

## SKILL ACQUISITION IN TEXTILES AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*The paper focuses on the ills of youths activities in Nigeria; it also discussed the benefits of youth empowerment in the country. It extensively presents textile design as a skill that can be used to empower the youth in the country. The paper suggested that skill acquisition should not be left to only Ministry of Women Affairs, private individuals and the offices of first ladies, schools and colleges, but churches and other organizations can as well take up the challenges of developing our youths skillfully so as to avert their negative life.*

### INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is an exciting country with a wide variety of people, terrain and climate. It is a country currently undergoing changes at a rapid pace, especially in the textile industry. Unemployment which is one of the social problems facing Nigeria has crippled the socio-economic growth of Nigeria. Social devastation of prolonged unemployment can be particularly severe on the youths with effects that may scourge their entire lifetime. Total awareness on concept of values for self-sustenance and reliance is a *sin-qua-non* to every growing youth. They must be inculcated with proper education for work and/or living with visual practical work. With appropriate skills, attitude and compliance youths should be able to work with their hands. Youths who undergo training and studies are conceptualized in the transformation of known facts and accepted principles, skills and attributes into potentially profitable new applications. Textiles is a field of study that provides the necessary knowledge for giving a fulfilled life. It is a branch of the Applied or Industrial Arts directly connected with 2-dimensional designs suitable for fabric printing for clothing, furnishing materials and soft sculptures or toys. The process of production include screen printing, block printing, stenciling, fieldy and atik, embroidery, appliqué, quilting, weaving kitting and others. As a skilled vocation, textiles have great potentials in the economic and moral empowerment of the youths in Nigeria.

### THE CONCEPT OF YOUTH AND NEGATIVITIES

The word “youth” have severally been defined by psychologists and para-psychologists. It has actually generated a lot of controversies. Hormby (2007) defined youth as a period of being young especially the time between childhood and maturity. UNESCO classified youths as young men within the ages of 18 and 35 years. Bello (2004) analyzing the population of youths in Nigeria used the 1991 population census as his yardstick to classify the population of Nigeria youths, between 15 and 34 years as one third of the nations’ population. Youths are the most vulnerable segment of the population socio-economically, emotionally, culturally, religiously, politically and otherwise. These group of people live with peculiar and unmet needs and aspirations which lead them into lot of social problems. The problems range from poor or inadequate parental care, poor education, cult activities, which have grown to a higher level of militancy, unemployment and underemployment, moral decadence, health and negative political manipulation of youth organization, disabilities without adequate rehabilitation centres and ill-equipped vocational training. According to Adewoye (2005) approximately 33% of youths in Nigeria have no access to formal education, youths that lack protection from their families or responsible adults have turned the streets, unoccupied buildings wastelands, bus stops, abandoned vehicles under bridges, etc to habitual abode as a source of livelihood or home.

### YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

The term empowerment came to the limelight in the 1980s when it was embraced by community development specialists who saw citizens’ political and social roles as critical ingredients of development (IPG, 2003). To them, once citizens are empowered to play these roles they can change their condition.

This cannot be done unless people feel able to have a desire to act. Youth empowerment could be said to connote a process through which the growing individual between the age of 18 to 35 years are provided with experiences that promote self-actualization, greater control over their individual and collective destinies and their ability to effectively contribute to the advancement of their unmediated and global communities over a period of time. It can be regarded as a dynamic process which enhances their ability to change structures and ideologies which make them feel marginalized. Youth empowerment in a nutshell therefore means providing an enabling environment to develop their true potentials so that they can contribute meaningfully to the development of the society in which they live.

### **EFFECT OF YOUTH RESTIVENESS ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The word youth according to Advance Learners Dictionary defined as when a person is still a child especially the time before a child becomes an adult. This may connote looking at the age bracket between eighteen and thirty five years. Youth include the state and quality of being immature, inexperienced, youth also connotes freshness, vitality, vibrancy. Restiveness as defined in the New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary of English Language 1991 edition is a state of having too much energy to be willing to remain at rest or to submit to control. This definition refers to a person or individuals. In the case of a crowd or audience or a community the same dictionary defines restiveness as being uneasy or beginning to show displeasure, Engina (2009), say restive means unable to be still or quiet, difficult to control especially when one is not satisfied with something. Restiveness is also defined as having too much energy to be willing to submit to control when the energy is properly channeled by designing what the energy can be expended on. The level of willingness to submit to control by constituted authority is increased: restiveness is therefore a function of unused energy. In terms of a crowd or community restiveness is defined by the measure of dissatisfaction or displeasure with a system (Saale, 2010). The above definition shows that youths have natural endowment of raw energy. They are always bubbling in spirit with high hopes, big dreams, aspiration and ideas of what their future will be. To achieve this, they must be naturally be still or remain quiet especially when their anticipation or future is heading towards the unexpected. They have to work, if the basic needs of life must be met. Therefore, in this context they have to be restive to an acceptable limit in order to lay a solid foundation for their future, restiveness in the Niger Delta is thus a displeasure with the actions of the Nigeria development.

Youth restiveness in the Niger Delta have resorted to the disruption of crude oil and gas facilities, vandalization of facilities, kidnapping and hostage taking of oil workers. The activities of the militant groups have, indeed, affected the Nigerian economy and caused considerable losses to foreign investors as well as adversely affecting the international energy market. According to Ray Ekpu (2007) alone youth restiveness in Niger Delta resulted in cutback of crude oil production in the region to about 780,000 barrels per day. This according to Ekpu, amounted to a loss of revenue of about ₦10.3 million per day.

### **SKILL ACQUISITION IN TEXTILES**

Skill acquisition is basic to all education knowledge, learning and professional training. As a process, skill acquisition becomes natural to the individual through repetition or practice. This implies mastery on any form of education, which focuses on equipping the individual with work skill to enable him hold a job or survive in an occupation (Awoyobi and Onyeukwu, 2005).

Cyril-Egware (2008) sees textiles as the production or making of cloth from the fibre stage to the finished fabric which is used for clothing, furnishing and toys. She is of the view that without textiles, the world will go naked, as textiles serves as a protective covering of the body and the home as curtains. Textiles serve utilitarian commercial and aesthetic needs of man. From 1960, when Nigeria became independent till date there has been various attempts by the government to formulate educational policies towards skill acquisition. These include the implementation of the Ashby Commission in 1960, Harbison's recommendation on Nigeria's high level manpower needs by 1970, the country should go into some fields of specialization, embraced in the Arts and Technology, of which textiles is a part of it. In 1961, the Banjo Commission was set up to review the existing structure, where recommendations were made that a suitable alternative to the traditional grammar school in training post primary graduates with marketable skills is required. The curriculum conference held in 1969 and a follow up seminar in 1973 gave birth to the National Policy on Education in 1977 with the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 system of education: this

launching of the universal free primary education (UPE) in 2000 is readily justifiable as far as skill acquisition policies are concerned. Since the 1980's, a lot have been seen in such programmes and projects at Federal and State levels. These projects, in line with the national policy of education have helped to empower a lot of youths in Nigeria in one skill or the other. Most programmes on the average lasted for one year and beneficiaries were given equipments take-off grants which they could start a small-scale business. Ajayi (2002) stated that textiles have been and are still a major basis for prosperity in most Asian, American, European and African countries. Textile design (dyeing) is one of the oldest art in Nigeria and it has been internationalized. The locally dyed materials have been mass-produced in form of printed wax. The Federal Government under Former President Olusegun Obasanjo, in order to promote Nigerian textile banned the importation of textile materials. This was emphasized during the workers day celebration in Lagos (1st May, 2004) when he commended the labour leaders for using Nigeria textiles for the march past. We further commended them for giving him all Nigerian textiles to wear, "from top to bottom". Before chief Obasanjo left office, some billions of naira was approved to refurbish the textile sector in Nigeria.

Gradually, education in Nigeria is being shifted back to private and non governmental agencies, including churches. As a result of this, those who are unable to meet with the high fees end up at home and grow to become a problem to the society. If the National goal on education of building a great and dynamic economy has to be achieved, skill acquisition especially in textiles should be encouraged. The skill acquisition programmes could combine with textile industries to sell samples for mass production for export thereby generating fund for the nation and the youths.

#### **HOW SKILL ACQUISITION IN TEXTILES CAN ENHANCE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

- Skill acquisition in textiles will enhance their employment prospects and become competent in handling tasks they may meet ahead of them.
- It will help them to function in the society, and promote economic development to ensure that the demands for various types of labour are matched with the supply.
- When youths are fully empowered, the tendency to depend on the government will be broken and the community/the society and the nation at large will become more enjoyable in terms of employment opportunities and self-realization, which is the pivot to economic development.

#### **THE WAY FORWARD**

Skill acquisition programmes should not be left to only the ministry of women affairs, private individuals, the offices of the first ladies, or schools and colleges. Churches could also prepare youth for today's world of work. Adequate training should be provided for the students. It should be characterizes by relevance to the needs of the community and comprehensive in scope, in skills development, creativeness positive self-concepts and individual effectiveness. Youths education should also be geared towards developing human and material resources, process and technology skills. These will sustain them occupationally and equip them better for technical work. Furthermore, it will enhance their employment prospect, and become competent in handling tasks they may meet ahead of them. As a nation, the solution to the prevailing economic problems depend on how far we plan for tomorrow today and how best we evolve and practice the right polices. There are capable hands that can draw up a plan for the youths in the church and it's environs. To be empowered with skill in textiles. Workers who may be interested in acquiring a skill to boost their salary could be part of the arrangement also.

#### **CONCLUSION**

No meaningful development can take place without education. Therefore for a country to develop fully, the youths should be fully developed educationally.

Technology education involves skill acquisition in any area and this is expected to equip its recipients with balanced theoretical and practical knowledge to enable them function in the society, and promote economic development to ensure that the demands for various type of labour are matched with the supply.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Skill acquisition programmes should not be left to only the ministry for women affairs, private individuals, the offices of the first ladies, or schools and colleges, churches could also prepare youths for today's world of work,
- Adequate training and student should be provided with textiles items as a kind of motivation,
- Workshops should be organize at the local level where youths are address on the importance of acquiring skills in one vocational or more,
- The youths should be encouraged to involve, practice skill work and not to be running after white collar jobs,
- Provide high quality training of peer educators that includes building self-confidence and skills and instilling clear program objectives to keep peer educators motivated and focused.

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