

**NATIONAL STABILITY THROUGH YOUTH EMPOWERMENT
IN NIGERIA: ENTREPRENEURIAL COUNSELLING
STRATEGIES**

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Abstract

National stability and integration are essential for the survival of Nigeria as a country. The use of entrepreneurial counselling intervention as an instrument for empowering the youth has always been emphasized. In Nigeria, the youth constitute the bulk of the population which Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010) estimated about 60% of the total population of the country. The youth comprises all young males and females characterized with excess potential energy, strength and vigour that need to be tapped. These potentials if not properly channeled into useful venture will lead to antisocial behaviours like cultism, political thuggery, armed robbery, kidnapping as well as proliferation of ethno-regional, religious and social organizations/movements (agitations) that are major causes of national instability. To check youth restiveness and foster national stability and integration the paper focuses on entrepreneurial counselling

intervention such as vocational guidance, career day, group counselling and community counselling to help empower Nigerian youth. Some of the recommendations include that parents, teachers as well as other stakeholders should provide the young ones with necessary skills needed for self-reliance so that they will contribute positively to national stability integration.

Key words: National Stability, National Integration, Entrepreneurial Counselling, Youth Empowerment and Youth Restiveness.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most devastating problems confronting the Nigerian nation today is national instability caused by long standing unemployment of school leavers. This problem has given rise to many social vices in our society such as armed robbery, drug trafficking, prostitution, examination malpractice, kidnapping and most recently suicide bombing among many others.

Adamu (2010) realizing this, comments that Nigeria is today bedeviled by the problem of unemployment especially among our educated youth who prefer white collar jobs after graduation. Consequent upon this, he states that few Nigerians think of getting into self-employment after school, hence the underutilization of manpower resources that would have contributed to national stability.

The few school leavers who venture into one form of entrepreneurship or the other are faced with unimaginable challenges and they back out as soon as they started. To overcome these challenges facing self-employment, the service of entrepreneurial counsellors are greatly needed. Through counselling the youth's unemployment will be reduced and national stability improved. Secondly, entrepreneurial counselling has become imperative due to reduction in oil wealth and attendant economic recession which is a great threat to national stability and integration.

There is urgent need to diversify other areas of the Nigerian economy especially agro-industries with local agricultural products as their base raw materials as it was in the 1960s and 1970s. This area of diversification was highlighted by Ihekwe and Ebomuche (2011) where they recommend agro –allied based industries, which they agree, will promote self-reliance as well as national stability.

Entrepreneurial counselling will expose Nigerian school leavers to various ways of acquiring sustainable skills that will enable them explore agro-industrial and trade strategies for self-reliance and national stability through food production and sales. Counselling will empower the youth to take charge of the legacy left by our forefathers who made our country safe through agriculture.

Entrepreneurial counselling will expose Nigerian school leavers to various ways of acquiring sustainable skills that will enable them explore agro-industrial and trade strategies for self-reliance and national stability through food production and sales. Through counselling the youth will be empowered to take into account the rich and varied food culture of the different ethnic groups in Nigeria and venture into agriculture for self-reliance and job creation.

Apart from agro-industries other entrepreneurial skills that will be acquired through entrepreneurial counselling as enumerated by Adamu (2010) are animal caring and

poultry, mat making, weaving, basket making, hair plaiting, baking, book binding, dress making, driving, carpentry, drink making etc. Empowered with these skills, a determined individual could start the journey to self-reliance and subsequently contribute to national stability of Nigeria.

Often times, Nigeria educational system is blamed for youth unemployment due to undue emphasis placed on acquisition of qualifications and certificate and not on acquisition of sustainable skills for self-employment. Recently, entrepreneurship departments have been established in few Nigerian universities. Time will tell if it will impart the most desired entrepreneurship education that will equip school leavers with the necessary skills for self-employment or it will end up as another theoretical academic exercise as usual.

The job of empowering the youth of this country is enormous and could not be achieved by only educational policies, hence the need for entrepreneurial counselling which is the main aim of this paper. Before proffering counselling interventions, the other terms to be highlighted include the following;

- ❖ The concept of counselling,
- ❖ National stability,
- ❖ Youth entrepreneurship,
- ❖ Youth empowerment,
- ❖ Youth empowerment through entrepreneurial counselling interventions and conclusions.

THE CONCEPT OF COUNSELLING

Counselling is a helping relationship between a client and a counsellor that increases self understanding and ability to manage the environment, take useful decisions and make appropriate choice to solve problems adequately.

Nwamuo (2005) defines counselling as a helping relationship and avenue for individuals to achieve greater awareness, not only of what they are but more importantly of what they can become. Yahaya, (2002) opines that counselling is an important activity that basically assists people to understand themselves and the environment they found themselves and help them to take effective decision necessary for their personal growth and development.

Counselling has also been explained as a learning process in which individuals learn about themselves, their values, attitudes, and behaviours that will help them in personal development. This type of personal development will equip individuals to become self-employed which will eventually contribute to national stability in Nigeria. Associating personal growth and development to counselling, Goodyear (1984) views counselling as the application of mental health, psychological or human development principles through cognitive, affective, behavioural or systematic intervention strategies that address wellness, personal growth/development or career development as well as pathology.

Iwuama (2007) describes counselling as a relationship between a professionally trained competent counselor and an individual seeking help in gaining greater self understanding, improved decision making and behaviour changing skills for problem resolution and developmental growth.

In view of the above, counselling can be described as a person to person helping relationship in which one person helps another to resolve areas of conflict that has been an obstacle to a person's actualization of his/her full personal development. Inability to

achieve this will definitely result to instability of an individual in particular and of Nigeria generally.

NATIONAL STABILITY

National stability is the attainment of national cohesion and integration for wholistic development (Nmodu, 2014). As a result of this, the Nigerian government has adopted several strategies to promote stability in her national life through the equipment of security agencies to curb crimes and introduction of youth empowerment programmes.

Another strategy to promote national stability was initiated by Common Wealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (PAYE), 2006-2015, which has a major aim to empower, engage and create value so that young women and men can contribute to the national stability of Nigeria. This entails that the greatness of any nation is in the quality of its people in the worth of and in the empowerment of its youth.

YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship has been taken as a generic term with so many connotations from different views. Nwachukwu and Nwamuo (2010) describe youth entrepreneurship as “the process whereby individuals become aware of business ownership as an option or viable alternatives, develop ideas of business, learn the process of becoming an entrepreneur and undertake the initiation of a business.

Daji, (2004) defines an entrepreneur “as an individual who is willing to and has ability to seek investment opportunities in an environment and be able to establish and run a business outfit successfully based on identified opportunities”.

Youth entrepreneurship is the practical application of enterprising qualities such as initiative, innovation, creativity and risk taking into the work environment (either in self-employment or employment in small start-off firms) using appropriate skills necessary for success in that environment or culture. Awogbenle and Iwuamadi, (2010) are of the view that within the framework of potential effort and strategies to boost employment and job creation for young people entrepreneurship is increasingly accepted as an important means and a valuable additional strategy to create jobs and improve livelihood. Youth entrepreneurship therefore involves the ability of a youth to identify and harness opportunities and add value to existing business for the purpose of making profit while taking calculated risks. Anyamene (2009) also stresses that entrepreneurship education encourages students to be creative, self-reliant and subsequently gain the ability to generate, recognize and seize the available opportunities.

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment according to Wikipedia, the free internet dictionary is increasing spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic strength of individuals and communities. Empowerment is to give strength and confidence to, the giving of power or delegation of power or authority or giving of ability, providing of special opportunities in employment or training. 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 through their beliefs, values and attitudes (Kar, Snehendu, Pascual, Cathrine 1999). As earlier mentioned, one of the greatest social and economic problems facing Nigeria today is youth unemployment. Unemployment can be defined as a

situation where people who are willing to work and are actively seeking for work for which they are qualified and are unable to find employment. It is the underutilization of labour force or human resources available in a particular place at a given time (Ogbuagu, 2009). For stability of a nation to be guaranteed, the youth who are the invaluable assets and leaders of tomorrow must be adequately empowered, (Awogbenle and Iwuamadi 2010).

EMPOWERING YOUTH THROUGH COUNSELLING INTERVENTION FOR NATIONAL STABILITY: ENTREPRENEURIAL COUNSELLING STRATEGIES.

Entrepreneurial counselling is simply a tool to raise an entrepreneur above average (Mamarou, 2012). Counselling in entrepreneurship could be defined as a process that caters for the need of the individual entrepreneur with the focus on assisting an entrepreneur to discover him/herself to explore and understand better his/her needs, feelings, values, attitudes, strengths and weakness, especially in the business realm. An entrepreneurial counsellor is therefore, a person with special skills and experiences who gives assistance to entrepreneurs in making informed decisions.

The entrepreneurial counselling strategies employed by counsellors in youth empowerment for national stability include:

- ❖ vocational counselling technique,
- ❖ Career day,
- ❖ Group counselling and
- ❖ Community counselling.

Vocational Counselling Technique

There is great need for introducing and emphasizing on vocational counselling in schools. Counselling students for entrepreneurship through vocational counselling will help them in appropriate vocational plans and exposing them to strategies for creating wealth for themselves and for the society at large as to maintain national stability. It will guide them to choose an occupation, prepare for it and make progress in it. In rendering vocational counselling, individuals will be helped to know their abilities, interest, selection of subjects and activities that will lead to the attainment of engaging in the right career which may be private or public. According to Brown and Denga (2010), counselling vocation stands to take necessary care of the individual. They will learn the strategies of making use of appropriate referrals to relevant specialists such as extension workers, farmers etc. Counsellors and teachers should assist students in making appropriate and satisfying personal-social, educational and vocational choices to avoid mistakes later in life. Vocational education should be made a compulsory subject or course at all levels of education so that each individual would be skilled in one area or the other, combined with any other area of study.

Career Day

Career day exposes youth to fascinating important and appropriate careers intending to open referred their mind to exciting world. It can be to as a day in school when students/youth learn about different careers. Different world of works are exposed to the youth through this programme. Resource persons from various disciplines are invited to highlight the available jobs stating the terms or mode of employment, condition of

service, certificate required etc. Counsellors should create awareness about self-employment and its merits so as to entice youth to get into self-owned businesses. They should help the youth to prepare for the workforce and choose the right courses for earning a living.

Group Counselling

Group counselling according to Ekwe, Iwuama and Nwankwo (2002) is seen as “collection of two or more persons who interact with one another in a way that each person influences and is influenced by the others”. The counsellor and members of the group share ideas, feelings and experiences together. In group counselling, youth receive attention, assurance and support from the counsellor which has a healing effect as they realized that others have similar problem. Counsellors through this programme motivate the youth in their educational and entrepreneurial pursuits. This is achieved by educating them on the need to engage in group business to be self-employed for national stability. Group counselling also enables youth to develop the ability for mutual interaction and relationship.

Community Counselling

It is evident that one of the aims of counsellors is to help people live their life in a better way. Working as a community counsellor is one of the top career options available for people who are in love with society and teaching people the right way of leaving their lives. Community counselling is a form of counselling in which different counsellors work with families, individuals, couples and also communities in one way or the other. Community counselling is actually a different form of counselling in which not only that people are taught about different right or wrong things but they are also shown the right ways to excel (Garry, 2007). It is carried out by counsellors who are trained to work in different kinds of settings like schools, hospitals, family services, prison, mental health agencies et ce tera Community counselling is antidote to people who find it hard to cope with depression, substance abuse, violence, parents having problems dealing with their children. The community counsellors educate the youth on how to cope with life inevitable challenges especially unemployment. More so, the community counsellors also educate the youth on different social changes to assist them develop positive attitude towards entrepreneurship.

THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN MAINTAINING NATIONAL STABILITY

Yimiebi (2010) opines that the quality of a country is not based on the number of men and women in its armed forces, nor is it determined by faithfulness to the application of the principles of allocation of political offices which in Nigeria is actually the yardstick for sharing public fund, but on national growth and stability. That is, its ability to engage youth into meaningful activities for national stability. Based on the above assertion, it is obvious that the contribution of youth in national stability cannot be over emphasized. Furthermore, youth entrepreneurs contribute to national stability in the creation of goods and services, reduction in inflation, utilization of local resources, mobilization of rural savings and reduction in the level of unemployment.

Succinctly, youth enhance the stability of the nation via abiding by the rule of law and regulations which include respect for honest venture and endeavours, respect for national

symbols and many other virtues. In the history of nations, youth have always been the extract of the population to wage war and make supreme sacrifice to attain peace and national stability. Suffice it to say that an effective youth empowerment can guarantee stability in Nigeria.

THE ROLE OF HOME/PARENTS AND SOCIETY IN KEEPING YOUTH BUSY

Abundant evidence shows that a positive family environment is the major reason that young people do not engage in unhealthy activities. Therefore, parents can help curb anti-social behaviours which affect social national stability. The family plays vital roles with regards to curbing anti-social behaviour which oftentimes result to increase in national instability. In other words, parents are role models that youth copy and imitate. Hence, the parenting style adopted by parents in the up-brining of their children has been discovered to contribute in moulding their character. Parents provide social educational and financial needs to their children to enable them face their studies and school.

CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurship which involves life attitudes include the readiness and the courage to act in the social, cultural and economic context for national and social development of an individual. The youth need to acquire entrepreneurial skills to enhance the sustainable livelihood and national stability. Issue of youth unemployment and under-employment can be minimized through self-employment. Therefore, vocational and entrepreneurship education should be vigorously pursued to equip the young ones with skill and the zeal to own businesses. Projects aimed at empowering youth should be emphasized. They should be taught trades and provided with entrepreneurial skills needed to become stable. Therefore, proper counselling is a necessary tool for fostering entrepreneurial development in youth as well as national stability. Parents should provide home guidance to inculcate desirable behaviour in their children. Parents should also help their children choose career in relation to their interest, aptitudes and capabilities. Children should also be allowed to participate in house chores and business of the family. Society should conduct entrepreneurship activities for the youth which will enable them venture into the available jobs for self-reliance which promotes national stability. It is also the responsibilities of the society to expose the youth to culture and tradition of the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Parents should be helped to understand the need for allowing their children to have practical experience of choosing careers they have interest in and get into business of their choice.

Parents should also give their children free hand in choosing careers of their interest while the guidance counselor should help them harness their assets to maximize their potentials with regards to their capabilities.

Government should establish guidance counselling centers in every locality so as to get the out-of school youth, and those in the informal sector to benefit from entrepreneurship education and skill acquisition. This implies that professional counsellors should be licensed to practice even privately.

Government should look inwards and stress on getting back to full agricultural practice and insist that practical and technical subjects be taught in the school system.

The government should open youth development banks for easy access to the youth without collateral like the Bank of Industries (BOI) for adults.

Government should reach out to other African countries and other developing countries, philanthropists, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and advocate for replication of those entrepreneurial activities that have sustained the developed countries so as to give our youth a face lift which will also benefit the nation as a whole.

Entrepreneurship guidance should be emphasized and pursued vigorously by the curriculum designers. Academic stakeholders should change the curriculum to emphasize the conglomerating entrepreneurial skills into every subject/course taught even from the primary level of education. Every teacher should therefore be re-oriented to frame and turn rhetoric lessons to practical ones relating them to the needs of the society.

Schools should launch small business or school-based enterprises where students can be encouraged to develop interest in entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship counselling should be included in the school curriculum and made compulsory for everybody.

Youth should be helped by teachers to realize that entrepreneurship leads to self-employment, self-reliance, self-sufficiency and being an employer of labour.

The educational system should equip the youth with the skills required to bridge the gap between what is taught in schools and what is required in the workforce in order to successfully begin building their careers.

Counsellors and school administrators should help students experience the benefits of field trips and have personal interactions with successful entrepreneurs within their localities as this will definitely boost their interest in developing and building up businesses of their own and becoming employers of labour.

Senior managers and successful entrepreneurs should be involved in youth's entrepreneurial training programmes for secondary school students.

To address the challenges posed by lack of fund, Nwachukwu and Nwamuo (2010) are of the view that counsellors should create awareness of microfinance programmes through youth workshops, television, radio programmes and career centers that will offer technical experts to guide youths in finding sources of funding for business.

Youth entrepreneurs should be encouraged by the society and their endeavours promoted by rewarding or giving incentives to them so as to attract others into the venture.

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