

Globalization: The Challenges of the Nigeria Youths

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Abstract

The paper investigates the challenges posed by globalization on the Nigerian youth. “Youth” bridges the gap between the dependency of childhood and the independent “freedom” of adulthood, and in order to combat the marginal social status, and sense of powerlessness attributed to “youth”, it becomes its social institution with its own codes and cultural claims. As a result, it poses a threat to the accepted norms of adult society. One of the basic tenets of globalization is giving greater role to the private sector and hence greater opportunity towards contributing more to employment creation by the private sector and this is now bringing to an end the era of the public sector/government being the largest employer of labour. The effect of this has been youth unemployment which has been on high rate in Nigeria. The implications of this high rate of unemployment among the young in Nigeria are quite serious, one of which is the dependency rate of many youths on parents and relatives, prone to crime and delinquency, easy prey to drug barons etc. The family which is an important vehicle of primary socialization has been seriously battered by westernization, the effects of which has brought about new values like, emphasis on accumulation of wealth as a symbol of success. There is no doubt that most of the young people in Nigeria are confused, and this confusion emanated from the effects which globalization has brought to us all. The paper concludes that, since the youth is the engine that propel every nation, it is a thing of necessity for the government of Nigeria to; focus on job creation strategies, empower the youth for universal access to economic opportunities and social service, restoration of some African traditional values and norms that have contributed to some of our success stories.

Key Words: Globalisation, Youth, Challenges, Family, Socialisation, Westernisation

1.Introduction: Conceptualizing ‘Globalization’

The notion of globalization is used in a serious manner in the sense...globalization as a presence, “of making global”, “being present world-wide”, “at the world stage” or “global arena”. In this sense, there is the question of visibility, immediacy, availability. It is also possible to talk in the sense of “globalization” of certain issues such as sustainable development, human rights, abolition of capital punishment, etc. some post-modernist scholars have concluded that the relationship inherent here is neither symmetrical nor asymmetrical. Neither is it always domination, exploitation and inequality. Within this usage, it is possible to describe the flows, exchange relationships and the much vaunted interdependencies and counter-penetrations, and to emphasize the spread of consciousness, and life styles...a second form of usage has within it... the element of power relations either or the economic, political or cultural levels. It is an “order” and a constructionist notion. It presupposes the making or remaking of the world and the existence of a system or structure. Whether it is that of an integrated capital market, world information or communication order or world political order (Aina, 1997)

The same author believes that discourse on globalization can be classified under three major heads: globalization as implying global culture and civilization; globalization as referring to the global economy, the international division of labour, the new information technology revolution, and global capitalism; and globalization as the expression of the global political and military order (ibid, 1997) From the above analysis, we can safely say that the following constitutes the key components of the globalization process.

- The emergence of a time-space compressed ‘interdependent’ world where interdependence does not preclude polarization and inequality.
- The emergence of a new world order where there has been a shift from the bi-polar world of the Cold world era to a uni-polar dominated and led by the United State of America.
- The emergence of a world of new flows of persons, cultures, ideas, finances, etc (Appadurai, 1990). Within these flows are several contradictory influences and currents, some of which subvert the dominant structures and patterns providing hiding and overt forms of resistance and alternative organization and values. These flows open up to the potential of the spread of alternative and counter organizations, solidarity and support and the effective internalization of local struggles and issues.
- The emergence and spread of new technologies, particularly with the information revolution and their transnationalization. These are transformation production and production relations and facilitating the integration of markets and economies, and international managerial control.
- The increasing importance of knowledge and information for production, ways of life and economy, and for the creation of new forms of social differentiation and stratification in the society (Akin-Aina, 2002)

2. African Perspectives on Globalization

African perspectives on globalization are diverse but mostly apprehensive. Many Africans are publicly critical of it, but few have dared to oppose its implementation. African leftist scholars are highly critical of globalization. Even scholars of the liberal persuasion, who are sympathetic to globalization, are critical of the rigid conditionalities international financial institutions impose on African countries. A 2003 survey by the Pew Research Centre, however, shows that more than 80% of African respondents view globalization as a serious threat to African traditions.

Proponents argue that globalization promotes economic growth and diversification and by so doing fosters political stability, gender equality, and cultural development in African societies. Economic diversification, for example, is expected to accelerate the absorption of women into the modern economy, which has a strong positive gender equity effect. Economic prosperity is also expected to promote cultural development, by expanding leisure opportunities for the population. Proponents therefore contend that openness and liberalization of trade allow local opportunity costs of resources to be reflected more accurately. Deregulating interest rates also raises rates and thereby encourages savings and the adoption of appropriate technology. Liberalization of capital mobility is also expected to stimulate foreign investment, and it is anticipated that privatization of banks will allow banks to allocate funds to finance private investments in industry. However, each of these policies can also produce adverse results depending on the prevailing conditions. Lifting protectionist policies can, for example, lead to loss of revenue and the destruction of potentially competitive local infant industry by cheap imports. Higher interest rates and tight money may also hurt industry, which tends to have longer duration and higher risks. Deregulation of capital mobility may also destabilize monetary systems, as has occurred in several developing economies.

2.1 Notion of “youth”

To merely see youth as the period between the ages of 12 and 20 is both misleading and inadequate. “Youth” goes some way towards bridging the gap between the dependency of childhood and the independent “freedom” of adulthood, and in order to combat the marginal social status and sense of powerlessness attributed to “youth”, it becomes its own social institution with its own codes and cultural claims. As a result, it poses a threat to the accepted norms of adult society. “Youth is therefore, the point where the dominant culture loosens the control of its young.

And it is on the streets that most young people make themselves visible in their attempts to express their interdependence from adult society, it is “the streets” that enable the creation of these cultural activities. This culture interacts on the streets, and finds its expression in the style it adopts. The high visibility of a group of young people with shared musical preferences, fashion ideals, and beliefs to the creation of a “sub-culture”.

Berger and Berger (1976) have argued that when asked what youth is, commonsense would first of all suggest a biological answer. According to them, in strictly biological terms, one might define youth as beginning on the day on which the individual has lost his last milk tooth and as ending on the day on which the individual has lost his last milk tooth and as ending on the day he sprouts his first white hair. Extensions of these biological definitions are those, which assign particular age brackets to youth.

The representations of the “youth” in academic literature and the impact of such representations on social welfare policies and practices present another interesting picture. One of the key features of academic (and non-academic) representations of youth is the widespread construction of youth in general, and specific groups of young people in particular, as ‘problems’ (MacDonald, 1993)

Some sociologists and historians have argued that the notion of adolescence emerged primarily as a consequence of changes in class relations as expanding capitalist economies demanded a cheap and youthful labour force (for example, Springhall, 1986). However, the discovery of adolescence also marked a key moment for social relations around gender, sexuality, “race” and nationality.

Legally oriented definitions of youth also abound although more often than not they tend to be contradictory. Thus in Nigeria, the marriage Act, although silent on the legal age of majority however requires parental consent for any of the parties to a marriage under the Act who is under the age of twenty one. It can be inferred then from the Act that the legal age of majority prescribed both by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. It is remarkable that the law simply demarcates the life phase into childhood and adulthood.

3. The Consequences of the Globalization on Nigerian Youth

3.1 Unemployment in Africa Countries

There is no doubt about the fact that the world economy is changing the force of globalization is giving greater role to the private sector and hence greater opportunity towards contributing more to employment creation by the private sector (Owagbemi, 2011). The area of the public sector being the largest employer of labour is fast disappearing. The market now acts as one of the major platforms for creating opportunities for employment.

The unemployment rate in sub-Saharan Africa (SAA) stands at 8.2% in 2009 (Ngozo, 2010). According to the

International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2009), sub-Saharan Africa stands out as regions with extremely harsh labour market conditions and with highest shares of working poor. Around four fifths of the employed in SAA were still classified as working poor (Akuta, 2009; BBC News, 2009). According to the International Labour Office (ILO), about 7.2% of Africa's youths are unemployed and an additional 46.9% are underemployed or inactive (ILO, 2009). An expanded definition of unemployment broadly includes everybody who can work, but is without a job (SA suffering from chronic skills mismatch, 2006). Samson (2009) has described the unemployed as one without a job although able and willing to work. Presently, there are increasing number of people that have been added to global unemployment figures, who move from one place to another in search of jobs, which might have evaporated owing to automation and retrenchments or moved to other regions, in order to take advantage of favourable business climates and government concessions, namely cheap labour, lax environmental laws and tax holidays (Bala and Lu, 2009).

Still on Nigeria, globalisation ecstasy has made a particular administration to assert that it is not the responsibility of the government to create jobs. However, ideally, job creation is one of the crucial roles of the government. In other words, individuals with specific skills may become jobless when there is paucity of opportunities within a given society. For example in Nigeria, the textile industry which was the largest employer of labour has folded up. These textile companies numbering about 145 in the 1980's has created jobs for millions of people. However, capitalist globalisation, which some refer to as '*financialisation*' (Went, 2000; Dorasamy, 2010) has made the financial sectors to become more booming than the productive sector in Nigeria. Conversely, the financial sector has over the years been able to create only about 300,000 jobs out of which more than 50% are casual employments. This is quite meagre when compared to the jobs previously created through the productive sectors. Therefore, in an economy, where the financial sector is more buoyant than the productive sector, there is bound to be problems owing to the vacuum emanating from economic mismatch. Entrepreneurial initiatives in Nigeria have not been properly funded by the government most probably because the global logics seem to have taught the nation's leadership that governments do not interfere with the economy or job creation.

Consequently, about 54.4% of the nation's citizens go to bed hungry every night. In the same picture of gloom, over 5 million Nigerian youths are estimated to be unemployed. Unemployment has reached a critical height in Nigeria. For instance, one month into his emergence as the Executive Governor of Edo state, Comrade Adams Oshiomhole (a labour leader) advertised about 10,000 jobs in the Newspaper, in response to escalating number of unemployed youths in his state. It turned out that over 95,000 applications were received. Therefore, one does need an additional evidence to show how real the problem of unemployment is in Nigeria. The everyday sight of the growing armies of the unemployed youths roaming the streets with despair written all over their faces attests to the gravity of the job market situation in Nigeria (Samson, 2009). In the heat of the ongoing economic crisis, the news that federal government intends to retrench about 160,000 civil servants is certainly bound to escalate the joblessness problem in the country (Nigerian Newsday, 2006).

Indeed, there is a globular relationship between retrenchment, unemployment and crime. Rising unemployment increases the number of idle persons and, hence the number of criminals (Chinonso, 2007). As the crime rate increases in any society, investors become increasingly less confident. Decreased economic growth leads to a higher level of unemployment, while the unemployed, unable to make a living, turn to crime (Bendix, 2005). It can, therefore, be asserted that, as unemployment decreases, the crime rate will decrease but the problem lies with fuelling necessary economic growth, while crime prevails. Crime affects every aspect of society and business. Therefore, companies, which are quick to retrench workers without considering the social effects that it may have, may be

acting irresponsibly and will in the end, suffer the consequences of increased crime and economic recession (Bendix, 2005).

At the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), and other government parastatals, the casualisation of most employment relationship and voluntary retirement packages for workers may signal a move towards pauperisation (Ukpere, 2009). While the evidence is not definitive, several studies of criminal behaviours within a capitalist dispensation have linked it to inequality, which points to the fact that high rates of crime are associated with falling income. The demography of criminality reflects a group that has endured the largest losses in real earnings such as young, under-graduate males. Surveys of inner cities show that many youths currently perceive crime as more lucrative than work (Freeman, 1995, cited in Matthews, 1998).

In fact, unemployment could be a reason why one could find some university graduate criminals presently in Nigeria. These are able-bodied person who are willing and ready to work after attending university for years as well as year of national service, but are without jobs (Chinonso, 2007). Even some previously employed graduates may have to face the wind of competition, which capitalist global forces have unleashed, and it seems that the only way out for corporations to respond to these putative global forces, is mainly via further retrenchments and unemployment (Bloch 1998; Scholte, 2000). Hence, frustration has led Nigerian youths to crime. Presently, about 90% of arrested criminals stated that a main reason why they engage in crime is hunger (Matthews, 1998). In addition, the growing number of graduates that are unemployed, have increased the rate of

some sophisticated crimes such as money laundering, drug trafficking, human trafficking, bank and lottery fraud (popularly known as 419 amongst Nigerians or 420 amongst Indians), child labour, women trafficking and recently terrorism, to name a few.

3.1.1 *Income inequality*

Continuing trends in unemployment have exacerbated the rate of inequality in Africa. It has been established that the divisions between the rich and poor, continues to grow (Haines, 2001). For example, the top 500 richest people currently own US\$ 1.54 trillion, which is more than the entire GDP of Africa (Prabhakar, 2010). It is an irony that Africa has one of the World's richest concentrations of minerals and precious metals, yet some 300 million of its people live on less than one dollar a day (UN Economic Commission for Africa, 2005). In the case of Africa, *"inequality is worsened when growth, which creates wealth, is not accompanied by decent jobs; the sort of growth that distributes wealth, foster consumption and drives investment"* (Juan Somavia cited in News from Africa, 2010). As a result, the poor becomes poorer and rich become richer which creates inequality and poverty among the people of sub-Saharan Africa (Prabhakar, 2010). A study by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (2005) revealed that focussing on economic growth alone might not be the best way to halve poverty by 2015. The report of the study further stated that a crucial factor in the equation is income inequality, because it is not so much the growth figures themselves that matter, but the fact that economic growth is intricately linked to unequal income. In fact, poverty reduction or escalation is determined by the level of inequality in society. Thus, even if there is growth in a country, the way the income is distributed is vital. Nevertheless, in many African countries growth in national income rarely trickles down to the poor workers (UN Economic Commission for Africa, 2005). For instance, in Nigeria, where some politicians earn more than the USA president, workers are recently comparing their difficult conditions with the affluent of the elites.

It was previously argued by the neo-liberals that renewed growth would eventually "trickle down" to improve everyone's well-being, including the poor. However, in spite of the acclaimed GDP growth rates in African over the past decades, the proportion of Africans living on less than US\$1 per day continue to rise (Prabhakar, 2010) Therefore, many of the African's poor have realised that the benefits of economic growth do not actually "trickle down" and the so called market mechanism of globalisation has failed to address the disparity between individuals and regions (Ukpere, 2010c).

Indeed, where extreme inequalities exist, markets, by themselves, do not lessen the gaps. The poorest and most marginalised lack the resources and political voice to influence the distribution of goods and services. Markets have always benefited those with the greatest wealth and power. This has been the situation in Nigeria, a situation where the youths are not benefiting from all the yearly economic growth Therefore, the main avenue to reduce inequality lie in government intervention (DESA, cited in Harsch, 2006).

During the 1990s, the market liberalisation policies driven by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and other TNCs led to huge cuts in government spending on social programmes, which in turn exacerbated inequalities. Such inequality meant that when national income raised, those at the top benefited most and when economic downturn or disaster struck, those at the bottom of the income scale (the most vulnerable) were hurt disproportionately. This situation has escalated the level of inequality and poverty in most African countries. The consequences of this poverty manifest itself in the form of increasing early mortality, diseases and malnutrition, prostitution, child labour, displacement and forced migration, the violence of social breakdown, state social control and fractional war, acute risk and uncertainty, environmental degradation and vulnerability, as well as a loss of existential material security (Amin, 2004). While tenure and security have changed only marginally for the majority, job offers for the unemployed have become increasingly unstable and lower paid (Matthew, 1998). This has in effect, expanded the gaps between the haves and the have nots.

In Nigeria, 39% of poor 6 to 14 years olds were in school, compared with 91% of rich 6 to 14years. The fact that there is inequality in Africa does not exonerate other advanced nation from this economic monster. Inequality is a global trend since the era of openness (Globalization). However, the situation is worse in Africa.

The United Nation-Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) have repeatedly warned of catastrophic food shortages in many African countries. Currently the average per-capita calorie intake has now fallen below minimal nutritional standards. The FAO recently estimated that of African's 750 million people, more than 270 million suffer from some form of malnutrition associated with inadequate food supplies (Prabhakar, 2010). The food and global crises is presently fuelling incidences of poverty and vulnerability in poor countries such as Nigeria, Ethiopia, Zambia, Malawi, Uganda, Botswana, Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Tanzania (Ngowi, 2010). The situation is worst in other parts of Africa such as Congo, Burundi, Comoros and Zimbabwe were people are suffering from a lot of problems. Despite the fact that the course of their poverty is also drought, famine, internal strife, wars, AIDS, globalisation is not indeed spreading the benefit of increased efficiency and openness that comes with it, more evenly and equitably to all nations (Prabhakar, 2010).

The current global economic crisis has affected African countries through declining private financial flows, trade, and remittances. By the end of 2009, African countries have lost more than \$50 billion income. The human consequences include mounting unemployment, poverty and hunger, in addition to 50 million people trapped in

absolute poverty (Africa Development Bank, 2009). For the very poor, reducing consumption from already very low levels, even for a short period, can have important long term consequences. The poorest households may have to reduce the quantity and quality of food, schooling, and basic services they consumed, leading to irreparable damage to the health and education of millions of children. Poor households forced to switch from more expensive to cheaper and less nutritional foodstuffs, or cut back on total caloric intake altogether, face weight loss and severe malnutrition (Prabhakar, 2010).

Nigeria the most populous African nation, according to the United Nation human development (UNDP) report (2005), out of 177 countries, ranked 158 in human development index, 165 in life expectancy at birth, 121 in combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment and 155 in GDP per capital. Nigeria has been rated in 2006, as 141 poorest nations on human development index. The nation is also considered as one of the 20th poorest countries in the world with 70% of the population classified as poor (majority of whom are youth), and 54.4% living in absolute poverty (UNDP 2006 cited in Ugoh and Ukpere, 2009). According to Suberu (2007) "Nigeria has earned around US\$500 billion in oil revenue since the 1970s, yet remains mired in poverty, unemployment, a burgeoning domestic debt, infrastructural squalor, abysmal health and education services, and attendant social frustration and unrest". It is conspicuous that poverty has been a serious problem confronting the Nigerian nation since independence, and the youths are seriously doomed for it. Nigeria instead of advancing has degenerated into one of the poorest countries of the world. In fact, more and more people are becoming poorer every day. In 1960, the poverty level in the country was about 15% and by 1980 it reached 28.1%. In 1985, the poverty level was 46.3 but dropped to 42.7% in 1992. Perhaps, the drop may not be unconnected to 1993 elections (Ugoh and Ukpere, 2009). Nonetheless, with the termination of the democratic processes by the military government, the poverty level rose to 43.6% in 1995. A year later, about 65% of the population was below the poverty line, namely approximately 67.1 million Nigerians. In the 1999 and 2000 UN Development Report, Nigeria had degenerated further as having 87% of its citizens who live on less than US\$1 per day and was rated 154 on the world's marginal poverty index out of 172 countries (Ekpu, 2004; Ikanna, 2009). In similar vein, over 7 million primary age school children are out of school in Nigeria. More pathetic is the disclosure that 201 out of 1000 Nigerian children stand the risk of dying before the age of 5. Women, of course are not spared of the unsettling development as 800 out of 100,000 of their folks are estimated to lose their life during child birth. The rising incidence of prostitution is an index of the escalating poverty level in the country. Also, compounding the shock is that an estimated 4.4 million Nigerians are living with HIV/AIDS (Daily Independent, 2008, cited in Ugoh and Ukpere, 2009).

In general, there is no doubt that for most of the young in contemporary Nigeria, life is full of ambiguities and contradictions arising partly from the requirements of a society and culture that is in transition from traditionalism based on ascriptive-particularistic criteria for social placement, to modernism based on universalistic-achievement criteria. In this transition, coupled with globalization, the cultural values and norms, which had evolved and brought order and harmony to the traditional communities, have been greatly weakened and some cases undermined, without being replaced by acceptable ones, anomie refers to the strain put on individuals' behaviour when accepted norms conflict with social reality.

3.1.3 *Indecent Dressing among Nigerian Youth*

Dressings are part of a peoples' culture and they define their tribal or ethnic identity. Apart from dresses being a means for cultural identity, they are for ornamental or aesthetic purposes, for protection of the body against harsh weather conditions as well as for covering the intimate parts of the body (Answer.com, 2011 & Articlesbase.com, 2011). These purposes are important especially as they form major aspects of a person's personality. But as important as these purposes are, they have been defeated by the generation of Nigerian youths (Articlesbase.com, 2011). Their dress patterns are most times anti-African, and are invented. They usually dress in a manner that does not show that they are responsible (nigerianfilms.com, 2009). The African culture and particularly that of Nigeria encourage modesty in appearance as do the Christian and Islamic religions where the larger population of these youths claim to be worshipping God.

This un-African dress pattern among the youths of this generation has generated lots of concern and worry among the citizenry of the country. Religious institutions as well as institutions of learning are not resting on their oars to watch this immoral act being perpetuated, but they speak against it. For instance, Lori (2003) reported that at the University of Abuja rules were made that any dress worn must cover intimate parts of the body, must not expose the breast, stomach, navel and bare chest. But on this, many campus students still dress indecently

3.1.4 *Wrong use of the Internet*

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has helped to revolutionize the community tremendously. It has via the use of Internet, Communication satellites, mobile phones etc, helped to bring people together distance, culture or language notwithstanding. Through the activities of home videos, satellites and other media agents, values (faulty or correct), fashions (modern, modest and immodest) are traded across cultures and nations. In as much as ICT is helpful, consequential to human, and societal developments, the rate of abuse and the un-

regulatory ways they are used call for great concern. Most of the youths and children that are exposed to some of their contents that most times are negative so quickly fall vulnerable. The parents of these children and their senior siblings in Diasporas are the ones promoting indecent and immoral practices and they are relayed through videos, pornography, and music as well as advertisement and fashion parades. In as much as ICT is good and beneficial to humanity, the associative evils need to be checked and resisted

3.1.5 Family

Modernization, westernization, globalization and increasing immiseration have combine to culminate in the breakdown of the family system, as it is known in the traditional setting. Alien values have become dominant in the society and family institution has changed accordingly caught as it were, between the dictate of traditional values and norms and the demand of the new reality. Part of these new realities is the extreme emphasis on the accumulation of wealth as a symbol of success. This in the pursuit of wealth, many parents no longer have time to spend with their children to househelps, peer influence and to the school. These pursuits have also placed a great strain on many marriages leading to a higher level of separation and divorced than ever before and also to an increased incidence of child neglect.

Just as the family has largely failed in its socialisation function to the child, so also has the school proved ineffective. There has been palpable deterioration of schools nationwide as a result of decades of neglect and indifference on the part of the authorities. Thus, not only is the average performance of students lower today than about two decades ago, the level of anti-social behaviour learnt in school today is at its highest

4. Conclusion

Various population statistics in Nigeria indicate that the larger proportion of the population is made up of young and energetic people popularly referred to as the youth. By virtue of their size, they constitute a latent force that, if properly mobilized and utilizes, could turn the development trends of the country (Iwara,2004). Because the group comprises of diverse individuals with different potential and skills, the mobilization of the youths can effectively impact on the state of the Nigerian socio-economic conditions. To mobilize the youth, efforts must focus on a strategy that will:

- Emphasize increased spending on focused job-creation strategies;
- Prioritize concerns about income-generation activities, individual and aggregate productivity in the poor communities where the young one resides, and ensure diversification of productive activities;
- Empower the youth for universal access to economic opportunities and social services

Since the youth is the engine that propel every nation, it is a thing of necessity for the government of Nigeria to; make appropriate technology available to them, focus on job creation strategies, empower the youth for universal access to economic opportunities and social service, restoration of some African traditional values and norms that have contributed to some of our success stories. It is only then the Nigerian youth can be hopeful in the already globalized world.

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