

# Evaluation of the challenges facing the Nigerian Youth and Policy towards National Growth

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## Abstract

Nigeria is as a country in Africa is endowed with resources, which can empower the youths for positive Contributions towards national development. Prosperous, disciplined, and focused youth populations remain a vital segment of the society, who has the ability to create a great future for the nation. However, the neglect of this group of human resources is no doubt the greatest problem of wastes, which has militated against the development efforts of the nation. This paper examined the moral and social challenges of the youth and policies made to combat these challenges. It sought to evaluate these challenges facing the Nigerian youth. Determine if there are policies for the youth and how they affect them, discover the real policies on the youth and their rights, find out the conditions for religious living and learning guaranteed and provided for the youth. It was discovered that there are policies initiated by different government but are not properly implement and also sabotages by corruption, inconsistency lack of management which has stopped proper implementation of those policies that has created poverty in the nation. Furthermore, the paper revealed that the agencies charged with the responsibilities of implementing the policies of government, (relating to youths) have failed in the discharge of their duties, thus exacerbating the menace of poverty in Nigeria. The study recommended among other things, curbing of corruption, introduction of disciplinary measures, curriculum change, and a holistic approach to child training. The paper insists that this position would boost national growth which is expected to tickle

down to reduce poverty and ensure a sustainable national development in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** *Challenges, Policy, Youth, National Growth, Nigeria*

## 1. Introduction

Nigeria remains the most populous country in Africa with the population of about 177 million people and about 70% are youths. Nigeria is a country endowed with oil, mineral resources, agricultural products and human resources to mention but a few. Nigeria is seen as the biggest economy in Africa with so many investments, positive macroeconomic indicators and many religious affiliations. The governments in their various arms are being driven by many individuals with little or no consideration towards the youth. However, in all the advancement, the country is still faced with so much challenges and the group most affected in this are the youth which has raised much concern as it affects the future of Nigeria. Little wonder Oviawe (2010) opined that the increasing rate of crime such as armed robbery, advance fee fraud (419), corruption, prostitution, nepotism, drug trafficking, cultism and other social vices are definitely the product of persistent poverty.

For Nigeria to chart a good course of development into the future, all the challenges facing the youth can be checked through very effective policies formulated for the youths of Nigeria. It is therefore indicative of notable worth to: Evaluate these moral and social challenges facing the Nigerian youth,

determine if there are policies for the youth and how they affect them, discover the real policies on the youth and their rights and find out the conditions for moral living and learning guaranteed and provided for the youth. For these objectives to be met, and better understanding of the need to evaluate these challenges and suggest a way forward, there are some over-arching questions which this paper seeks to answer: What are these moral and social challenges facing the youth of Nigeria, policies and how effective are they in solving the problems, what moral living and learning conditions are guaranteed, which are provided, which are missing? What is the real-life impact of policies on young people and their rights? This paper will attempt to answer the above questions and suggest policies for the Nigerian youth where they are found wanting, missing, inappropriate and abused to eradicate or reduce to the barest minimum the challenges of Nigerian youth.

## 2. Definitional Strategy

Concept of youth: Youth is defined by Webster's New World Dictionary as "the time of life when one is young especially the period between childhood and maturity of the early period of existence, growth or development." The word "youth", "adolescent", "teenager" and "young person" are often used interchangeably. Youth generally refers to a time of life that is neither childhood nor adulthood but rather somewhere in between. Youth is an alternative word to the scientifically oriented adolescent and the common terms of teen and teenager. The concept is also definitions, as a life stage, one that is not finite or linear, as young adults between the ages of 15-24, (USAID) the time when one is young especially the period between childhood and maturity. Age limits The age in which a person is considered a youth varies throughout the world; United Nations General Assembly puts the age from 15 to 24; World Bank puts the age from 15 to 24; Commonwealth Youth Programmes puts the age from 15 to 29; National Highway Traffic Safety Administration puts the age from 21 years; Government of Tasmania, 20 to 24; Wilson School District puts the age from 14 to 21. In this paper, youth will be seen as a person between the ages of 15-35.

A Policy is defined as the basic principle by which a government is guided which has declared objectives that a government or party seeks to achieve and preserve in the interest of national community. (www.businessdictionary.com) It is also defined as a plan or course of action, as of a government, political party or business intended to

influence and determine decisions, actions, and other matters. (www.free dictionary.com) A policy is "an agreed position, and/or a course of general plan of action to be followed by government, party or individual". (Concise Oxford Dictionary, Oxford University Press). For the purposes of this paper, the last definition will be considered.

Development, on the other hand is a state in which things are improving. It also means 'to change gradually, progressing through a number of stages towards some sort of state of expansion, improvement or completeness or a state in which the subjects true identity is revealed (Word web Dictionary, 2010).

## 3. Challenges facing the Nigerian Youth

Nigerian Youths are faced with several challenges that have affected the holistic development of Nigeria, but the following will be discussed in this paper: Restricted access to functional and qualitative education, unemployment, migration and inadequate supply funds and religious fanaticism.

### Restricted Access to Functional and Qualitative Education

Education is said to be the bed rock of knowledge as training is a major factor to development. Little wonder Prov. 22:6 talks about training up a child in from childhood as he will never depart in old age. Consequently every youth especially in Nigeria has right to quality education, where it is not provided constitutes a great challenge. The National Bureau of Statistics (2006) states that 33% of persons aged 15 and above cannot read or write in any language. Higher literacy rate (79.6%) was recorded for urban areas. The primary school completion rate at the national level is dismal and only 47% of children had access to secondary school (69% urban and 37.5% rural). This report differs in south west with the highest figure of 69.4%, then south 48% and south east 42.1% which is the lowest in statistics.

Irrespective of the progress made in education and the policies formulated towards its advancement, many young people lack education and additionally, lack basic skills needed to support post school life. The introduction of Universal Education Scheme (UBE) has not alleviated the situation as early drop outs, grade repetitions and poor education quality shows inadequate education for work and life.

## Nigerian Educational System

In the system, there is the presence of corruption, particularly in the universities. Lecturers are known to collect money from students in exchange for good grades. To the extent where they have to pay (bribe) their way through university administrators in order to have their exam results complied and submitted to the National Youth Service Corps. Professor Olu Aina, the chairman of the ICPC (Independent corrupt practices and other related offences commission) reported that to continual failure to make violators accountable for their actions. The federal government expenditure on education in 1997 and 2000 was below 10% of the overall budget. The money appropriated to the education sector in the 2013 budget was N426.53 billion (N4.92 trillion).

The education sector according to the United Nations educational, scientific and cultural organization (UNESCO) recommends that the education sector accounts for 26% of national budgets in order to impact national development. (UzochkwuMike <http://b.scorecardresearch.com>.) Some parents force their children into studying courses they have less or no interest in, not allowing their children to make their choice of study, thereby that child studying a course and then not doing well in it. By the time that child graduates the child becomes irrelevant in that field, and would not even have the passion to work in that line of study. According to the channels Television Station report of 9th September 2014, over 10.5 million Nigerian children are out of school, this shows the literacy level of the country. In fact, it was stated in channels T.V that the problem of Boko Haram in Nigeria today is because they were not in schools when they were young. The guest speaker further explicated that the youths were fed with wrong information and because of that they lacked knowledge, and when they lacked knowledge, they lacked wisdom. So they are a problem to the country because they lacked knowledge which they would have gained if they went to school. Overcoming equity therefore requires a population that is informed, educated and skilled.

## UNEMPLOYMENT (LIMITED ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT)

Unemployment is one of the developmental problems that face every developing economy in the 21st century, and Nigeria is not exempted. Its impact is felt more by the youths Youth Unemployment

occurs when people are without jobs and they have actively sought for job within the past four weeks. (ILO 2007) Fajana (2000) refers to it as a situation where people who are willing and capable of working are unable to find suitable paid employment. Unemployment is very bad situation in Nigeria today which has ravaged our society. Most students today graduate from tertiary institutions and stay at home for years before getting an employment, while others don't even get, but end up trying their hands on one thing or the other which at times leads them to illegal dealings. Uzochkwu Mike in his article (score card research.com) explained unemployment in Nigeria like a disease that the cure is yet to be discovered. According to official statistics, 24% of Nigerians are unemployed. Official Nigerian statistics say 38% of those under are unemployed, the World Bank's estimate the number to be close to 80%.

Students after graduation, graduate into joblessness and low morale. And many students even graduate and not hired because they lack skill. The expansion of employment opportunity is far below the growth in the youth population, partly because of lack of commensurate investments and appropriate technologies. Also high dependence on foreign products has left the Nigerian youths unemployed. It is believed that locally made or fabricated products or goods are inferior, thereby having high preference for foreign products as against Nigerian products.

According to Nigerian youth BlogSpot 2008 "prolonged dependence on imported goods, ranging from tooth picks to tissue papers, polished rice to household furniture, paints, cars, textiles and second hand wears etc. in preference to anything "made in Nigeria? Goods have tacit undermined genuine attempts to boost local production efforts". In March 15, 2014, 16 youths were killed in stampedes when 500, 000 desperate job-seekers rushed for interview for under 5,000 vacancies at the Nigerian immigration service. Okafor (2011) buttressed that for most developing countries like Nigeria, Governments and policy makers are increasingly finding it difficult to grapple successfully with youth unemployment. This high rate of unemployment can be blamed on the lack of adequate provision for job creation in the development plans, the ever expanding educational growth and the desperate desire on the part of youths to acquire University education irrespective of course and course contents. As a result, a number of skills acquired from the University appear dysfunctional and irrelevant

## **MIGRATION AND INADEQUATE SUPPORT FUND**

Many Youths today seek to migrate to other countries, believing that where they are, is inferior to where they are going. Aggravated by lack of economic opportunities like soft loans or grants to start business, most ill prepared youths migrate to urban areas to other countries at great risk, even untimely death, to seek often elusive greener pastures, dashed hopes easily propel most vulnerable ones to crime, prostitution, drugs, robberies, cult-related activities, militancy etc.

Presently, as at 22nd April, 2015 7(seven) foreigners have been killed in South Africa in the xenophobia attack, hundreds injured and over 50 shops looted. All of these were youths and especially Nigerian youth who left Nigeria in search of greener pastures. The Nigerian health system is poorly funded, and this lack of resources creates "brain drain". Talented doctors and nurses find jobs in developed countries, leaving Nigerian hospitals in the hands of their less talented colleagues. Within Nigeria good doctors are disproportionately concentrated in cities, leaving rural areas underserved. ([www.scorecardresearch.com](http://www.scorecardresearch.com))

## **ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION/ INADEQUATE HEALTH FACILITIES**

There is serious destruction of the environment by the Nigerian Youth. The environmental standards of Nigeria are in a bad state. Nigeria experiences hundreds of oil spill per given in the Niger Delta, largely due to pipe erosion, sabotage are neglect by oil spills which weaken the environment, and this harms the community especially the youths who fish and farm the delta as well as the overall economy. Waste products are not properly disposed, and gasbags contribute to the spread of diseases. The youths in the society are not properly educated on waste disposal, and our government has not been conscious enough to see this as a challenge on our streets in Nigeria causes, pollution, diseases, and death.

In recent times (2014) the Ebola Virus (EVD) disease ravaged some west Africa counties and even got to Nigerian killing about 5 persons with 14 infected with the virus. This which is known to have been caused by a virus was able to be contained in Nigeria was simply by proper hygiene and infection prevention control. The Nigerian Youth have the challenge of proper health hygiene, but if the government can ensure discipline in them

enacting policies that will go a long way to preserve the lives of the Nigerian youth. In the environment one of the social problems the Nigerian youths engage in is, land excavation. Unpermitted excavation of land (earth) causing serious erosion and damage to the soil. They pack away fine sand from the earth crust causing pot-holes, accidents, erosion and bad road network, all in a bid to make money.

## **DRUGS AND ALCOHOL**

Drugs and alcohol has become what individuals or youths brag about. And the social media has made alcohols to look so nice and attractive in the eyes. The youths aware/unaware of its damages to health and negative impact to behavior still go ahead to drink it. They feel high with it and believe that it is the order of the day. And other youths who do not partake in same act are tagged "Jew". The youths engage in it and under the influence of these drugs or even alcohol cause a lot of mayhem in the society. Then in recent times the health sector knowing that is not good for consumption, after every alcohol/a says, that we should be reminded that anyone who takes it is "liable to die young". In search of quick money, the youths also engage in drug business. So many of them have been caught, punished and even died in the process of the use of sale and manufacture of drugs.

In Ode Irele Ondo State, some 12-24 persons have been announced dead and 10 hospitalized due to the consumption of local gin containing methanol. This contained some chemical composition which killed them. The government ought to stop the youths from alcoholic beverages and tobacco including other drugs as it is dangerous to health.

## **Negative Attributes of Peer Group Influence**

Peer group influence has ravaged the society so much that youths who don't group of friends or belong to a particular group behaving alike has not arrived. This is where youths learn a lot of heinous crimes which hinders them from growth, progress and development. These youth change to match that of their peers. They begin to take up smoking and underage drinking and even lead to immoral sexual relationships causing the young girls to go into prostitution. This will affect their academics poorly; it will lead to development delays. Some of the youth could drop out from school. They might also have

job related problems and even marital problems later in life.

### **Thuggery Terrorism and Crime**

In every corner of the Nigerian society today, thugs are seen and used to perpetuate all manner of crimes, from using them in politics and political rally to serving as personal assistants to notable members of the society. Mouth watery promises make youths of today get so much interested in identifying with men of very high class in the society and they end up joining cabals in order to have an identity. This is done to terrorize people and send fear to onlookers or send signal of safety or security. This has made the youths to lose their sense of decency and culture. In the last concluded elections, the media clearly showed areas in Bayelsa and Rivers state where youths were used to cause mayhem, kidnap, and unleash terror on innocent and go as far as engaging in robbery citizens. The act spread in the south east of Nigeria and does not appear absent in the south west.

### **Sexual Promiscuity and Teenage Pregnancy**

Sexual promiscuity and teenage pregnancy is one of the menaces that destroyed that destroyed the bright future of our youths. Adolescence is characterized by physical changes, new emotions, and sexual urges and youths are likely to participate in sexual activity. This act of sexual promiscuity can be described as an indiscriminate sexual habit which tends to chronic. (cemeka.hubpages.com) This however, result to teenage pregnancy which they indulge in with little or no idea of its consequences. This group could be tagged to be “babies giving birth to babies which is accompanied with great risks which ranges from birth injuries to death, destabilization of emotional wellbeing, high rates of infant mortality, infant malnutrition, infection and maternal ill health, public stigmatization and dropping out of school. All these can be attributed to pornography, where youths are wrongly exposed to daily and uncontrollable use of the media, internet: tweeter, face book, viber, Skype, google, to practice what they see.

### **4. Evaluation of the Policies**

Since 1971, the major focus of the National Policy on Education has remained making education meet the economic need and development of every Nigerian. Though the Federal Government has spent huge sums of money on education, much of it had been spent on secondary and tertiary education

whereas it is the primary and adult education that the poor need most.

### **The Universal Primary Education (UPE)**

This program started during Third National Development Plan (1975-1980) was abandoned at the rational level. Most states either continued or abandoned the plan too. This (together with inadequate funding) invariably led to the rapid fall in the standard of education.(Egware, 1997) In September 1999, Olusegun Obasanjo initiated Universal Basic Education (UBE) but the illiteracy level is still very low though enacted as a legal policy law in May 2004 as it was passed by the national assembly. Some other programs specifically targeted at the youth include, the nomadic education developed to train the children of nomads, especially in the north. Other programmes were focused on girls' education, adult literacy, women and children in exceptionally deficient circumstances. Despite effort made toward making education come within the reach of all Nigerian only adult literacy rate, which at stood 49.8 in 1980 Increased marginally to 55.0 in 1995.(Olaleye,2000)

### **Family Support Program me**

This programme was initiated by another First Lacy, Mrs. Marian Abacha, in 1998 to replace the Better Life Programme of Marian Babangida. It aimed at improving and sustaining family cohesion through the promotion of social and economic well-being of the Nigerian families. In order to contribute to national development, special policy programmes were introduced in the health, education and agriculture sectors. These come in the mold of child welfare and youth development, women in development, disability, destitution and income generation programmes. (Uniamikogbo, 1997)

### **Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI)**

This programme was established in 1986 to alleviate poverty through the development of rural infrastructures. It was expected to provide basic amenities like access roads, rural electrification and portable water to ease the living conditions of the rural people. The programme was criticized for its lack of special design to meet the need of the vulnerable poor youths. DFRRI could not achieve its set objective because there was no effective standard for project co-ordination and harmonization among

the three tiers of government and between DFRRRI and the various governments. (Ekong, 1997)

### **National Directorate of Employment (NDE)**

The programme was launched in 1987 for the purpose of creating employment opportunities in form of self-employment and self-reliance aimed at poverty reduction among unemployed youths in rural and urban areas. This was to be achieved through the training of the youths in different arts and crafts and providing them with soft loans and equipment. It had four main programmes; Vocational Skills Development, Special Public Works, Small Scale Enterprise and Agriculture. In 1989, the sum of W650 millions was allocated to the NDE for the employment of 62,000 graduates and non-graduates nationwide as part of 166 extra Budgetary relief package by the federal government, this was to cushion the effects of the then Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). Though the directorate gave loans, trained the unemployed and assisted 156 rationalized all poverty eradication institutions and small scale entrepreneurs in various ways, it was impossible to cope with the ever increasing application in the face of inadequate funds. (Olaleye, 2000)

### **Mass Mobilization for Social Scheme and Economic Reconstruction (MAMSER)**

The programme was introduced in 1986 to mobilize and encourage the participation of grassroots people in development. This was done through integrated rural development and basic needs strategy. (Ibid, 692)

### **Community Action Programme for Poverty Alleviation (CAPPA)**

CAPPA was yet another Federal Government programme aimed at alleviating poverty. It was established in 1997. Its objectives were to improve the living conditions of the poor through a targeted, cost-effective, demand driven and promptly delivered programme. Other aims include enhancing the productivity of the poor through skills improvement and improving the nutritional status of the poor through improved household food security and health practices. Though these were laudable objectives, the basis and framework for adopting them, methods were not clear. Besides, the poor people were already discouraged and it was unclear how the government

would encourage them to participate in the programme. (Odedeji, 1997)

### **Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP)**

The programme was introduced in 1993 as an investment promotion and poverty alleviation programme by the Federal Government. Aimed at stimulating appropriate economic activities nationwide, it focused on the provision of loans to promote entrepreneurship and business opportunities

### **National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)**

After examining the report of a committee set up to study the achievements of previous poverty alleviation programmes. President Obasanjo introduced the NAPEP and situated it in the office of the President. This bold step was to eradicate (and not only alleviate) poverty through four different schemes.

a. Youth Empowerment Schemes (YES)  
This Youth Empowerment Schemes (YES) was designed to empower the youth to acquire skills that will make them self-reliant and improve or build their capacity through on-the-job training.

b. Rural Infrastructures Development Scheme (RIDS)

Under this second scheme, the government would provide the people with good and portable drinking water by sinking boreholes in each local government area of Nigeria. Also, the abandoned water projects by the Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) were to be completed.

c. Social Welfare Services Schemes (SOWESS)

This is meant to provide social amenities such as transportation through the Federal Mass Transit Scheme.

d. National Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS)

The Natural Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS) was to harness the agricultural, water and solid, mineral resources; conserve the land and space (beaches, reclaimed land, etc.) particularly, for convenient and effective use by small scale operators and the immediate community. (Aliyu, 2003)

## Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme SURE P

This program was initiative by the Good luck Jonathan program in January 12, 2012 as a policy to reinvest Nigerian policy to be able to create more job opportunity for the youth in the country. As other policies were also destroyed by those managing it and the intended implementation team, it also not surviving to achieve expected target.

To ensure well-coordinated and monitored poverty eradication efforts, the federal government streamlined and programmes. Thereafter, NAPEP became the comprehensive structure for coordinating and monitoring the activities of the core poverty eradication ministries and agencies. (Aliyu, 2003)The government policies on Nigerian youths, in regards to the above challenges facing Nigerian youth can be said to be good to have solved them or reduce them to the barest minimum but it is obvious that this challenges are also faced with several bottle necks which include the following:(a) Corruption and mismanagement of this programmes and or policies by those in charge or designated to do so.(b) Unwieldy scope of the programmes resulting in resources being thinly spread among projects (c)Poor human capital development and inadequate funding of the programmes. (d) Lack of involvement of social partners other stakeholders. (e) Poor planning, implementations and evaluations of the programmes. (f) Policy inconsistency and poor governance.The above points have led to policy failure or its inability to achieve the set objectives of policies made and programmes initiated.

Apart from policy failures, available information by National Universities Commission reiterated that the massive unemployment of Nigerian universities graduates in the country can be traceable to the disequilibrium between labour market requirements and lack of essential employable skills by the graduates (NUC, 2004). This critical skill gaps inhibits the development of youths and the entire development of the nation, as more than half of the Nigerian populations are under the age of 30. Nigeria's population is predominantly made of youths. In addition, a national survey jointly sponsored by NUC and the Education Trust Fund (ETF) in 2004 sought to determine the labour market needs. The study revealed that 44 percent of the 20 organizations rated Nigerian

Science graduates as average in competence, 56 percent rated them as average in innovation and 50 percent rated them average in rational judgment, 63 percent as average in leadership skills and 44 percent as average in creativity. On needed skills like

literacy, oral communication, information technology, entrepreneurship, analytical, problem-solving and decision making, 60 percent rated them as poor. By any standard, the above statistics reflect a poor assessment of Nigerian University graduates and further buttress the argument that Nigerian university

graduates are unemployable (Okafor, 2011). Okafor (2011) future reiterated in concordance with the NUC opinion by asserting that the high rate of unemployment can be blamed on the lack of adequate provision for job creation in the development plans, the ever expanding educational growth and the desperate desire of the youths to acquire University education irrespective of the course and course contents. As a result, a number of skills acquired from the University appear dysfunctional and irrelevant In addition, Umoh(2012) observes that several such NEPAD and NDE programmes and other youth employment schemes operated as independent bodies, whereas they should have logical interface with other macroeconomic policies so as to maximize returns underscores the little effect of their possible impact.

## 5. Recommendations

This paper has been an attempt to evaluate the challenges facing Nigerian youths to discover if there are policies and the extent to which it has been implemented. The picture of the challenges facing Nigerian Youth can be different if the following recommendations can be applied

1. Crating of greater opportunity for the youth to be involved in 50 to 50 ratios in government representation since they are the future of the nation.
2. Intentional empowerment scheme policy made for the youth alone should be initiated.
3. The level of skill acquisition among the youth should be focused on to make the youth self-supportive and help curb unemployment by adequate involvement of NGOs.
4. Parental training should be encouraged as policies on time giving to parents to train their children at young age should be enacted as the delegation of responsibility is robbing off negatively on the nation's future.
5. Religious involvement should be highly regarded as encouraged in all home and school

systems and moral education should be compulsorily enshrined in school curriculum.

6. There is a need for intentional curriculum and adequate follow up of such curriculum in all levels of educational system to accommodate discipline as any found in going against such directives should be dealt with and made public as a deterrent to others.

7. All government establishments designed to fight corruption and ineffectiveness should be monitored and empowered this will curb immorality, involving in political thuggery and obvious reduction of commercial sex working etc.

## 6. Conclusion.

This paper has been an attempt to evaluate the moral and social challenges of the youth in Nigeria and to discover if there are policies made to end or minimize these challenges. The paper discovered there are adequate policies in place which can really change the situation but they are being destroyed by some individual anomalies or corruption. The paper insists that these policies can bring the needed change if the recommendations made is accepted and implemented.

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