

# CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT IN NIGERIA

BY

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## **Abstract**

*The issue of youth empowerment for the development of careers in their fields of endeavour cannot be over emphasised. It is important to note that when a youth is developed career wise he now has ample opportunity, skill and zeal to develop the nation. The empowerment of youths for career development becomes imperative considering the dearth of employment opportunities available to our youths. It is based on the above premise that the paper examined the concept of career development and youth empowerment; the role of family and education in youth career development; various empowerment programmes open to the youths, problems of youth career development and the vices of youth unemployment to the country. Recommendations were directed at ensuring that the government; families; schools; religious organisations should give the youths best career development programmes. Education has long been acknowledged as a potent force which could be harnessed in solving societies' myriads of problems vis-à-vis youth empowerment and career development. To do this education should inculcate in the youths the skills needed to be self reliant; 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 people who take advantage of career development and ever-changing world are aware that nothing is stationary except change. Ogbimi (2002) defined career as a course of life endeavour. It is expressed as a consecutive and progressive achievement in a field of interest wherewith the individual's livelihood is intended. In this same manner Herr and Cramer (1984) sees career as a life style concept that involves a sequence of work or leisure activities in which one engages throughout a lifetime. Herr and Cramer further indicated that careers are unique to each person and are dynamic, unfolding throughout life. Career development is not only an important activity for integration into an individual's life but also a necessary activity. Career development can be seen as enumeration of consecutive jobs and training. Activities show that career development is gaining importance and it has become increasingly relevant for both

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employees and employers to adjust where and when necessary. The word career is viewed from different points. Some see career as a course of successive situations that make up activities such as sporting, musical or work experience.

According to Atueyi and Isiaku (2011) career development can be seen as the hub of any meaningful development since man heeds to all activities on earth. It is important to note that when a youth is developed career wise he now has the ample opportunity, skill and zeal to develop the nation. Career development enhances the satisfaction of needs, rapid technical development, business growth, community development as well as national development. Career development is an organised planning method used to match the needs of a business with the career goals of employees. Formulating a career development plan can help employees to do their job more efficiently. Career is the totality of work one does in one's life time, and it is person oriented. A career involves not only systematic education for the initial occupation, but also a systematic occupational experience in which each occupation is considered as technical and social preparation for the succeeding ones. Career works therefore enable youths to choose a life rather than simply a living; the chosen occupation will globally shape the person and his life style. Chuke and Ukpabia (2010) outlined the following as elements of career development.

- ❖ Personality and characteristics
- ❖ Value appreciation
- ❖ Skill evaluation
- ❖ Knowledge and learning
- ❖ Entrepreneurship/career alternative.

Osuala (1998) commented that “career development has become increasingly important to youths who are preparing to work in a society that is typified by changing technologies, job distributions, economic outlooks, employer's requirements and expectations and family structures”. In this paper, a holistic approach to career development and youth empowerment were discussed.

## **Youth and the Family**

The concept of youth was a subject of debate in Nigeria for so long. It was finally determined by age-range. Youth is demystified as the time when a person is young especially the time before a child becomes as adult. It is defined by Geddis and Grosset (2005) as the state or quality of being young. Every new administration decides what age would be in the youth category. Age 7 – 30; age 12 – 30; age 18 – 20. It has been agreed as a matter of convince that 30 which features in the National Youth Service Corp Decree, is the limiting age for youth in Nigeria (Arazu, 2008). 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.

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The family is an indispensable factor in the education of children. Ordinarily, education begins at the family before moving to other organs of education like school and church etc. It is in the family that children receive material, intellectual, emotional and religious or spiritual development. The importance attached to family in the education of children is such that family serves as a substratum in the formative stage before they go into the formal system of education. It is not surprisingly that the early stage of one's life is cherished considering the deep impression usually made in the mental faculties. According to Otefor (2009), the most important period of man's education is that of the early years of his development when he is most tender and pliable. It is of prime importance to see that the combination of circumstances and conditions which surround the child during this period of his formation is as very effective and lasting as possible.

It is pertinent at this point to identify the implicit of career development in an individual pattern of education and employment over the course of his working life career. Longman (2000) defined development as the gradual growth of something which becomes bigger or more advanced. Training and education are programmes aimed at preparing youths for career development. The success of career educational structure is determined by the success of the functions carried out; the individual and the societal benefits accrued from it so as to provide the foundation for career development. Family has a vital role towards nurturing a child towards the appropriate career in life for him to contribute his quota towards national development.

### **Youth Empowerment and Career Development**

Empowerment has assumed a household name especially when talking about unequal power relations between people who are otherwise ought to share powers equitably in matters that affect their lives and future endeavour (Madunagu 2005). Empowerment is expected to transform the unequal power relation to equitable power sharing in favour of the less powerful. This is the reason why we hear phrases such as women empowerment, convention on the rights of the child and youth empowerment. The phrase points to the reality that some groups in the society are at the receiving end of unequal power relations among which are the youths. Most Nigerian youths do not want to identify with the only country we can call home, Nigeria. The right thing is to start contributing to the development of the nation, beginning from the individuals – the youths.

According to Madunagu (2005) Youth Empowerment refers to the process by which youths gain inner power to express and defend their rights and gain greater self confidence, self identity, self esteem and control over their lives, personal and social relationships. The word empowerment has been jargonized and depoliticised by its various users, it is in its fullest sense a liberating grassroots concept which has its political roots in power by the people (Whermer, 1998). It is a process with the socio-political goals – the equalizing of power and basic rights. As a general concept, it is the process by which disadvantaged people work together to increase control over events

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that determine their lives. As noted by Mohammed (2004), despite the fact that Nigeria is ranked as the sixth richest nation in the world in terms of crude oil reserve and supply, and the fact that the country ranks among the nations that are blessed in terms of human and material endowment, her citizens are wallowing in abject poverty with little or no economic empowerment for the larger percentage of the populace.

The youth empowerment scheme popularly tagged project YES is a registered non-governmental organization initiated by Hajiya Kure, the former first lady of Niger state. The scheme which was actually introduced in April 2000 was registered as a non-profitable making venture with the corporate Affairs Commission of Nigeria with registration number RC13705 (Ohize and Adamu 2009). According to the initiator and motivator project YES is a form of human development intervention organisation which offer opportunity for a wide range of vocational skills training for the youths because of their socio-economic situation (Kuti, 2006). The scheme is targeted at training youths by empowering them economically and socially. It is expected to interfere in their educational pursuit and offer an opportunity for initiating behavioural changes in the youth.

Another youth empowerment programme is Junior Achievement of Nigeria (JAN). It is the world's oldest and largest non-profit economic education organisation designed to help students understand the world of work and help them discover and reach their full potential. Junior Achievement operated in 112 countries around the world with entrepreneurial and leadership programmes that are delivered to schools by trained volunteers from the private sector. Junior Achievement of Nigeria began operations in Nigeria in 1999 and has reached over 6,000 students in approximately 30 primary and secondary schools in Lagos, Abuja and Enugu (Sesan, 2002). JAN seeks to inspire and educate young people (ages 5 – 25) and empower them so that they can become business leaders that can compete with their peers anywhere in the world. To achieve this, JAN implements economic education programmes that develop attitudes and skills necessary for personal success and social responsibility.

Some of the programmes are company programme which is an extremely practical programme where students establish and run their own company. Elementary school programme seeks to provide role models for elementary students; explore business and workplace; create connection between young people and the business world; explore economic concepts; build interdisciplinary skills in various fields. Venture in management programme is a programme that allows members of the National Youth Service Corps from corporations of all sizes and types to participate in a rigorous mini-MBA session that will introduce them to the rewards and challenges of general management and entrepreneurship.

Leadership empowerment achievement and development programme is designed to develop and empower girls to become young women leaders and achievers. Personal economics/economics of staying in school is geared towards making students

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understand the cost of leaving school early and the benefits of obtaining an education. Career programme is designed by JAN to help bridge the wide gap between Nigerian University students and their peers in other parts of the world. Enabling the future is a partnership project between JAN and Microsoft which involve the establishment of a sustainable Information Technology and Business Acquisition Centre. JAN is dynamic in the delivery of programmes and helps in improving the lives of Nigeria's youth. Other ways that can enhance career development amongst our youths is loan grant to farmers; incentives to critical areas that can give employment; establish progressive schemes that can encourage youth employment; establishing and sustaining good policies that positively influence the youth and encouraging of investment and subsidies in agriculture. Youth Empowerment is the backbone of national development and point in the direction of self-induced empowerment as a viable option for today's Nigerian Youth.

### **Problems of Youth Career Development in Nigeria**

The problems perverting youth career development in Nigeria are specifically outlined as follows:

- ❖ The inability of governments the federal, state and local government to create the enabling environment. Various governments in Nigeria are yet to appreciate the enormous role of human resource development vis-à-vis the development of indigenous entrepreneurs.
- ❖ Lack of technical, vocation and entrepreneurial skills in the curriculum of tertiary institution.
- ❖ Quest for white collar job by our youths.
- ❖ High rate of illiteracy in Nigeria also hampers the growth of career development.
- ❖ Poor planning and execution of employment programmes for youths.
- ❖ Wealth of the nation concentrating on the hands of few citizens.
- ❖ Insufficient fiscal and monetary measures for business growth in Nigeria.
- ❖ Non-availability of organised database of unemployed youths.

### **Youth Unemployment in Nigeria**

Unemployment among our youths has resulted to poverty in the country. Poverty may be defined as "the state of being poor or without competent subsistence, need or penury (Webster 1990). Poverty – a dread monster now knocks at the door of graduates of higher institutions as well as others. So what has to be done is to reposition our educational system to alleviate poverty. It therefore means that, our educational system is no longer able to assist in alleviating poverty that is, providing our graduates with the necessary tools to sustain themselves.

There is no gainsaying that Nigeria is facing all forms of social disorder arising from youth unemployment (Chukwuemeka, 2009). Everyday, there are reports of robbery, car snatching, boom blasting, prostitution, kidnapping and other vices. There is a general belief that most of these 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

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unemployed youths wander about. According to Chukwuemeka and Onudugo (2009) the youth unemployment in Nigeria is a Herculean task. Ude (2010) sees quest for white collar job as a contributing factor to unemployment in Nigeria. Owing to societal expectations certain jobs are looked down upon. Kingsley (2004) is of the view that unemployed graduates sometimes indulge in drug abuse because they want to be far removed from the society. They want to be in world of fantasy where there is no gnashing of teeth. Unemployment among youths is associated with psychological trauma which can result to committing suicide. The teething problem in this country is how to get millions of our youths meaningfully employed.

## **Conclusion**

The challenges facing Nigerian youths are too many and inexhaustible. The all round solution to the nation's problem is career development and youth empowerment. The youth must be poised to acquire intellectual, material, emotional, religious and spiritual development to face the challenges of better tomorrow. In a nation where the young people are not empowered with positive and virtuous skills and attitudes, the rich will not be able to sleep and the justice department will spend more on overtime. The place of career development and youth empowerment is not a subject to any debate.

## **Recommendations**

In course of this paper the following recommendations were proffered:

- For effective and efficient career development the education of youths must be directed at imparting holistic learning.
- Programmes for career development and youth empowerment should be intensified in the country.
- Entrepreneurial skill acquisition should be inculcated in the educational curriculum to cut across all spectre of educational system in order to position the youth in act of management, analysis and effective operation of business.
- Establishment of coordinating bodies to monitor and evaluate government programmes and policies as they relate to the youth.
- Creating of employment opportunities for the youth by every aspect of the government.
- The family and religious bodies is potent and indispensable force in educating the youth toward positive and virtuous values.

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