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# YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AS A VERITABLE TOOL FOR PEACE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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**By**

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## **Abstract**

*This study focused on youth empowerment as a veritable tool for the realization of peaceful co-existence and national development. In doing this it looked at the concept of youth and traced their idleness to inadequacies in the school curriculum which invariably results to their restfulness and involvement in social vices. The paper found out that the systematic development of entrepreneurial skills in youths will bring about peace and sustainable national development. It suggested a review of entrepreneurial education curriculum, proper mentoring and provision of infrastructure by government as a means of facilitating youth entrepreneurial skills.*

**Keywords-** Youth, Entrepreneurship, Peace and Development

One thing that agitates the minds of world leaders nowadays is the realisation of peaceful co-existence and its sustenance. In Nigeria for instance, the issue of youth restfulness has become a daily occurrence. Issues such as kidnapping, “Boko Haram”, insurgence, pipeline vanderlisation, to mention a few are no longer news. These crimes

among others are perpetrated by youths. It is in line with this that Oguejiofor & Ewurum, (2011:7) opined that pipeline infrastructure has turned out to be weapons of struggle against poverty, hunger and disease by unemployed appearing as miscreants and street urchins. In the same manner the issue of “Boko Haram” insurgence has become a reoccurring decimal on the pages of newspapers on daily basis. The perpetrators of thee crimes are mainly youths. The unemployed youth no doubt are relevant resources used in carrying out various crimes in the society. As the saying goes that “an idle mind is devils workshop”, it therefore become imperative that youths should be gainful engaged or empowered in order to have lasting peace in the nation. It is no gain saying that, a peaceful society is the bedrock of sustainable national development. It is in the light of the above that this paper examined the modalities for empowering the youth in order to bring about much desired peaceful co-existence and subsequently national development.

It has been observed that the national assembly has failed to utilize its enormous power to ease the economic and social hardship confronting the teaming population of this country (Nigeria). The members of the assembly more often than not engage in fighting themselves over leadership position or busy devising ways for their benefits at a time 70% of Nigerian earn below one dollar a day, with 66-70% living below the poverty line (Adamu, 2013:4). It therefore become imperative that the youth has their destiny in their hands through gainful empowerment since their leaders are busy amassing wealth.

This equally led to the issue of security. The country has not fared well in these area, especially in the recent times. This can be seen in the area of increase crimes rate, the emergence and spread of politically motivated violence, upsurge in communal conflict, proliferation of ethnic and sectional militant and the deteriorating standard of living (Tyoden, 2005).

Recently, kidnapping and bombing are the new dimensions of crime in the country with the “Boko Haram” insurgence in the Northern states. The bottom line is that twin hydra headed problems of unemployment and insecurity has impacted adversely on economic activities in the country and consequently on national development. This trend can not be allowed to continue as it threatens the collective aspiration of being one of the first twenty developed nations by the year 2020. Therefore, concerted effort need be made eo empowered the youths.

### **The Concept of Entrepreneurship**

An entrepreneur can be defined as an innovator. That is someone with creative ideas. Thus, it is someone who can perceive business opportunities and take advantage of the limited resources available in establishing business concern profitability. In the

*Youth Empowerment as a Veritable Tool for Peace and National Development Kolawole  
Jayeola Asa and Olufunke O. Kudehinbu*

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event of dearth of this creative ability it could be acquired through training. It is in this wise that Ishola (2012:3) defined it as specialised training given to business and technical students to acquire skills, ideas and management abilities necessary for self-reliance. More importantly that most youth are inexperienced and may not have the ingenuity to establish a business. Therefore, acquiring entrepreneurship education will be a step in the right direction. It is in line with this that Ishola (2012:3) further opined that the development and training of entrepreneur is key to Africa's future and the greater world economy.

### **Youth**

Youth is usually a term that refers to people who are young at heart, energetic and vibrant. In Nigeria they are described as those within the age bracket of 18-35 years of age. This can equally vary from country to country.

### **Peace/Crises**

Peace can be described as a situation, condition or an environment where there is no crises or disturbances. In a country it is a state of freedom where the citizen lives according to the law of the land. On the other hand the opposite of peace is crises. This depicts a state of disorderliness, danger or difficulty. A situation where crime is committed with reckless impunity is a state of crises.

In Nigeria for instance the society can be described as that which is being vandalized on all fronts. Adukwu - Bohijoko (2012) described Nigeria as that which has witnessed a steady erosion of values, the decline and outright extinction of institutions, the enthronement of patrimonial states, rewards of mediocrity and general celebration of perversion. This she said lead to a point where grave insecurity parades the land, where foreigners, innocent citizens and school children are kidnapped by uncultured youths who embrace evil as a means of survival in a depraved society. Equally she opined that poorly schooled youth; lacking in purpose and vision and largely unemployed are to a nation what explosives are in the hands of an enemy. Majority of the youth in this present dispensation are thus uncultured, poorly schooled, use illegal means to survive, lack vision and largely unemployed. Unemployment is an hydra headed problems that can be the cause and effect of vices militating into crises such as kidnapping, vandalisation of pipelines, "Bokko Haram" insurgence to mention a few. An idle mind is the devils workshop. Therefore, it is important that the youth are gainfully engaged through empowerment.

### **Creation of Ideas**

Central to youth empowerment is the ability to create ideas. Ideas can be created through; invention, modification, copying, professional advice, work

experience, hobby, professional training, literature, research, franchise, government support, workshop, documentations, mentorship among others.

### **Expectation from Youths**

A number of popular saying have grave implications for the youth. Some of these saying are: Work while the sun shine; The way you lay your bed, so you lie on it; Make hay while the sun shines; Hard work does not kill but not working and He who fails to plan, plan to fail to mention a few.

It is in this wise that the society placed a number of expectations on the youths. Take for instance, the society expects youths to be successful in a chosen career; take care of their younger ones, support their parents and elderly ones, provide good leadership, contribute meaningfully to peaceful co-existence and national development. The implication of the above is that youths should be able to choose a career or start a business enterprise that will make them meet the societal expectation.

### **Choosing a Career**

In order to choose a career, there is need for self examination in the following areas: Likes, wishes, strength, preferences, mentor that could be emulated, advantages embarked in the career, is it legal and noble. Aside the training needed should be considered. This will be considered in line with the length, cost, ability to mention a few. Also there is need to consider the level of formal education needed in line with the ability to meet the cost, length of time to mention a few. The status of the job in terms of the value placed on it. For instance, someone may prefer interior decoration to catering.

### **Career/Occupation**

Numerous career opportunities are available in different sectors of the economy from where choice of career could be made. The economy can be divided into two - the real and service sector.

**Real Sector** – Opportunities are available in the area of agriculture, such as in lumbering, farming, animal husbandry, poultry among others. Agro-allied also provide a number of opportunities such as in the processing of oil palm, groundnut, cassava to mention a few. Also food and beverages, printing, iron-steel are available opportunity in the manufacturing sector. Equally, a lot of opportunities are available in building construction and solid minerals.

**Service Sector** – Quite a number of career opportunities are available in the areas of Information Communication Technology (ICT) such as hardware assembling , internet services, software development to mention a few. Career opportunities are equally

*Youth Empowerment as a Veritable Tool for Peace and National Development* **Kolawole  
Jayeola Asa and Olufunke O. Kudehinbu**

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available in the area of education, tourism, transportation, trade and commerce, health care, estate management among others.

A number of small scale businesses are available to which youth can take advantage. Some of these include, brick making, commission agents, super markets, hair dressing, interior decoration, cleaning services, printing, film distribution, travel agents, advertising, tailoring, tyre treading, fast food to mention a few.

### **Benefits of Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship is usually low capital based and in most cases owner share all the profits. Equally owner can put in extra efforts and time. It also creates in the individual self-actualization, while it enables the individual to develop specialized skills and innovation. More importantly it keeps the youth busy as they are engaged in worthwhile career. Thus giving the youth focus in life and as a result creating peaceful environment that is favourable to sustainable economic development.

### **Conclusion**

As explicated the development of entrepreneurship in the youth is enigma to peaceful co-existence and invariably sustainable economic development. The quest for lasting solutions to the problem of unemployment leads to the suggestion of some measures that can be put in place for the creation of entrepreneurship in the youth.

### **Suggestions**

The following suggestions will help in profitably engaged the youth in the world of work.

Skill acquisition schools, trade centres and the like should be established in all local government areas in the Country.

More emphasis should be laid on Students Work Industrial Scheme (SIWES) and Industrial Training (IT).

The industrial training allowance due to the students in tertiary institutions should be paid before the students conclude the programme and directly to the students personal bank account.

All students in the tertiary institution should be made to participate in compulsory skill training programme for at least six months before the completion of their academic programme. Certificates should be issued by the participating industries on students' good performance.

Students in tertiary institutions should be allocated to senior lecturer and above who will mentor them and serve as their guardian throughout their stay in the

institution. A lecturer should not have more than five students to mentor from part one to final year. The lecturer serving as mentor among other things will ensure the inculcation of good societal values in the student such as respect for elders, handwork, among others. The students should equally be grounded in generating ideas from which he/she can make career choice upon graduation.

On the completion of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) government should provide soft loan to unemployed graduate to establish small scale enterprises. This should be facilitated and monitored by local government of the participant.

Equally students in senior secondary school should be made to undergo entrepreneurial training in any area of interest to then during their long vacation for senior secondary school one and two students.. Upon graduation the school should arrange six month industrial attachment for the graduating students before gaining admission to university. This will provide a solid foundation they can build upon in the tertiary institution. Those who did not gain admission should be fully engaged in their choosing skill pending the time they will gain admission otherwise they can build a career on the chosen skill.

Government should provide enabling infrastructure such as steady supply of electricity, water, good road among others.

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***Youth Empowerment as a Veritable Tool for Peace and National Development* Kolawole  
Jayeola Asa and Olufunke O. Kudehinbu**

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