

CULTURE AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: GOVERNANCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

The research evaluated the negative realities in Nigeria, as a result of governments' failure being a regulatory, enforcement and development agent, which has opened Pandora's Box as it were. Morality and traditions are out and a new free thinking concept is fundamentally taking over. The paper examines the failure of government through neglect of education and culture, which has negatively affected youth development and indeed development in general. Therefore, focus is on the action and in actions of governments in Nigeria, using secondary sources of data. In conclusion, the research asserts good governance as the way out of the present deteriorating realities, into a better and sustained culturally relevant youth development in the 21st century Nigeria.

Keywords: Government, Information Technology, Nigeria Culture and Education Youth Development.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria as a country achieved independence on the first of October, 1960. With independence came great expectations from the citizens of the new Nigeria. However, after more than fifty years of independence characterized by a failed civilian government and successive military regimes the great expectations were never realized. The return to civilian rule (29th of May, 1999) after almost two decades of military rule gave Nigeria hope, hope for sustainable development through the dividend of democracy. However the reality is that since the second coming of Obasanjo, democracy has yet to bring about any meaningful change in the socio-economic cum political lives of the people. Obasanjos administration failed to deliver on its promises of better life and better Nigeria. Perhaps (Dowden, 2009) explains it better:

With the legacy of sixteen years of bad military rule, strong international support and a Six fold increase in Nigeria's oil revenue during Obasanjo's eight years as president, it is hard to find exactly how he managed to end his reign as just about the most unpopular man in Nigeria. When he came to power, he had all the cards. He could have bought off or charmed opponents, taken easy steps such as providing electricity and clean water. He could have left a legacy of real change, a transformed Nigeria, but Obasanjo left office discredited and disgraced.

The state exists to ensure the general welfare of its citizen's things thus; the state is a natural design for promoting social good and public welfare (Okoli & Okoli, 1990).

The main challenge to maintenance of our core values (good cultural features) is bad governance which could be linked to bad leadership. Politicians are seen to be more focused on looting public treasures and ensuring their Hold on power. According to (Munroe, 1993) in the political, civil, economic, social and spiritual arenas, recent events indicate that previous generations have produced a poor quality of characters that fade in the presence of true leadership and leave our present generation in this same leadership vacuum.

Government, education, and youth development

When government is viewed as a process or act it could be defined as the "body vested with the power and authority for maintaining security, peace and stability by making and enforcing conventional and fundamental laws in a given state or society" (Anyaele, 2003). Governments in Nigeria (under both military and civil rule) have not lived up to its constitutional obligations through the neglect of education,

which has a serious consequence on youth development of any state. According to (Oxford, Concise Oxford Dictionary, 2011) education refers to “the act or process of educating or being educated; systematic instruction” and also the “development of character or mental powers”. Where government has failed in educating its teaming youth and re-enforcing societal culture through legislation, school curriculums, control of media and leadership by example the future of our youth’s development becomes problematic.

(Oxford, Concise Oxford Dictionary, 2011) Refers to youth as “the state of being young, the period between childhood and adult age” and also as “young people collectively (the youth of the country)”. While it defines development as “A stage of growth and advancement”.

The neglect of education in Nigeria by successive governments has led to the virtual collapse of education in Nigerian. (Jideofor, 2013) explains it like this:

That the Nigeria education system is in severe crisis is self evidence. If the increasing trend of our university graduates being unable to read and write is not enough evidence, then the virtual absence of our universities in the upper end of the league of African universities should suffice. And if you are still not convinced, you can read the articulation of the academic staff union of universities (ASUU) during its annual strikes.

The reality now is that, the school system has little or no influence in moulding the character of children and the youths. Rather peer groups, information technology and poverty have assumed that responsibility, as will be discussed in subsequent pages.

Culture and information technology in Nigeria

The level of cultural awareness of a people helps determine its relationship with information technology. culture according to the concise oxford dictionary as “the acts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively” and also as “the customs, civilization, and achievement of a particular time or people”. While it refers to information technology as “the study or use of systems (especially computers, telecommunication, etc.) for storing, retrieving and sending information”. It is the responsibility of government to make policies. One of the ways of achieving people oriented or culturally sound polices is through agenda setting. (Dlakwa, 2010) noted:

Policy agenda refers to a repository of societal needs or demands that policy makers feel compelled to act upon. The choice of such needs and demands does not come that easy, for the simple fact that at any given time the demands made to government far outweigh the resource capability of the political system.

However, despite governments’ nonchalant attitude towards people oriented policies, there exist the challenge of ignorance on the part of citizens because generality of the Nigerian people are not adequately educated and therefore not having the capacity to mobilize in struggling for their rights. This almost always results in government making unpopular policies. This view is supported by (Starling, 1979) “Almost irrespective of the particular issue, there is a bias against groups whose members lack status and community standing”.

The changing value system of Nigeria from a culture of dependability, respect, love and family value, to a culture of selfishness, arrogance, hate, intolerance, and criminal behaviors to mention but a few. These deviant behaviors are ever present especially in the youths. The mass media in Nigeria contributes to the negative culture or the deteriorating culture. In Nigeria the television station (private & public) largely show mature contents with little or no rating. Even during the news hour you find the media showing mature content without proper warnings. Therefore, exposing the public and indeed children to undesired or harmful news. The media which is ideally instituted to among other things educated mobilized and serve as a development agent is failing in this regard. The root of the problem of “Nigerian Journalism” could be better appreciated when seen from the view of (Mbaya, 2012) who asserts that:

A national mass media in which journalists, experience job insecurity, harassment by security officers, ideological confusions, professional misconduct, and corruption cannot adequately perform the important task of informing, educating, entertaining and mobilizing the people towards democratic national development. Most of the news report focus on the activities of the elites or big people, and

generally ignore the masses in reporting news. The nature of Nigeria state didn't guarantee the freedom of the press. We have seen how mass media houses were close down, political activist detained and mysterious death of Dele Giwa. These are all indications that the leaders do not want to lead by good example.

All of these and more are changing the way people see and do things. The culture of an honest living or life with dignity of labour is being replaced by a new growing culture of get rich over night, characterized by violence, armed robbery, drugs and pre-marital sex.

Unregulated information technology in the form of social media is also playing a part in the changing culture of Nigerians. Children now can access pornographic site by simply browsing the internet using their phones with little or no difficulty, dating sites, nude pictures, x-rated videos, and other internet site that transfer negative culture and violence. Usually, in the form of hate, sex, violence and the mirage of an easy life without hard work. According (Daily Trust, 2013) with the heading EFCC nabs varsity students over #2.05bn fraud, shows the resultant effects. It was a criminal attack on union bank which was carried out through electronic transfers and withdrawals involving two (2) undergraduate students of the University of Jos and others. That is not saying that information technology is bad but unregulated information is bad and can create series of problems to the country.

Conclusion

It is clear that this new free-thinking society is guided by emerging cultures dictated by information technology, illiteracy, peer pressure, mass media, and governments failure as a regulatory and enforcement body. The society is characterized by ethnic sentiments, moral bankruptcy, violence, poverty, and corruption. All because of governments failure in developing the education sector and regulating information technology in the country.

Recommendation

The current dire situation could be managed and eventually reversed. Despite globalization and its accompanying features, government as an agent of the state must take the lead in ensuring that it remains true to our great cultural heritage, by ensuring it considers our peculiarities before adopting international or western cultures. All that is needed is a couple of measures. We recommend the followings:

A review of the present communication policy of the federal government, which should cover the mass media within the country and the international press which broadcasts from outside the country but, transmits signals to the country. This should also be followed by a regulatory and enforcement body empowered by law.

For government to succeed as a regulatory, enforcement and development agent it must invest in its people through capacity building. This could be achieved through a well established education sector, which requires more financial votes to the sector. Our future as citizens and that of our potentially great country depends on a structured and funded education.

A policy of reawakening and reorientation should be pursued by government through its relevant agencies. Our established cultural values must be rekindled.

Political-will remains a pertinent factor in any undertaken thus; leaders must reawaken their sense of patriotism, and nationalism if we are to reach the promise land.

Organized pressure groups must rise up to their responsibilities of being the voice of the voiceless. Such groups are well placed to ensure that culturally friendly and economically positive programmes get on to the agenda.

Accountability must be ensured. The economic and financial crimes commission must be made truly independent for it to execute its mandate as required by law.

Nigerians are religious, so let's not forget the power of prayers. With the Almighty all is achievable. Therefore much as there is need for constructive and concrete planning, it is also vital we remain prayerful.

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