

COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION AND YOUTHS EMPOWERMENT FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

GIDEON UDECHUKWU ISIKA (PhD)
Department of Mass Communication
Delta State Polytechnic
P.M.B 1030,
Ogwashi-uku
Tel No: +2348036735400
E-mail: lordgid63@yahoo.com

&

EKENE S. SCOTLAND
Department of Mass Communication
Delta State Polytechnic
P.M.B. 1030,
Ogwashi-uku
Tel No: +2347036457081
E-mail: sekenescot@gmail.com

Abstract

Among the aims of development is the creation of opportunities for youths, who constitute an important segment of the society's population. The obvious separation of this reality from the socio-political life of the nation can be why our national development planning is some-worth artificial. The alienation of the youth from economic activities has been the reason for the present mass poverty and anti-social behaviours (kidnapping, hostage taking, tuggery, Boko Haram, advanced free fraud, popularly known as 419, petroleum pipe-line vandalisation and so on). The resultant burden on the fragile economy could have been avoided, if in building the nation's myths, youth development was considered by successive governments. This paper discusses some of the underlining challenges and elaborates on how communication and education can play significant role in national economic planning. Using analytical approach and tenets in media framing, the paper concludes by suggesting that the employment embargo be relaxed to absorb a good number of university graduates as a stopgap in order to stem the looming youth unemployment crises

Keywords: youths, employment, communication, development, economy

Introduction

Nigeria is in daring need to redress the failures associated with poor governance due to the parochial nature of the privileged class and the social, economic and psychological conditions of the citizenry. This failure, apparently orchestrated in the areas of opportunities for employment, empowerment in education and general living condition of the mass of low-income population especially those residing in the rural areas, is so glaring that it tends to cast aspersion on the socio-economic growth of the nation, much as it blights the hopes for possibilities in building a united and strong nation-state.

The process of mobilizing resources in education and technology, in order to initiate the emergence of a productive and engaging youth population are not there, in the first place and unattainable under the present political structure in Nigeria, which is why there is frustration and anger everywhere. Because education provides boundless opportunities through training the intellect in order to understand the nature of the society and its basic stable values, it becomes imperative that in giving rise to the present state of affairs, education seems rightly to blame for creating a situation of serious deprivation.

Those who feel frustrated, as is the case often react by directing aggressive behaviours at what is perceived to be responsible for thwarting their dreams. *Boko Haram*, is a clear example of perception of some youths from a particular ethnic area in Nigeria that the source of their stagnation and seeming alienation from economic process is education, hence its meaning “away with Western education”. Their counterparts in the Niger Delta are equally doing the same, cutting the pipelines and taking hostage of their oppressors (See Draman, 2003).

Wheeler (1980, p.12), notes that:

education may be thought of as an important social institution, the totality of structures and roles, processes, relations and material instruments built up around society’s interests in the enculturation or socialization of the youths.

From the emphasis of this definition on the socialization of the youths, it means that education is youth-centered. The opportunity for economic advancement of the youth is shaped by the educational system which is meant to promote the culture of the society in which it operates. In dynamic societies especially in a period of rapid social change, the type of education meant to induct the young into society and promote an intelligent understanding of their needs and values is needed. This paper discusses the challenges of youth’s empowerment in a society where there has been a long tradition of inappropriate educational planning; the axiological imperatives of which are the concerns here.

Justification for Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

Among the reasons behind the study of underdeveloped countries especially Africa in the post-war years, according to Hla Myint was:

due to pressure from the economy, political instability resulting from the development of money economy and the fact that the larger part of the productive resources are in subsistent sector. Also, the exchange economy has not spread from the market for commodities to factors of production, particularly towards a more wage economy. This seems to have unsettled the bulk of the youths ... (Myint 1972,p. 87).

It is very worrisome that several decades after Myint’s statement above, the position still remains the same. However, government’s appreciation of the problem especially in the 80s with some interventions that is now moribund did not change the current figure of unemployment. From the statistics released by the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in 2018, showing a higher number unemployed, this is quite disturbing. Today, except for the children of the rich and powerful others have no place in the scheme of things even as the government seems to merely scratch the surface.

Only recently at the second session of the seventh synod of the Anglican Diocese of Olleh, Delta state, the former President, Olusegun Obasanjo reacted to education and security implications in these words:
A situation where almost 40% of the population are not equipped with education to be able to make meaningful, positive contribution to development in this day and age is bad almost to the point of criminality... education both in quantity and quality must be seen as the first pillar of our development after we have delivered on politics of unity in diversity in concrete and sustainable policies and action. (See Sunday Vanguard of May 19, page 4)

Although the ex-President happens to be quite aware of the educational deficiency especially in the North where he served as a soldier, and the security implication of uneducated and disengaged youth population which appears to be ignored by the government in power to the overall detriment of the realization of high levels of civilization in accordance with improvement in choices and values associated with the people, the centrality of education in Obasanjo’s treatise that focuses on the nation’s security challenges, is what critics are saying all manners of inventive over. On the flip side is also the view that

whether he was in a position to change the dynamics is immaterial. The common knowledge of the educationally advantaged South and disadvantaged groups in the North calls for necessary attitudinal and behavioural change through investment in education. The governments of the Northern states that relegated their youths to the background, in our view, should sort themselves out to avoid more calamities and rather than attack the messenger, take the message.

Even with the creation of the Ministries of Youth Development in the 1990s in order to obviate the lapses of earlier development programmes and curb the social menace of rural and urban undeveloped youths, government effort in this area have been pedestrian. The farm settlement scheme did not succeed due to implementation which was faulty, added to the now worrisome twist of increasing number of suicide cases.

The case of one Ifanyi Ugokwe who was jailed for attempted suicide early this year was trending. After weeks of being hungry and jobless, the 25 years old told CNN that he reached a breaking point after a security guard pushed him to the ground, while searching for a job at a building site. The humiliated young man then went to a nearby lagoon and jumped in. But before the young man's fate could be finally sealed, help came from passing fishermen who rescued him and handed him over to the police (*Sunday Vanguard*, Jan 13, 2019, page 28).

Ugokwe is only one out of several sad stories of suicide cases across the country which should concern the leadership that the nation has stepped from frying pan to fire. The truth is that Nigeria's security cannot be guaranteed until the hindrances to the economic emancipation of the youths are realized. Empowerment of the youths is justifiable to able them fulfill their aspirations in life and stem the spate of banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery and killings in the country as direct consequences of not providing for the youths over the years.

Taxonomy of Educational Objectives for youths Empowerment

Educational objectives are in three main domains: cognitive, affective and psychomotor areas. Educational objectives are directed towards classifying educational goals which are pertinent to the selection of experiences that can be useful in the consideration of content. Let's look at the first two:

Cognitive Domain

The first of the areas of cognitive domain are concerned with intellectual skills and abilities critical to thinking or problem solving, comprehension or understanding. It also has to do with transmitting messages through communication and in addition going beyond what is given to determine corollaries, consequences and implications. The next two abilities work in opposite direction as it were though the first is essential to the second. Analysis, the first of the attributes is concerned with breaking down of materials into constituent parts which involves synthesis; putting together the parts to form a whole. Elements to be derived are from numerous sources and according to patterns, while the last of course is evaluation.

Affective Domain

Educational objectives in this domain relates to certain sensitivity with the individual's willingness to receive or to be attended to. Acquiescence in responding, positive emotional responses to stimuli and greater involvement of the individual in investing time, resources and energy which is acceptance of a value commitment dealing with conviction loyalty or faith are of essence. Such valuation enduring over time involves considerable investment. As values are internalized by the learner they are gradually built into the system. And of great importance is the interrelationship between values. According to Wheeler, organization of a value system is consistent with psychology of life described in terms of feelings, attitudes, sensitiveness, etc.

As this taxonomy increases the specificity of the burgeoning discussion and its application, the reader will find that education can help in creating positive social values. These values will in turn help to improve the sustenance of the individual in the society. Every society where man finds himself is built on the principles of morality as its foundation. Since man is capable of being good and bad, he needs to be prepared

to be good at all times through education. Ethical knowledge exposes the youths to evaluate moral standards and see the defects as they appear. This is what makes education value-laden because it aims at betterment of man in order to affect the society (Lacan, 2000, p 44).

Theoretical Implications

This study is guided by Media Framing theory, which according to Chong and Druckman (2007, p.104), refers to the process by which people develop a certain conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue. The theoretical foundation of media framing asserts that the media tell people both what is important in the world around them and how to think about the event and people who inhabit in the world. The theory is the brainchild of the media effect paradigm which assumptions according to Yusuf, Hassan and Usman (2013) are that issues characterized in news reports can have influence over how it is comprehended by the audience.

Frames per se, are the messages that are communicated by the media in their reports or stories. Frames help the audience to interpret events and represent to others. Can you spot agenda-setting there? While exponents of this theory raise concerns about differential interpretation of media messages, the ideology in media framing has much to do with the representation of dominant issues of society to codes and conventions having, as it were, bases in the operation of the media. We should, however, keep in mind that the concept of framing does not refer merely the choice of subjects that are presented but also to the effects of the media modes of presenting issues on the judgments that are borne by the audience.

As it relates to the foregoing, ethical or political values that the audience might adhere, if brought to the fore in the attempt to conceptualize the audience perception are the frames. Media framing of unemployment situation in Nigeria could revolve around news angles that shape the decision on the issue. All the newspapers or broadcast stations may cover the story, but there is always a clear distinction in their analysis. (See Alao and Uwom, 2012)

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