

A Drastic Decline of Tiv Youths in Self-Employed informal sector in Contemporary Nigeria, 1999-2015

By

Fanen Ugoh

Email:fanenugoh@gmail.com

+2348036574981

Introduction

One of the most fundamental issues in the economic development of Tiv land in Benue State of Nigeria is the qualitative and quantitative inadequacy of Tiv Youths in Vocational and technical acquisition jobs in recent times which would have enhanced their self - employment.¹⁴⁴ These Youths in Tivland constitute a sumptuous proportion of the entire population in Benue State.¹⁴⁵ These Youths were in the past known to be the zealous, creative, energetic, fearless individuals who were focused and passionate in their self-employed technical and vocational jobs, such as tailors, mechanics, carpenters, electricians, welders, etc.¹⁴⁶ They also engaged in farming

¹⁴⁴.Examining Empowerment: A Guide for Youth Development Professional Journal of Extension, 1999

¹⁴⁵ . Destiny Emmanuel, Leading Democrats: Youth Empowerment as an Indirect Tool for Sustainable Development. Niger Delta, (2016)

¹⁴⁶ .Ibid

and craft production to earn a better living which was lucrative and made them to be self-dependent.¹⁴⁷ But with the return to democratic rule in 1999, these self-employed Tiv Youths were lured by the political elites into abandoning their various trades and joined politics with a deceit that politics was more lucrative, juicy, and has the fastest means of making money.¹⁴⁸ The political ideology of this nature of a class which Tiv political elites lured Tiv Youths into joining politics is local politics that did not proceed beyond the mentality of selfish politicians to have a greater number of Tiv Youth under control and perpetually dependent on politicians for survival.¹⁴⁹

These Youths that have abandoned their self-employed vocational jobs and ventured into politics are profoundly affected by political power play influences, which physically removed them from their traditional self-employ labour and placed them in idleness, strange and usually hostile surrounding, formed attitudes, and made resolutions that are detrimental to self-growth not only to themselves but among other Youths. This has systematically and completely ruined Youth ideology of enhancing self-development.¹⁵⁰

It is imperative to note that the Youth manpower that was previously integrated in technical and vocational occupation reduced drastically. This is the history of how the panacea to high rate of dependency of Tiv youth began

¹⁴⁷ .Adetola Adekoya, Seven (7) ways to Encourage Youth Participation in Agriculture: A panacea to youth Unemployment in Nigeria. Information Guide in Nigeria, 30th May 2016

¹⁴⁸ . Press Reader, Daily Trust Newspaper, 11th September, 2017

¹⁴⁹ .Ugbana Okpu, Ethnic Minority Problems in Nigerian Politics, 1960-1965. Sweden; A.B. Stockholm, 1977.

¹⁵⁰ .Nigeria's Untapped Informal Sector, Thisday Newspaper, 31st August, 2016

in contemporary Nigeria.¹⁵¹ These Youths were lured into politics by political elites who were driven to compete for prestige and political power with one another, ensured they were followed, demanded new opportunities to show their prowess and amass wealth. They created a competitive atmosphere charged with the control of the state and driven by insatiable ambition.¹⁵²

The paper is therefore premised on the interrogation of drastic decline of Tiv youths in vocational and technical self-employed informal sector. The year 1999, marks the commencement of our time purview, since it was the date when Tiv Youth began to abandon vocational and technical jobs to join politics, while 2015 is the terminal date, since it marks the point when majority of youth engaged in politics and became formally structured in political parties functioning within a political system which drew them to the threshold of dependency.¹⁵³

The provision of vocational and technical works has a long history. Before the industrial revolution between 1750 and 1830, the home and apprenticeship system were the principal source of vocational framing. While technical and vocational skills has continued to thrive in many societies. The Benue youths who had previously engaged in this sector, have now neglected the aspect of self-employment. Consequently the Tiv youth no longer have larger number of its population working as bricklayers, carpenters, painters, electricians, tailors, auto mechanic e.t.c The decline of Tiv youths from these

¹⁵¹ .Odimegwu Onwumere, Nigeria's Progress and Challenges on Vocational Education as Government has failed. The Nigerian Voice, 1st March 2016

¹⁵² .Mbuega Ayo, "Intra-Ethnic Conflicts and Development in Tivland, 1960-2012" Unpublished PhD Thesis, submitted to the Department of Political Science, Benue State University, Makurdi, 2016

¹⁵³ .Ugbana Okpu, Ethnic Minority Problems in Nigerian Politics, 1960-1965, Sweden; A.B. Stockholm, 1977.

highlighted jobs in Benue State is socially and economically injurious, because it is robbing the state of revenue and employment opportunities that would have enhance economic development.¹⁵⁴ The paper through a historical analytical methodology interrogates major secondary sources.

The study therefore reveals that when youths are self-employed, they become self-reliant and thus are able to assert their independence by making right choices and decision thereby building high self-esteem for themselves. Their empowerment will also make them contribute immensely to the growth of their communities.¹⁵⁵

Conceptual Clarification

No doubt, a better way to address issues as the one before us is to first of all examine the fundamental concepts underpinning it. The importance of this can be easily explained. One such an endeavour clarifies the focus of our analysis by illuminating its substance, pattern and direction. Furthermore, it puts the issues raised in a proper perspective by aiding the flow of the discussion. Finally, it makes the discourse comprehensive thereby enhancing its simplicity and understanding. It is on this basis that the analysis in this paper shall be both definitive and explanatory.¹⁵⁶ The contending concepts are: *Youth, self-employed and dependent*.

¹⁵⁴ Victor, E. Dike, "Youth Unemployment in Nigeria: The Relevance of Vocational and Technical Education": NESG Economic Indicators, Vol 12, No.13, September, 2006

¹⁵⁵ .Jessta Noel, The Definition of Youth, Unpublished M.A GThesis, Department of Arts, Jacksonville University, 2016.

¹⁵⁶ .Okpeh, O. Okpeh jnr, " The Sense and Nonsense in History as a Science: A Reflection on the Nature of History and Historical Knowledge" in Mike, O. Odey, J.N. Nengel and O.O Okpeh (ed) History and Methodology in Africa, (Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2006): 14

Who are youths?

There is a wide consensus among global youth researchers that existing youth definitions and concepts are becoming more and more blurred as a result of the de-standardisation of life trajectories. Not only does youth tend to start earlier and end later, but the transitions from childhood into adulthood are increasingly fragmented which is particularly visible through increasingly discrepancies between different policy areas. Nevertheless, the concept of youth as a social group requires homogeneity based on shared social position that differs from other age group. In that context, young people should be seen as a unique group requiring attention because of their vulnerability and exposure to abuse during the most important period of their lives. Depending on youth policy conceptualization, social pattern and models of family transitions to adulthood.¹⁵⁷

Youth is generally perceived as the time of life between childhood and adulthood. According to Macmillan Dictionary, the age range that constitutes youth varies from one society to another because an individual's maturity may not correspond to their chronological age.¹⁵⁸ However, the United Nation define youths as persons between the ages of 15 and 25, recognize the fact young people are heterogenous group in constant evolution and that the experience of being young varies across regions and within counties.¹⁵⁹

The Nigerian National Youth Policy 2001 defines the youth as all young persons of ages between 18-35 years. The youth population, according to the 2010 census figure is almost a hundred million. This means that they constitute more than two third of the country's population

¹⁵⁷.Omafune F. Onoge,'Urhobo Youth Future (ed) Urhobo Historical Society of Nigeria Publication, 3rd October, 2004.

¹⁵⁸.Macmillan Dictionary for Students, Macmillan Pan Limited, 1981);1115

¹⁵⁹.UNESCO: Acting with and for Youth.
<http://w.w.w.unesco.org>

of 140million. Youths refers to the vibrant and resourceful segment of human configuration. They are the backbone of the development of the country. Indeed, if Nigeria is to be sustained as a viable entity, there must be a very good plan to tap the energy and resourcefulness of the youth's population to fast track the development of the country. Youths occupy the productive cream of the society and unless engaged in productive venture, they can be restive and anti-social. This can endanger the development of the society. The perception of the Youth today as a problem is not far from national economic management crisis which has reflected in youth behaviors creating fear, loss of hope and uncertainty.¹⁶⁰ No other generation in Nigeria has faced more daunting challenges than those aged twenty four and below. The youth are the worst affected by the poor choices of politicians and heads of our civil institutions. These bad choices run on the basis of a flawed neoliberal philosophy, which discourages government spending on basic needs of society like education, health and social infrastructure. This then leaves a lot of loose revenue that is available for looting by the elite. The lives of the poor youth in cities and rural areas are unacceptably undignified, stagnant, wild, aimless and negative. The youth are hapless victims of our chaotic politics, which is dominated by implacable partisanship, rigorous aggression and intolerance. This is why they seek to belong but at the same time are denied membership. The whole idea of youth wings of political parties or of associations is a marginalization and exclusion device. Even our academics and intellectuals wedge war against youth by denying them access to education and work, through unending strikes and alienation from the truth of our developing crises. Many of our youth become touts and put themselves in harm's way so that they can find a

¹⁶⁰ .Nigeria:2009 National Youth Policy/<https://w.w.w.strategicplan Action>

place in the neo-patrimonial state of our politics of chaos. They seek protection by becoming touts and arming themselves as private armies of the big men in the hope that the so-called dividends of democracy can trickle down to them. Many youth have died in this way by helping to rig elections for politicians. The youth like moths to the fire are led to abandon their critical thinking and ability to resist injustice and instead, accept a canopy from power brokers. Rather than generations of our youth rising up to change the drift to chaos, they become capillaries of corruption and our country is robbed of a youthful and robust energy to develop efficiency, accountability and legitimacy, which is so necessary in the modern state.¹⁶¹

Dependency

On the other hand, dependent is the relying on someone or something else for aid and support. While self-employed means earning income directly from one's own business, trade or profession rather than as a specified salary or wages from an employer.¹⁶² It is in the light of the emerging trends and realities that these above mentioned concepts are explained in order to articulate the essence which this paper seeks to theorize.

Theoretical Framework

Decision Making Theory

The paper adopts the decision making theory as a basis for analyzing policy on youth unemployment and how the decline of youth in informal sector has led to dependency which greatly affected their socio-economic growth. The use of decision making is appropriate because

¹⁶¹ .Iyorwuese Hagher," Youth Alternatives to the Politics of Chaos" (ed) *Diverse but Not Broken* (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press Limited, 2015):45-58

¹⁶² . Onoge, M. cited in Jeremiah Tersur Vambe," Promoting Youth Employment in Benue State, Nigeria" University of Abuja, Unpublished M.Sc Thesis, 2013.

it is relevant in the study of government policy on social problems in understanding the way and manner government has failed to implement policies that would have enhanced youth empowerment. The theory was first popularized by Blaise Pascal in the 17th century. He adopted this theory in order to resolve theoretical puzzles and problems in mathematical sciences. As a result of the relative success in the core areas of mathematics especially in Algebra and logarithms, which some social scientists adopted the methodology in the field of administration.¹⁶³

One of the most important assumptions of the decision making theory is the contradictions it tends to have in the affairs of policy making and governance in Nigeria. The contradictions here can be seen in the level of what Ihonybere J, describes as hegemony of politics. This trend which has become more of an instrument of repression by the policy makers rather than serious youth development concerns is a major setback on the path of not only poverty reduction, but on socio-development generally. To him, as politics and indeed every other thing about public interest is increasingly becoming primary to the initiators of public policies, every other policy aimed at socio-economic development becomes marginalized. He further contends that because of the rise in hegemonic politics in a country such as Nigeria and indeed elsewhere, the emphasis on political power and all the accompanying benefits rises. Thus political competition becomes increasingly intense leading to the militarization of not only politics, but also the society to the detriment of socio-economic development policies such as the one of Youth empowerment. This argument as put forward by

¹⁶³. Ihonybere, J, cited in Mbuega Ayo, "Intra -Ethnic Conflicts and Development in Tivland, 1960-2012' Unpublished PhD Thesis, submitted to the Department of Political Science, Benue State University, Makurdi, 2016

Ihonvbere J becomes critical to this study when one considers that the so-called public policies enunciated in Nigeria such as job creation and poverty reduction merely expresses and further reinforces the contradictions between the policy makers and the Nigerian Youth. Thus the ensuring mutual alienation arising from the contradictions could lead to the dissociation of public policy interest, and therefore stalls the struggle against youth empowerment and scourge of poverty in society.¹⁶⁴

In another dimension, apart from the contradictions posed by the political class, who of course are the ones in control of public policies, there is also the consciousness to continue in the business of reproduction of existing forms of domination. There are two ways in which this situation underdeveloped the Nigerian society. The first revolves around the incompatibilities between the pursuits of public policies on the one hand and the quest for survival and the reproduction of existing form of domination on the other. In either of the two extremes, the experience in Nigeria shows that the political leadership over time would naturally choose the reproduction of domination over serious policies such as Youth empowerment. The damaging effects of this conflict situation as it relates to public policy making in an underdeveloped nation like Nigeria are obvious. It leads to the misuse of manpower resources as well as inefficiency and corruption. As a matter of fact, appointments into positions of power, especially those ones that relates to youth empowerment and poverty reduction can be compromised, even when they are positions which require specialized knowledge. Some of these positions most of the time tend to be made by political criteria particularly by regarding these appointments as part of survival strategy. Thus each time such appointment is made, the

¹⁶⁴ Ibid,

conflict between survivals on the one hand and efficiency and national transformation is reproduced.¹⁶⁵

The second most problematic of all on the issues of public policy and decision-making in a society like Nigeria is the militarization of social life. By militarization, is meant the tendency of policy makers to cover-value political power and the intense struggle to obtain and keep. In this competition, every form of force is mobilized and deployed. The winners have the prospect of near absolute powers while the losers not only forgo power but face a real prospect of losing their individual liberties including social benefits like poverty reduction. Most of the previous policies carried out by government in the past whether military or civilian administrations have characteristics similar to the aforementioned. Hence, the generality of public decision and public policies in Nigeria have had tendencies to experience summersault even with enormous resources to logically execute and implement these policies for the greater good of youth in society.¹⁶⁶

In Nigeria, over the years, successive governments have adopted various policies and programs to deal squarely with the problems of poverty. These policies are intended to ensure, among other things, Youth empowerment and provision of critical infrastructures that will stimulate youth socio-economic activities, especially in urban areas that will in turn enhance incomes and improve socio-economic conditions of the youth. The issues surrounding youth participation in politics and drastic decline from self- employed ventures are those of human being.¹⁶⁷

A careful look at the decision making theory as used in the study reveal that few members of the opportunistic class benefit more from some of the policies

¹⁶⁵. Ibid

¹⁶⁶. Ibid

¹⁶⁷. Ibid

that are being formulated in Nigeria. This trend appears to have negated the actual intent and purpose of the policy which was meant to be a source of succor for the youth who are engaged in politics, just like most public policies lack effective popular participation in project design. They are also acclaimed to be deficient in terms of implementation, monitoring and evaluation. In other words, youth who are supposed to be the beneficiaries of the policies are normally not involved in the formulation and implementation of such policies that are supposed to change their lives. What obtains rather is a situation where few privileged opportunistic youth and their close allies in government circles simply manipulate the masses in favor of the few. Most critics have maintained that this kind of alienation could result to self-aggrandizement, corruption and ultimately, squander mania. These circumstances could translate into the heightened problems of youth involvement in political thuggery, assassins and political mercenaries in the society. Again, recent experiences show that youth involvement in politics has removed them from being self-employed to be dependent on politicians. In Nigeria in all its ramifications is often conceptualized in a more or less top-down fashion. This youth drifting away from self-employed policy in a top-down approach is one initiated, rationalized and coordinated at the apex of the administrative hierarchy in Nigeria, with minimal or no consultation with the beneficiary groups.¹⁶⁸ The implication is that there might be no trickle-down effect on the target groups.

Nevertheless, for any meaningful future youth empowerment policy in Nigeria to take place, one can say without reservation that the formulation and implementation of such future programs in Nigeria should be holistic. Again, public policies in this direction must be seen to be comprehensive and total and not particularistic as is currently the case in Nigeria. Moreover, youth

¹⁶⁸ . Ibid

empowerment efforts in the country should always try to articulate efficient and effective ways by which the various manifestation of poverty can be comprehensively reduced and eradicated. While doing this, such efforts must remain focused and committed in the bid towards targeting the youth with vocational and technical skills that can be assisted morally and financially to establish small scale business venture to reduce dependency and enhance their economic development. The vocational and technical skilled labours includes: carpentry, tailoring, auto-mechanic, painting, welding and radio repairers, electricians etc. However, it can be said that every government since independence appears to have regarded economic development and youth empowerment as a matter of great urgency. This notion has been premised on the fact that the unfulfilled economic promises in the post-colonial Nigerian state constitute a threat to political stability. However, the Youth socio-economic expectations have consistently been unfulfilled. Efforts of various Nigerian leaders towards creating jobs and employment opportunities to reduce youth dependency have remained perfect merely as policy without execution and implementation.¹⁶⁹

Causes of Unemployment

The causes of unemployment in Nigeria include poor infrastructure, insecurity, non-diversification of the economy and poor educational system that does not readily produce employable graduates. Among other things Adawo recommended that governments at all levels should partner with the private sector and diversify the economy in order to create jobs.²⁷ In the view of Adebayo and Egbuna unemployment leads to psychological

¹⁶⁹. Lawrence Ohale, "Nigeria's Public Policy and the Youth' A paper presented at River State Youth Sensitization Workshop. University of Port-Harcourt, 22nd May, 2013.

problems of frustration, depression, hostility and criminal behaviour. They assert that youth way of reasoning is due to their standard of living. It is youth unemployment that primarily encourages the development of vices such as thuggery, militia and political mercenaries. If these youths are self-employed in skillful ventures in the private and public sector, it will create socio-economic growth and generate revenue for the state. These unemployed youths survives by engaging various activities such as petty trading, casual jobs, buying and not paying back, stealing, pick pocketing, prostitution, toutting and illegal activities. Some have become drunkards, and others are on drugs. This has led to increase in crimes especially with the proliferation of youth gangs. This has negative implications on the economy of Benue State and Nigeria generally.¹⁷⁰The political Bureau Report of 1986 affirms linkages of youth and national destinies in quote:

In the context of Nigeria's historical experience, youth and students have rendered valuable contribution to the struggles for liberation and national development. They constitute a reservoir of energy dynamism for any national struggle or campaign if they are correctly guided, mobilized and fully integrated into social fabrics of the nation. They may also constitute a threat to national survival and stability, if they are allowed to drift, are unemployed, indisciplined and morally bankrupt. No nation aspiring to major national greatness can afford to ignore the youths and allow them to constitute a major social problem. They are a vital source of manpower and do possesses leadership potentials, can acquire knowledge and are full of future promises, once these innate potentials in them are fully exploited

¹⁷⁰ . Omo Gabriel, "Youth Unemployment in Nigeria" Vanguard Newspaper, 2015

and properly channeled, their contributions to national development can be immense.¹⁷¹

The government should develop and implement measures to promote self-reliance in youths through a range of measures from micro-credits and entrepreneurship education to reviewing the federal/ state budgets and how they affect young people. The government should do in its powers to empower the youth.¹⁷²

The Growth of Youth Unemployment and its Implication

Youth unemployment is a cross-cutting challenge in Africa, irrespective of the region. It is mass youth unemployment that triggered the 2011 Arab Spring in Tunisia, which later spread to other countries in the region. Nearer home in West Africa, the hopeless plight of the teeming idle Youth was a major contributory factor to the civil wars and state collapse in Liberia and Sierra-Leone, and to the ongoing (2015) Boko Haram Insurgency in parts of Nigeria. In short there is no denying the fact that youth unemployment and extreme poverty are among the most potent contemporary threats to peace, security and development in Africa.¹⁷³

The problem of poverty, unemployment or inequality cannot be solved by economist alone because it poses cultural, social, political and historical traits. The measure of development is not limited to economic indices alone. Rather, it is extended to include the degree to which provisions have been made for the people's life

¹⁷¹ Nigeria Political Bureau Report of 1986

¹⁷². Adeolu Akande, Public Lecture: "The Role of Education in National Development" National Youth Forum. Ibadan, Oyo State, 6th April, 2017.

¹⁷³. Tabi Haman Joda, Anti-Corruption Handbook for Nigerian Youth: A Fundamental Paradigm for Re-branding Education, Business, Politics and Public Administration in Nigeria. (Kaduna: Joyce Graphics Publishers, 2010):97

and property. Life sustaining needs include food, shelter and clothing. Self-esteem implies individual self-respects, self-confidence, sense of worth and accomplishment. Freedom as used here is not limited to political freedom. It extends to freedom from poverty, equality of opportunities protection not only relates to safety of lives and property but to the sanity of the human rights.¹⁷⁴

The Failure of Leadership and Growing Unemployment in Benue State

Where there is no vision, the people perish is an euphoria that has become common knowledge among the Benue political leaders, who often articulate visions in colourful and expensive development plans, policies and programs but mostly for chanting. They are chicken-hearted in the implementation of these plans, except to enrich cronies, political stooges and royal choristers or sycophants. At the end of their tenure, no actualization of the vision and no regrets for the failure, no review and no direction, yet such a non-performing leader often aspires to continue in office without any youth empowerment scheme encapsulated in their development agenda leaving the youth to be dependent.¹⁷⁵ According to National Directorate of Employment (NDE) data analysis on unemployment in Benue State, is 65.8 percent. The sex distribution of registered unemployed persons indicated a significant disparity between males and females. About 45 percent of the registered unemployed persons are youths in the age bracket of 25 and 34 years. This is dangerous and has the capabilities of eroding cultural values and causing insecurity. It is important to embrace vocational

¹⁷⁴. Mbuega Ayo, "Intra-Ethnic Conflicts and Development in Tivland, 1960-2012" Unpublished PhD Thesis, submitted to the Department of Political Science, Benue State University, Makurdi, 2016

¹⁷⁵. Darmani, L. Youth and Restlessness: Challenges facing the youth of today, (Accra: Assempa Publishers, 1999)

and technical works.¹⁷⁶ These Tiv youths need to be given quality education in vocational and technical skills, the production of knowledge and human capacity weighs heavily on how a nation's development is pursued and attained. Thus, there is a close correlation between developments in the educational sector and the overall quality of life of the youth of the state. Efforts have been made over the years by voluntary agencies, religious organizations, community development association and private individuals towards the sustainable development of education in the state with certain degree of results such as increase in youth enrichment and training in vocational and technical skills. Despite following government recommendations that trade centers or craft schools should be established such as the one in makurdi, known as Government Technical College. The growth and development of technical education has major constraints. Apart from the fact that technical education is capital intensive unfortunately, voluntary organizations in Tivland have not shown interest in investing in the venture. Furthermore, technical schools have been branded as institutions for frustrated school leavers and dropouts from secondary schools. The allusion to technical schools as those for dropouts contradicts the present entrepreneurial realities, as the products of these technical schools would have constitute a large percentage of self- employed youth in Tivland.¹⁷⁷ This very development would have helped in job creation. It would have also reduced poverty and dependency. However the entrepreneurial aspect is yet to attain a revolutionary level, where the informal sector would have become a

¹⁷⁶ . National Directorate of Employment Report, 2015

¹⁷⁷ .Mbuega Ayo, "Intra-Ethnic Conflicts and Development in Tivland, 1960-2012" Unpublished PhD Thesis, submitted to the Department of Political Science, Benue State University, Makurdi, 2016

dominant constituent of the economy of Tivland, as more technical, vocational and entrepreneurial skills would have helped to engage the youth actively and gainfully in informal sector. These youths have been variously hired by opportunistic and desperate political elites during elections as thugs as in the case of Kwande Local Government election conflicts of 2004. And also during the Kparev-MINDA indigene-settler conflict in Makurdi in 2004 and 2012, the unemployed youths are those in the vanguard. Again during an intra-Shiltile land dispute in Katsina-Ala which destroyed 50 houses, the youths were sent as thugs to demolish houses.³² These youth that have drifted away from their self-employed venture to join politics are responsible for the great increase in armed robbery and political violence.¹⁷⁸

The failure by the political elites to implement programs that will bring about progressive change that will advance the Tiv youths socio-economically has been a major challenge. This is because successive administrations in Benue State, especially George Akume and Gabriel Suswam prepared development blueprints that if they were implemented as planned Tiv youths in rural and urban areas would have witnessed a revolution in agriculture, infrastructure, and human capital development among others. However, bickering among major political actors, diversionary activities by incessant violence and limited financial resources account for this. The activities of the political elites have also brought about condemnable practices that have kept Tiv youths at a standstill. The Tiv elites are aware of the deplorable development challenges in Tivland, but have not woken up to the challenge. Rather, they are engrossed with egregious competitions, divisiveness and smear campaigns. Jibo Mvendaga, partly attributes this uncooperative behavior among the Tiv elites as basic ignorance. Although party politics is generally predicated on partisanship and

¹⁷⁸ . Ibid

geared towards acquiring political powers, but the final goal is consensus and development. In Tivland, consensus among the major Tiv stakeholders is conspicuously lacking. For this reason, the political class in Tiv land, traditional rules and the youths must work concertedly to uplift the Tiv nation out of frequent internecine violence, forge a common front and utilize the scare resources to develop Tivland. But the elites in Tivland have found politics as a conduit for siphoning the scare resources of the state, leaving the youths and masses in abject poverty. The elites usually equip youths with guns instead of goods, with weapons instead of wealth, with mutual hatred rather than health to use against fellow Tiv youths. The lack of functional infrastructure and youth empowerment schemes has adversely affected the level of youth productivity and welfare.¹⁷⁹

The Failure of Industrialization: A Contributory Aspect to youth Dependency in Benue State

The political elites in most cases selfishly unite to influence decisions and allocation of scare resources now and in the future either exclusively for their own benefits or for their own benefit plus that of the larger population. Todaro M. maintains the elitist activities often serve to inhibit any genuine reform efforts that might benefit, the wider population and in some cases actually lead to have practically demonstrated their concern for development of

¹⁷⁹ .Jibo, M, "The Manipulation of Sub-ethnic Differences in Tiv politics since the Colonial Era" in G.N. Hembe(ed) Issues in the Development of Tivland : The North-South Development Gap. Makurdi;SGDT, 2001);126-137

their communities.¹⁸⁰ In Tivland the late Governor Aper-Aku left a good example that is generally acknowledged as a foundation for youth empowerment, job creation and industrialization. He established Benue Brewery, Ben Bottling Company, Taraku Mills, Agricultural Development Company, Benro Packaging Company, Agro Millers, Otukpo Burnt Bricks, PCL Water Works, Makurdi Modern Market, State Secretariat, Lobi Bank, Ikyogen Ranch, Ultra-modern Sporting Facilities, and Sheraton Hotel. All these were genuine efforts that created employment opportunities and avenue for youth's development. But these industries due to poor management and maintenance and total neglect have either become comatose or privatized, resulting to the sack of several youths from the employment of the above mentioned. The implication has heightened the number of unemployed youth in Tivland that were left with no alternative than to join politics. The youth participation in politics without any interest in artisan informal sector worsened under the administration of Governor George Akume (1999-2007), Governor Gabriel Suswam (2007-2015) and Governor Samuel Ortom (2015-2019). Apart from late Aper-Aku (1979) who strived so much to impact developmentally, another Governor who achieved in his short period in office is Rev. Moses Adasu who established the Benue State University which is the largest industry with employment and students enrolment. It is sad that school fees are increased yearly leaving most youths who cannot afford the fees to dropout from school. The place of the poor and youth is not usually factored into consequential public policy issues that affect the lives of the people negatively and positively. Most of the time, such policies

¹⁸⁰ . Todaro, M Cited .Mbuega Ayo, "Intra-Ethnic Conflicts and Development in Tivland, 1960-2012" Unpublished PhD Thesis, submitted to the Department of Political Science, Benue State University, Makurdi, 2016

only widen the income gap between the poor and rich. When such policies affect the poor negatively, many frustrated youths recourse to 'way of survival' inimical to society in order to stay alive. This is responsible for increase thuggery, theft, kidnapping, prostitution, among others are the vices associated with his economic deprivation and exclusions.¹⁸¹

The statistical data on global economy of artisan income generated is \$34billion. Nigeria has failed to leverage this group in the informal sector to drive industrialization and create jobs. In Tivland, this economic sector is 80percent dominated by non-indigenes who are said to repatriating as much as one billion naira from Benue State annually, leaving Tiv youths jobless. This affects local artisans and craftsmen, who remain idle and jobless while majority of non-indigenous youths call the shot as bricklayers, carpenters, steel fabricators, plumbers, electricians, tillers, painters and casters. Others are tailors, barbers, masons, cobblers and other micro, small and medium-scale service providers. Also included are operators in events management, automobile repairers, and car washers, to name a few. These non-indigenes have dominated the aspects of housing, construction and related industries like iron blending, tiling, welding, and plaster of pain (POP) among others. They took over those areas of trade because the few trained Tiv local artisans were aging and youths have not been trained to replace them, hence their interest have drifted to politics. The dearth of junior technical manpower and subsequent dominance of non-natives has resulted in huge capital

¹⁸¹.Mbuega Ayo, "Intra-Ethnic Conflicts and Development in Tivland, 1960-2012" Unpublished PhD Thesis, submitted to the Department of Political Science, Benue State University, Makurdi, 2016

flight and also worsened unemployment in Tiv land of Benue State.¹⁸²

Despite her competitive advantage in agricultural sector, and rich cultural tradition, large army of artisans through mostly unskilled and unique raw materials the Tiv youths of Benue State is yet to exploit the potential of her artisan economy to create jobs for youths and drive industrialization. Already they are fears that Tiv youths in technical labour skills may soon disappear completely from the development landscape, with serious negative consequences for economic growth and development, unless urgent and concerted efforts are made to halt the decline.

This is so considering the fact that the artisan sector is believed to be the second largest employer behind agriculture in the developing world including Nigeria. Millions of youths should participate in the artisan economy as a means to earn income and sustain their livelihoods. The Tiv political elites have brain washed youth that tend to make them neglect farming. This agriculture is still greatly and relatively undermined or even overlooked as a mere “Back-yard Business”. Some Tiv youth even regard farming as “an odd job that is meant only for the illiterate rural people.”⁴⁰

From 1999 to 2015, a significant proportion of Tiv youth have become unemployed, demoralized and confused. Thus, we have experienced high levels of youth deviance, manifesting in the form of violence and thuggery rising levels of financial and economic crimes, cultism, militancy, fraud and other corrupt practices in both high and low places in Benue State. Many of the Tiv youths of today are not being equipped to sustain themselves economically and to contribute to the maintenance of family cohesiveness, neither are they empowered to participate meaningful in the community and social life. Despite the failure to formulate policies to reckon with

¹⁸² . Ibid

challenges facing youths in Tiv land of Benue State, many youths have made a successful transition from childhood to adulthood. However, they did not achieve this transition without assistance from families, societal institutions, communities and friends. They benefited from the opportunities and events that guided and structured their behaviours and encouraged them towards positive growth and development.¹⁸³

It can be safely assumed that all socio-cultural formations recognize the imperatively linkage between a people's collective future and the character of their youth. Evidence of this recognition is abundantly provided in ethnographic reports of the institutions and customary practices devoted to socialism and enculturation of the young. The goal of enculturation is to enable the young acquire the appropriate behaviours, interiorize the benefits, value orientations. Thus, equip the young generation in a position to reproduce the institutional format of the society and its cultural contents, long after the parental generation have moved on.¹⁸⁴

Recommendations

The quality of the youth can be a parameter by which the future of any nation can be measured. The failure of a nation becomes imminent if the youth are relegated to the background. It therefore means youth empowerment is a key in nation building. Youth empowerment is a process where children and young people are encouraged to take charge of their lives. They do this by addressing their situation and then take action in order to improve their access to resources and transform their consciousness

¹⁸³ . Ibid

¹⁸⁴ . Catalano Richard et al, "Positive Youth Development in the United States: Research Findings on Evaluations of positive youth Development Programmes" (ed) Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, (2008):98

through beliefs, values and attitudes.¹⁸⁵It is on this premises that the former secretary General of United Nations, Mr Kofi Annan remarked that young people should be in the front of global change and innovations. If empowered, they can be the agent for development and peace. If they are left on society's margins, all of us will be impoverished.¹⁸⁶

Youth empowerment in Tivland of Benue state should be address as a gateway to intergenerational equity, civil engagement and democracy building. Local, state, national and international government agencies with non-profit community based organizations should provide programs centered on youth empowerment. Other youth empowerment programs should focus on poverty alleviation, living standards for those living in poverty areas in order to reduce the causing of deprivation as it relates food, resources and education programs aimed at empowering poor youth.⁴⁴Various types of empowerment programs across the globe should be initiated in Tivland to create jobs for youths through different tactics. These programs can operate in a variety of setting, which may be a key factor in their success. The beneficial outcomes to youth empowerment programs are improved social skills, improved behavior, increased academic achievement, increased self-esteem and increased self-efficiency.¹⁸⁷

It is sad that youth empowerment as a concept has been a mockery in Benue state and Nigeria generally nowadays. Politicians have continued to abuse the very philosophy of the ideal. To them, it is all about giving the youth tricycles and motorcycles for commercial transport.

¹⁸⁵. Ihonvbere J. The Political Economy of Crisis and Under-development in Africa; selected works in Claude Ake(Lagos: JAD Publishers Limited, 1989)

¹⁸⁶. Kofi Anan cited in Kingsly Amatanweze, How not empower the Youth, The Nation Newspaper, 5th March, 2015.

¹⁸⁷. Ahmed Usman " Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria; An Assessment of National Poverty Eradication programme (NAPEP) in Nasarawa State

Although such gestures certainly help them financially but this is far from youth empowerment, which is a complete transformation of young people through capacity building and active participation in decision making process. Youth empowerment is characterized by certain factors which include sound education, policy making involvement and innovations. Education propels the youth to a state of self-dependence, thereby making them to contribute meaningfully to economic development.¹⁸⁸

Before a nation could claim to have empowered its youths, it must have reduced unemployment to the barest minimum. The number of unemployed young people is increasing exponentially. This is a consequences of a failed system that has not accentuates the need to make our education more practical and skill oriented. Many potential abound in the youths that can change the face of society. Some should be trained as carpenters, electricians, mechanics, entrepreneurs, singers etc these untapped talents can help solve the problems of unemployment and youth restiveness, if we fail to re-design youth empowerment schemes and encourage youth to participate in politics, the number of Tiv youth in artisan informal sector will continue to decline drastically.¹⁸⁹

There is need for a shift in emphasis from political issues to the general pattern of change and developments in institutions, ideas, economies and techniques requires a change in attitude of youths. This, the state system should provide bases for wide ranging activities and contacts with the youth.⁴⁷Millions of youths are roaming the streets of Benue State and Nigeria without employment and

¹⁸⁸.Onyekwere Cyprian Eneh, Failed Development, Vision, Political Leadership and Nigeria's Underdevelopment; A Critique Review.(ed) Political Science Alert, 2019.

¹⁸⁹. Catalano Richard et al, "Positive Youth Development in the United States: Research Findings on Evaluations of positive youth Development Programmes" (ed) Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, (2008):98

capital to establish private businesses. Though government is not the only source of employment but when selfish political elites hinders youth access to social services and employment opportunities including enabling environment upon which self-development can be derived, it becomes difficult for there to be equitable and fair distribution of employment in the system. Political elites swindle public funds that ought to be invested into income generating ventures that create employment for youths has resulted to youths dive into crimes like cultism, drugs trafficking, human trafficking, ritual killings and other shameless vices like prostitution. Youth even loose the initiative to grow independently.¹⁹⁰

The youth should take hold of their lives today and stop whining to themselves, to their parents and to leaders about the fears of the unknown, fear that they may contract HIV-AIDS at the next party, fear of what the news might reveal about them and their friends, fear that the mobile phones are helping your girlfriends and boyfriends cheat on you, fear of financial insecurity. The youth must cast away these fears and embrace their destiny, to be ethically involved in efforts that contribute to greater good of the country. Their new chances of a worldwide, none-kin peer groups, emails, facebook and Twitters, LinkedIn, bbs, Skype, WhatsApp, mobile phones and other social networking are opportunities that no other generation before you has been blessed with. So, great Nigerian youth, get up and save your country before it falls in the abyss as a failed nation, while your oppressors continue to blame you, the victims. This is your time to seize the moment, to organize, to reclaim your country from internal and external colonizers, through purposeful living, through ethical conduct and appropriate behavior and skills. Any youth that sits on the fence or refuses to take part in

¹⁹⁰. Political leadership in Nigeria: A Problem to National Economic Development: A Case study of Ebonyi Local Government Area. Doublecast.Com, 2015

rebuilding the new great generation is either a “traitor or coward” or both.¹⁹¹

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