

Youths and Career Development in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects

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Abstract

This paper is a broad overview of youths and career development in Nigeria. In discussing the sub- topics therein, Nigeria peculiarities were taken into consideration. The discourse captured salient areas like youth upbringing, strategies for crime and juvenile delinquency control, youth gangs, youth education, youth unemployment among others were identified as problem areas among Nigerian youths. The paper argues that a critical evaluation of Nigerian educational system is needed to ensure that graduates do not rely on while collar jobs or only jobs provided by Government. The type of education being proposed is that which will be able to inculcate in the youths the skills needed to be self reliant; education that will instill into the minds of its graduates the ability to forecast the business World and be able to discern what the need of the society would be and work towards it. The discourse also suggested the formulation and implementation of public policy that would anchor on effective electricity generation. Hitherto, instability in the business sector is engendered by epileptic electricity supply.

Stability in electricity generation would readily create enabling environment needed for business to thrive in Nigeria.

Keywords: Youth, career development, unemployment

Introduction

The concept of youth was a subject of debate in Nigeria for so long. It was finally determined by age-range. Every new administration decides what age-range would be in the youth category. Age 7-30, age 12-30, age 18-20. It has been agreed as a matter of convenience that 30 which features in the *National Youth Corpse Decree*, is the limiting age for youth in Nigeria (Arazu, 2008, Egboh et. al 2009).

Those above the age of 30 maximum, according to the National Youth Policy for Nigeria, may be accepted to play the roles of youth leaders, youth organizers, youth animators, etc. The National Youth Council of Nigeria got this clause enshrined in the youth policy.

Factors that motivate proper youth upbringing

The individual is subjected to the control of the social system. In other words, the ideals of a group must be by the society in which we live. This goes to show that we are shaped by the society in which we live. Adults motives are derived largely from individuals' social experience/interaction until death.. This process contends Ntunde (2005) is socialization.

Socialization

Socialization according to Horton and Hunt in Ntude (2005) is the process whereby one internalizes the norms of his group so that a distinct 'self' emerges unique to this individual. man is shaped by the society. This process of shaping begins in earliest infancy. It is life long process of internalizing the norms of one's group. One learns the ways of life of his people or groups. So culture is transmitted to the individuals. The effect of socialization is that man imbibes or fails to imbibe the societal values, norms and value systems. Many factors of socialization argues Okey (2000) include:

(a) The Family

The child's socialization is carried out predominantly in the family by parents, brothers and sisters. But the role of the mother is more pronounced. From earliest infancy the child begins to be trained right from the first contact with the mother. The family lays the foundation for the child's socialization. The child is taught how to talk, eat, and walk and the habits necessary for life and manners (Egboh, et. al. 2009).

There are some structural attributes of the family that affect a child's socialization. These include: size of the family, the birth order of the child, environment where the family resides, class of the family etc (Egbue, 2001).

(b) *The Church*

The church is also another important factor in socializing a child. Children who are taken to the church early by parents tend to imbibe good morals than those who are distanced from the church and other religious activities.

© *The Peer group*

The type of group a child mingles with plays significant role in his/her upbringing. Evidence has shown that a child that mixes up with criminals is likely to be a criminal.

Juvenile Delinquency

Generally, juvenile delinquency involves young offenders in the society contends Newton (2008). These categories of offenders are youths who have not reached the age of criminal responsibility. In this sense, these offenders are not legally liable to face normal legal criminal procedure in the criminal law court unlike their adult criminal counterparts Uwandu (2009). Their exemption from criminal courts is hinged on the preemption that they (the young offenders) are incapable of criminal intent which is a basic ingredient of a criminal act. Alternatively, juvenile courts are established purposely for this category of offenders to help rehabilitate them rather than trying and punishing them.

In the light of the above, juvenile delinquency can be defined as the behavior of the youth (those below the age of adult) which deviate from the societal norms and values to warrant their being perceived as menace to themselves in particular and to their society at large (Newton, 1999). In other words juvenile offender is a delinquent child who has committed any act which, if it were committed by an adult, would be a crime.

Strategies of crime and juvenile delinquency control

The threats posed by the consequences of high crime and juvenile delinquency rates to the society make the designing and implementation of their control strategy a compelling necessity. According to Sun (2010) the intervention methods to be adopted include the following:

(a) Mother-therapy: Children tend to take more to their mother, thus the mother's advice, intervention and modeling especially at the infant stage of the child is very important to control delinquency and crime in a child.

(b) Professional and clergy men therapy: The clergy men, professional psychologists, counselors, teachers or psychiatrists intervene.

(c) Prison, asylum and confinement: Crime and juvenile delinquency is also controlled by reminding the culprit in prison, asylum or other forms of confinement.

(d) Other control measures include:

- Socialization
- Proper socialization of the child
- Group pressure.

Gangs

Yablousky (1969) classified gangs into three:

- the social gang
- the delinquent gang and
- the violent gang

(a) **The social gang:** This is relatively permanent organization of youths that hang around stores, clubs, etc. The members intimately know one another with sense of we-feeling. What they engage in is directed towards their benefit and is acceptable to the society. Leadership in the gang is based on popularity and constructive leadership qualities. They don't engage in delinquent behavior typical examples are the youth gangs in some of the neighborhood.

(b) **The delinquent gang:** This is a group that comes together to carry out one illegal act or the other like burglary, assault. It is made up of small number of youths. Too many of them will spoil the intimacy required for cohesion. They train themselves to act out illegal behavior.

© **The violent gang:** These are groups organized around violent activities. They act in accordance with the emotional need of their members. The members get charged at the least provocation. They are known to be hostile and aggressive.

Deviance

Deviance is every where. It may be a matter of cheating, lying, and failure to take one's turn. It may be defined as any form of behavior that violates the norms of a social group by laws.

Deviance can be classified under two main categories argues Thompson (2008):

- Acts such as murder, rape, suicide and robbery
- Deviant behaviors include such behavior as drug addiction, alcoholism, gambling, rape, kidnapping, etc.

How to achieve sustainable child survival and development

Child survival, character molding and development are more or less dependent on the effectiveness of women of the house. Men have little or no time to tend to their children. Children nurtured by men as a single parent often fall victims of many social vices like membership of gang, cult, alcoholism, crime etc

What should parents do to avert calamity?

(a) Should monitor their children's behavior relentlessly, any form of deviant behavior noticed, the child should be scolded, cautioned or counseled.

(b) Parents should not do funny things with like romancing, fighting, exchange of words in the presence of their children.

© Children should be told the truth at all times.

(d) Parents should restrict their children from mingling with friends and companions of questionable character.

(e) Parents should not over pamper their children. It is better to 'spare the child and spoil the rod'.

(f) Parents should take their children to church, christian fellowships from the prime of their age. It is the duty of parents to lead their children to Christ early enough. God will ask parents questions about their children on the ‘last day’.

(g) Women, even if your husbands are incapacitated, not economically viable or deviants who dodge responsibilities, take up the challenge and ensure that you bring your children up properly, academically and otherwise. You will certainly reap the fruit of your labor. You will soon be called ‘mama doctor’, mama lawyer’, mama engineer’. You will also be invited to spend good days in foreign and developed countries.

(h) Parents should not neglect the health of their children. They should be meticulous to know when they require medical attention.

(i) Women should show love to their children even if their father do not.

Creating an enabling environment for youth survival

For the youths to develop as responsible citizens patriotic and forward looking argues Uzodinma (2005), certain conditions or requirements must be in place. Good education is the sum total of such requirements, good or sound education is the development of the whole man or woman, body, psyche, mind and spirit. Any educational policy that neglects any one of these constituents of the human personality is doomed to failure and as such would produce human beings who would be anything but what man was meant to be:

(a) The body is developed through physical education, health-care, good food and water, cleanliness, good housing and ventilation etc.

(b) The psychic life is developed through good social interaction in the family, in the school or age-grade, in the religious gathering, in the wider society. The emotions are controlled and channeled along the avenues approved by culture and custom.

- (c) The mind is trained through formal and informal education. The arts and science disputation and argumentation, more elaborate training in scientific and other research programs – all these help the mind grow and expand.
- (d) Spiritual training is more complex and very often neglected. That man is a spiritual being is evident in his ability to conceive of and possess abstract ideas or concepts like beauty, infinity, patriotism, originality etc. Such ideas are in-tangible, non-material, and abstract. They are as such spiritual. They exist beyond the ability of sense perception. That faculty or power in us, which produces and harbors or keeps such abstract concepts or ideas, must have the part of that which is perceived and harbored. An Igbo adage has it that *'agwo adi amu ife di nkeke'* (the snake's offspring cannot be short). A spiritual or abstract concept in man's mind is proof that man is spiritual at the core of his being. This aspect of man's nature is very often neglected in educational policies and the so-called educated man ends up parading himself as a glorified animal. He or she does not aspire for happiness above what the senses can enjoy. Outside eating, drinking, sleeping and mating, like any other beast or bird, there is nothing higher to aim at.

Youth Unemployment in Nigeria

There was a time in Nigeria when higher education certificates such as B.Sc, M.Sc., HND or even NCE were regarded or nick-named "meal ticket". Then, holders of such certificates were highly honored and respected.. Reason being that they have jumped over poverty line. Their certificates give them automatic access to near riches or say wealth. Then too, only a few were holders of such degrees, yet there were many juicy jobs waiting at the door steps of a graduate. The academic world was good.

The economy was flourishing to the advantage of this class of citizens. A lot of laurels were knocking at their doors including good residential areas such as G.R.As in most of the big cities. In fact any degree holder in any discipline was regarded as a rich man or woman. Educational planners and managers had no stones to grind as to innovations and planning for future eventual changes.

Today things have changed. "Poverty" – a 'dreaded monster' now knocks at the door of graduates of higher institutions as well as others. Poverty may be defined as "the state of being poor or without competent subsistence, need, penury. (Webster International Dictionary 1999 Edition). . So what has

to be done is to reposition our educational system to alleviate Poverty. It then means our educational system is no longer able to assist in alleviating poverty that is, providing its graduates with the necessary tools to sustain themselves. Therefore we could make bold to say that poverty among youths is occasioned by unemployment.

There is no gainsaying that Nigerian society is facing all forms of social disorder arising from youth unemployment Chukwuemeka,(2009). Everyday, there are reports of robbery burglary, car snatching, forgery, impersonation, rape, kidnapping and other vices. There is a general belief that most of the acts are carried out by unemployed youths and youths that are not stable in their employment. In most of our streets and public places, the unemployed youths wonder about. This is mostly because they find themselves without any means of livelihood. In the circumstances, the alternative is to device some means to survive.

The problem of youth unemployment in Nigeria argue Chukwuemeka and Onudugo (2009) is a herculean task. According to Ude (2010) the quest for white collar jobs has also led to unemployment. Owing to societal expectations, many jobs are looked down upon. Imagine a situation where undergraduates in the various facets of education would vow never to hold a piece of chalk, or browse through files in the bureaucracy. When youths are unemployed the tendency deviant behaviors are high. Kingsley (2004) is of the view that unemployed graduates sometimes indulge in drug abuse because they want to be far removed from society. They want to visit fantasy land where there is no gnashing of teeth. It could still force a graduate to contemplate suicide and actually go ahead to commit it. The basic problem is how to create or provide adequate employment opportunities that will create employment for the millions of unemployed youths, so as to fend for them-selves, and ensure that the youths accept to adjust with the available employment opportunities instead of pressing on or desiring a particular type of employment.

How to curb youth unemployment

- (a) Ability of the Government to implement effective monetary and fiscal policies and at the same time formulate and execute a policy of self-employment by creating entrepreneurial-friendly environment.
- (b) Creating a stable political and economic system that could attract investment both domestic and foreign.
- © The Government should provide financial assistance for self employment through a properly articulated micro-credit scheme that would enable enterprising youths obtain soft loans for establishment of micro businesses.
- (d) Electricity generation should be stabilized. It follows that when formulating power/energy policies, all the stake holders ought to come together to ensure that areas of problems are addressed and those involved in the implementation need to have the technical know how required. The Obasanjo's led administration invested whooping sums of money in the energy sector, and yet no improvement is recorded in the sector. The 1700 MHW currently generated as against 50,000MHW recommended minimum MHW argues Soludo (2006) calls for serious rethinking by the Federal Government of Nigeria.
- (e) Youths should pursue employment where they have the flair, skill or calling
- (f) A change and a critical evaluation of our educational system are indeed needed. education that will make its graduates not to rely on white collar jobs or on only work provided by Government of the day. Education that will be able to inculcate in its graduates the skills needed to be self reliant, Education that will instill into the minds of its graduates the ability to forecast the business world and be able to discern what the need of the society would be and work towards it, education that offers its owners self confidence, self ego and other qualities.

Youth Empowerment

Youth development argues (2010) is the process of continuous improvement of the youth development. structures, institutions and programs in order to create a social condition, the rights of the youth are advanced and protected, their welfare enhanced, and their effective functioning and self actualization ensured. Youth development is a sine-quo-non for youth empowerment.

Components of Youth Development and Empowerment

- (1) Youth employment –employment opportunities should be provided by the ruling elites to gainfully employ and empower the youths who incidentally are the future leaders. Where there is insufficient paid employment, the ruling petit-bourgeoisies should create enabling environment to sustain entrepreneurship and operation of small scale ventures.
- (2) Youth education and training – education is power, it is one of the major indicators of measuring development. Therefore youth training programs including vocational training through talent/skill assessment inventory.
- (3) Entrepreneurship skill acquisition should be inculcated in the educational curriculum to cut across all specter of educational system in order to position the youths in act of management, analysis and effective operation of business.
- (4) Research, evaluation and publication of such researches, especially those that relate to skill acquisition would foster youth development.
- (5) Liaising with state youth departments and international organizations
- (6) National Youth Award scheme
- (7) International youth exchange program
- (8) Youth holiday program
- (9) National youth camps and
- (10) Coordinating activities of national voluntary youth organizations.
- (11) Youth mobilization – Political and social mobilization agencies should be set up and their services should be complemented by non-governmental organizations. They will handle youth

mobilization, business and political education. Funds should be made available for effective running of such outfits.

- (12) Establishment of coordinating bodies to monitor and evaluate government programs and policies as they relate to the youths.

Conclusion

The challenges facing Nigerian youths are too many and inexhaustible. Nigeria is the Giant of Africa. As the Giant of Africa she has sunk so much money for the survival of African nation-states. But yet the rate of unemployment, youth neglect, social vices, poverty appears to be topping that of other African states. Therefore the solution to these problems is for us to imbibe psychological re-orientation which would mean building a stable state that will be devoid of corruption and bad leadership.

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