beneficiaries and their level of satisfaction on the N-power programme is presented in Table 7 below.The result of the correlation analysis shows that there was a significant relationship ($r = -0.267$; $p < 0.05$) between beneficiaries' perception and their level of satisfaction on the N-power programme. The negative correlation coefficient indicates that the level of satisfaction on the N-power programme has a negative influence on the perception of the beneficiaries about the N-power programme. Based on the result

of the correlation analysis, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the perception of the beneficiaries and their level of satisfaction on the N-power programme was rejected while the alternative hypothesis was accepted. The study, therefore, concludes that there is a relationship between the perception of the beneficiaries and their level of satisfaction on the N-power programme. Ronald (2017) findings indicates that the N-power programmes have collectively impacted positively on youth empowerment and participate in gainful entrepreneurial ventures.

Table 7: Correlation result of the relationship between perception of the beneficiaries and level of satisfaction on the N-power programme

Variables	r-value	p-value	Remark
Perception of the beneficiaries * level of satisfaction			
On the N-power programme	-0.267	0.007***	Significant

Decision: Null hypothesis rejected at 5% level of significance.
Source: Field Survey, 2019

Hypothesis 2: The result of hypothesis two that states that there is no significant relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and their perception on the N-power programme is presented in Table 8. The result shows the estimated regression analysis of the relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and their perception on the N-power programme. The analysis shows that there is a positive relationship between socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and their perception on the N-power programme although the "r" value of 0.206 shows a weak relationship. This could be explained by the fact that other factors outside the selected socio-economic characteristics of the respondents influence perception of the programme. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.042 with F-value of 1.050 is however not significant at 5% level. Hence, the F-test accepts the null hypothesis that, there is no significant relationship between socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and their perception on the N-power programme, while the alternative hypothesis is accepted. From this the study concludes that socio-economic characteristics of the respondents do not influence their perception of the N-power programme.

Table 7.0: **Relationship between socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and their perception on the N-power programme**

Variables	Coefficient	Standard Error	T-value	P-value
Constant	3.593	3.864	0.930	0.355
Age(X_1)	0.620	0.434	1.429	0.156
Education(X_2)	-0.285	0.294	-0.969	0.335
Household size (X_3)	-0.186	0.214	-0.868	0.387
Income level (X_4)	-0.228	0.342	-0.665	0.508
R	0.206			
R^2	0.042			
Adjusted R^2	0.002			
F-Ratio	1.050			

Source: Field Survey, 2019.
Decision: Null hypothesis accepted at 5% level of significance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

N-Power programmes hold a lot of potentials that would lead to increased employment opportunities for youths in Nigeria. No effort should be spared in optimizing its promising objectives through implementing the right policies for the realization of creation of employment opportunities. The study has shown that the perception of the N-power programmes initiated by FGN have not shown satisfaction of youth on empowerment and engagement in gainful entrepreneurial ventures. Furthermore, the findings of the study has shown that social and economic concerns of the respondents have no relationship with the perception of the respondents.

In line with the findings of the study the following recommendations were made that:

i. economic policies should aim at enhancing creation of employment opportunities and youth entrepreneurial capability;

ii. appropriate legislation to protect the programme form political interference and, proper monitoring and evaluation should be adopted in order to achieve the objectives of the programme;

iii. beneficiaries should be equipped with better exit package for independence and sustainability which would consequently lead to adequate satisfaction about the programme.

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