

CREATING ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR EDUCATIONALLY LESS PRIVILEGED YOUTH: A MISSION FOR THE VISION OF UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Halima O. Zubairu

Abstract

From the results of a case study that depended on counselling technique and five (5) clients, this researches reports show here that deviant attitude and behaviour of educationally less privileged youth who pose menace and insecurity to the society could be made positive. This is, by engaging them in activities that can lead to developing their skills in vocational discipline as a mission to achieving the UBE vision. The report concludes that if such youths are provided with an enabling environment to develop their psychomotor skills, they would become less dependent on wrongful patronages, think and act rationally, become socially accepted citizens, contribute economically and meaningfully for self reliance, thus fulfilling the UBE vision in the 21st century i.e. "non formal Skills and apprenticeship training for adolescent and youth who have not had the benefit of formal education" (UBE, 2002).

Introduction

Human development is predicated by his satisfaction of his basic needs-shelter, security, food and clothing, and other things that support spousal support. Of course, the individual strives to get reliable economic strength to get these needs. Thus, the youth who is not engaged positively-going to school or learning a trade or engaged in a useful venture-would least be expected to be gentle or creative. What could be expected of such a youth is restiveness and moral decadence, especially where all that is opened to him is through the peer group. Such peer group members may be deviants and morally bankrupt in the societal ideals and norms. They may be involved in smoking, thuggery, raping, stealing and even robbery, etc.

Against this background, this researcher has taken a close look at measures that the governments have so far taken to curb youth deviance, to consider if such measures have yielded much positive result, These measures include police arrest, intimidation, trials at juvenile courts and consequent detention in custody homes such as done by National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency, and on a mild action, use of social welfare custody where the character is too young for prison custody.

The counsellor has made an opinion survey (details in the methodology) of the success of these measures and the result was that some of the policing have rather made such restive youth hard criminals. Of course, the fact is that any attempt to enforce such traditional approach or reproof to solving a problem without a focus on the remote causes jeopardizes any effort at emergent solutions. Indeed, the lack of focus i.e. the pragmatic mission for such problem solving can impede on the socialization and economic realization of the youth, especially the youth in deviant circle. In a summary, solutions hardly succeed where postulations are made and reprimand actions are taken without reaching out for, and providing against the root causes of the problem.

Thus, this counsellor-researcher believes that the report of her case study is necessary and important. The importance lies on the fact that the discussions, and recommendations that are postulated as the conclusion could lead governments to create youth counseling centers, vocational centers and provision of personnels and all that will motivate the deviant youth to have interest in acquiring such skills. This study could also spring up other similar case studies that would be beneficial to the public and especially the government and the law enforcement agencies.

Related Literature

At the UBE flag off on September 30th 1999 at Sokoto, the President, General Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (Rtd) asserted on the scheme as an

Ambitious educational programme of the government and people of Nigeria to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance and

poverty, as well as stimulate and accelerate National Development, political consciousness and national integration (UBE, 2002:3).

Indeed, the UBE blue print states five categorical visionary goals called "Objectives". And the two which are more relevant to this case study are stated thus:

Catering for learning needs of young persons who, for one reason or another, have had to interrupt their schooling through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education, and

Ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy manipulative, communicative and life-long skills as well as ethical and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning (UBE, 2002:3).

Accordingly, the blue print states the expected beneficiaries and their benefits to include the following: out of school children-non-formal programmes for updating the knowledge and skills of persons who left before acquiring the basics needed for life-long learning and "non-formal skills and apprenticeship training for adolescents and youth who have not had the benefit of formal education".

Upon this background, the blue print points out three implications for the "universal" aspect of the UBE. which include, "special attention to special groups, in playing that special needs of all the sectors of the population will be taken into account"(for details, UBE" (2002; 3-4),

Werinch and Werinch (1974) has written on vocation and technical education and the people such education can serve. The joint authors has reported seven case studies which involved the less privileged who had to learn vocational skills through the circumstances that befell them. Jane, Ed. Margie, Mary, Darlene, Tom and Joe, were the clients of the cases that were studied (PP 6-7), The more related case to this study is that of Margie. Margie at 24 years old was serving a prison term; for theft. She was one of the fifteen inmates who were pretested and found to be good for experimental vocational programme in office skills area with a community college.

While in prison she was opened to the experiment and had to learn typing, short-hand, bookkeeping, operation of various office machines and other related skills. According to the joint authors. Margie could type 75 words per minute and she could take short hand at 100 words per minute with a high degree of accuracy. On her release after she had completed her jail term she got a job as an Executive Secretary to a Managing Director of a well-known firm and lived a happy life there after (P.5).

Writing on vocational skills, Okorie (1997) states that vocational and technical education is acquired by learners in specific areas of mechanical and manipulative skills. Furthermore, Obasanjo (1999) asserts that the re-birth of UPE in the new nomenclature "UBE" is aimed at revamping the ailing primary and junior secondary education to guarantee the right of all school age to learn to read and write-permanent literacy, and, to acquire basic and technical and vocational skills and democratic ideals.

Indeed, the discussions so far made from related literature to the study has had much influence on this study. It could be appreciated that the UBE blue print has made a clear case for the educationally less privileged youth. Furthermore, both Okorie (1997) and Obasanjo (1999) make a case for the educationally less privileged youth to be cared for. Finally, Werinch and Werinch (1974) reported cases are clear indication that the youths who are found in deviant circumstances could be remoulded from mal adjustment in the ideals of the society through inculcation of vocational skills that give them earnings so that they could be socially accepted individuals rather than being misfits.

Methodology

Preamble

This researcher had the opportunity to interact with some adolescents and youth who were involved in illegal sales and hawking of petrol in the 1990s fuel scarcity and much economic hard time at a major road junction in Kano metropolis. As a customer who was buying petrol from some of them, she started to watch their behavioural traits towards their customers and the business itself. She interacted freely with them, using words that rekindled their hope in life, rather than looking at them with scorn. She observed that when some of them saw her coming to them, they would either throw away the cigarettes

or the substances they were smoking or quench them.

The Design

She took advantage of this golden opportunity to stratify seven of them for the case study, using counselling and advice. Two of them fell-off soon, from the study, though they were never informed of the researcher's intention.

Preliminary Survey

After the decision to undertake the study, she made a preliminary survey of opinions often elderly people within the village of the case study on what they felt was responsible for the continuous deviance of the youths and the illegal sales of petrol. This survey was done on the spot of unscheduled interaction. The interactive questions were not structured. Among other factors gathered were that the restive youth had no decent job to do and therefore had no defined means of livelihood. Some parents could not cater for their children due to the economic crunch and could not be in position to control their children, some who had to even support the family spousal support. On a sad note, it was also gathered that some of the law enforcement agents would demand a lot of money from the youth they arrested and free them even without any caution. In other words, such youths were sources of income for such law enforcement agents.

An inquiry was conducted to know if the two prison yards in Kano City had provisions for counseling and training the inmates on vocational skills, as nearly all of them were uneducated. The result proved that such provisions were not available. Similar inquiry was conducted at the office of the social welfare and there was no positive result.

The Study Sampling

Seven deviant youth were initially stratified for the case study. However, two of them soon fell-off as they were more of a volatile personality. Though this researcher would still buy petrol from the two occasionally, more attention was paid to the other five who would show sense of remorse the more they were advised. The five of them were talked to individually even on other days when there was no need to buy petrol. When they became more interested, they would occasionally bring petrol for her at home. Sometimes they were given food, especially if their visits were during dinner; garri was a common food they would request for.

This relationship was adopted because she needed to establish a close rapport with them, as if the situation was that of a therapist and a patient. In fact, there was no structured counselling questionnaire nor interview questions. This was so, because doing so might jeopardize the exercise. On some occasions, she had to share sympathy with them when they were arrested by the law enforcement agents. Such sympathy would be used to include more counselling and advice for them to stop their attitude to avoid being social misfits.

Two things happened to the advantage of getting positive results from them. The first was that they lost one of their friends, who was one of the two that did not co-operate, in an accident. "Moor" as he was called by friends was a thug who died in March 1999 during an electioneering that involved campaigns at a rally in Gwarizo. Unfortunately, his remains was treated with ignominy by the very party and the personality that sponsored him on thuggery. The second was the Presidential flooding of petrol stations with fuel across the nation as soon as the President elect, General Olusegun Obasanjo took oath of office in May 1999. This made for a depression on petroleum hawking activities of the youth. The counsellor researcher seized these developments to appeal to the clients to look inward for a better thing to do, rather than illegal sale of petrol. And the whole exercise was conducted through counselling on acquisition of vocational skills in some trades. The trades in mind were tailoring, barbing, carpentry and furniture, joinery and welding, brick-laying and masonry, painting and decorating, driving and mechanics.

Findings

Causes of the Clients Delinquency and Service

This counselor researcher's interaction with her clients revealed that they were influenced into their respective deviance by the following remote causes.

1.' Divorce/Separation of Parents

Bal explained that her mother had been divorced by the father due to serious economic recession. He had to be brought up by his step mother who could endure the situation. According to him, he was not well fed like the children of the step mother though feeding in

- the house was a problem. On a simple misunderstanding, he would be seriously beaten by the father and sometimes he would not be allowed to sleep in the house. He had to take to the company of his friends who lured him to take solace in drug addiction and earning money from illegal sale of petrol.
2. Bash's case was similar to that of Bal. His mother was separated from the father because the father married another wife. He, too, took solace in his peer friends, some who were hard drug addicts, because of maltreatment from the woman.
 3. For Sad, he was born into a polygamous family of four wives. His father loved one of his wives best to the utter detriment of the other women. While the children of the loved woman was held in high esteem and well cared for, the other children were scorned not only by the woman but also by the father. Sad suffered it most because he was the only son of five children of his mother. He was called all sorts of derogatory names by the beloved woman. He could not bear the ordeal and had to desert the parents to join his friend who was making money from illegal sale of petrol. He was introduced to other vices besides the sale of petrol.
 4. MS lost his father the very day he was taken to start primary school in a motor accident while he was returning home. He was the third child but first son of the four children the father had before his death. His mother remarried but the marriage did not favour them as they were not allowed to accompany their mother to the new husband's home. They stayed with their aged grandmother while their mother was supplying their needs. At a time, things became difficult for them and he had to join his friends who were making money from illegal sale of petrol. Consequently, he had to take to drug abuse in order not to be a misfit in the midst of his friends.
 5. Omo was in primary five in 1996 when the father left for Oshodi, Lagos resettlement center in preparation for the discharge from the Army. He was left with his mother who had to take care of eleven of them, including the wards the father was caring for. For six months they could not hear from the father and attempts to trace him was not fruitful. Though the mother was hawking soft drinks and other two siblings were hawking pure water and soft drinks too, at Kofaruwa Motor Park to feed, the money realized was so meager that they could not adequately be supported by it. He had to leave school to join his peers who were selling petrol which could give quick money to support the family. He had already been addicted to drugs and could not reason with the father who sent them money after the eighth month and who returned with one leg amputated a year after. The father had an accident on his way to Oshodi and the accident was serious. His father was unconscious at the hospital for three weeks because of the serious injuries he sustained. He was already declared on absence without official leave (AWOL) by his unit authority, and would not be paid until he reported at Oshodi after staying for five months in the hospital.

During most of the period of the scheduled contacts with them, they had repeatedly mentioned that they had to drug themselves with weed substances, abuse the use of such drugs as valium and even had to prepare and smoke solutions used in patching tubes to enable them look tough. According to them, it was a device to withstand the ordeal of illegal sales of petrol. In other words, they had to take to Dutch courage to enable them act. But the unfortunate side of it all was that they became so much addicted to drugs that it had overt effects on them.

The turning point as said earlier was that of the death of Moor and the depression on petrol hawking economy which gave the counsellor researcher the opportunity to invite them individually for more counselling and advise.

This counsellor researcher had liked to adopt abbreviations for the names of her clients for confidentiality and security reasons as observed earlier viz:

1. Bal 2. Bash 3. Sad 4. Omo 5. MS.

This is slightly different from use of first names by Werinch and Werinch (1974).

In March 2000, Bal decided on his own to learn furniture making and upholstery. The counsellor researcher accompanied him to a successful upholsterer who advised him to learn carpentry for at least three months before joining him. According to him, skills in carpentry is vital for furniture and upholstery, Bal graduated from apprenticeship in December, 2002 and he now works as a "joinman" -employee to his master, and is living comfortably.

In June 2000, Bash and Sad came together to the counsellor researcher to seek for advice on the trade they had to choose, having decided to learn vocational skills. While Sad chose to learn barbing and went for it. Bash decided to learn driving only if he would be able to secure a motor to drive. He was introduced to a driver who had a transport business. Bash was attached to one of his bus drivers as a conductor / apprentice. Bash now drives a taxi and plies BUK old and new campuses. Both Sad and Bash are comfortable in their undertakings. They are now married and Bash's wife had delivered a baby girl.

MS had taken to be a mechanic for which his friends call him "engineer". Only in December 2004, he had his ceremony for graduating from apprenticeship which he started in June 2000. He is now working as a "Joinman" i.e. an employee with his master. Omo had left primary school when his father was preparing to discharge from the Army in 1996 to join the illegal sales of petrol. He was the only client with basic education and had to agree to return to school. Ofcourse, he still hawks bread in the evening to support himself as his parents have packed and returned home. His ambition is technical education after his senior school certificate.

Discussion

It could be summarized that the immediate causes of the deviance of the clients were the emergent business of petrol and peer group influence. The remote causes were the bad effects of divorce/ separation cases, polygamy and unfortunate circumstances such as the cases of accidents. Except in the cases resulting from accidents, the other causes, i.e. peer group influence, divorce and : separation and polygamous life re-echo Skinner's (1954) assertion of causes of adolescent maladjustment, juvenile delinquency and the deviance eventuality. Peer group influence is a great -factor for mal-adjustment.

As a case study, this counsellor researcher had consistently followed up the activities of these clients. It was observed that they no longer indulged in deviant behaviours.

They slopped sale of petrol. They no longer smoke as they used to do before. In fact, they now live gentlemen's lives. They promised not to smoke any substance, even cigarettes. With the little earnings they now make, they are now responsible in their expenses. They are no longer associated with free girls. Theirs, is now a life pattern that is socially acceptable to the public.

Education has been defined as comprising all efforts, conscious and direct, incidental and indirect, made by a given society to accomplish certain objectives as considered desirable in terms of the individual needs as well as the needs of the society where the programme is based. It is noted that this is the vision of the Nigerian Educational system and in particular the UBE Programme. It is therefore appropriate to point out that vocational training should be considered as a core knowledge which cannot be separated from the virtues and skills of morally developed citizens.

The virtues and skills in mind are not distinct to moral and civic education alone, but they are necessary for active engagement in many personal and professional realms through which economic and social reality are two ends that are made to meet. The public and indeed the governments, should neither see inconsistency with the goals of traditional liberal education and vocational ism, nor, should it be treated as a goal that is separate and distinct from economic and social realities. In essence, vocationalism paves way for work, which is central to the lives of most adults. Therefore, work is a primary domain in which every citizen has the opportunity to contribute to the welfare of others in the community at large (Berber, 1998; Zahradeen, 1990). Hence, economic manifestation is realized from work. According to them, work is one of the three most important

places where meanings in life could be found. For this, it is critically important to integrate into the universal basic education programme, a concern for ethical and socially responsible occupational practices and not only as a policy that never becomes a reality. The practices should embed in the youths an understanding of occupations in a large social and intellectual context that gives it a deeper meaning. In turn, such practices facilitate their minds towards economic viability.

This counsellor researcher hereby examines that the problem of societal decadence, especially, youth restiveness and deviance, occur because such youths, like the educationally less privileged and the jobless have no source of making the two ends meet in the face of ever increasing cost of living. Thus, this counsellor researcher opines that such vices like adolescent restiveness, youth maladjustment, lead to stealing, robbery, flirting, drunkenness, thuggery and smoking of wee^e substances and solutions, etc. All these which harden some youths' minds are the results of the governments lack of foresight and/or deliberate neglect in developing vocational skills in them, especially the maladjusted. Of course, religious and political leaders are also involved in delivering misgivings about moral and religious uprightness. In reality, the inability of the educationally less privileged and jobless youths to fulfill self actualization to manifest in their daily living is recognized by this counsellor researcher as a psychological problem. And, one way of solving such a problem is that the governments should not use only the orthodox policing but should create and run guidance counseling centers and vocational centers to absorb them for necessary skills development.

There are several skills and capacities that are required for mature functioning within the domains of an individual's integrity, social responsibility, civic responsibility and constructive political participation. The less educationally privileged youth should therefore be given at least the opportunity for vacation centers. At least, the vocational skills curriculum will help to develop them to have the ability to think clearly about moral and civic issues. Such moral commitment and sense of personal responsibility will lead them to act justly and to portray emotions that encompass empathy and concern for others (Zahradeen, 1990). Vocationalism helps the youth for honest attitude through shaped affective domain. By vocational engagement, the individual learns to have a feeling for the dignity of labour and values such as the sweat of others. Though such youths, like the clients are less educationally privileged, they owe the community social responsibility (Youniss & Yates 1997; which they can discharge effectively through developed vocational skills for work.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations Recommendations

- i. The government should use the traditional method of curbing youth restiveness and deviance to a certain less extent that does not harden them to become criminals.
- ii. The government should provide in prison and social welfare custody, opportunities for inmates to learn vocational skills to make them earn good living after their release, as in the case of Werinch and Werinch's (1974) Margie.
- iii. Prison and Social Welfare custody should also be provided with guidance-counsellors who can appraise remote problems of inmates to counsel them on how they can realize their skillful potentialities to become useful citizens rather than misfits.
- iv. Released inmates (youths), especially, the hitherto deviant youth should not be looked upon with scorn by the public. Rather, they should be sympathized with and absorbed into the society as in the cases of Werinch and Werinch's (1974) client.
The non-formal Adult Education centers should include vocational skills curriculum similar to women centers where courses in home economics are conducted.
- iv. The government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should establish guidance counselling and vocational centers to absorb the interests of the youths who are uneducated.

Summary/Conclusion

As the saying goes, an idle mind is a devil's workshop. When the less educationally privileged youths are made to engage in vocations that can earn them money for sustaining themselves in terms of buying possessions and some other necessary things to keep them belonging^e they will never have a feeling for engaging in any anti-social acts, that can lead them to deviance of the societal norms. The devil will not have a place in them to stay to direct. Politicians play with politics as profession. They engage the services of the less privileged to have education, to torment opponents. They are used as thugs who are deserted as soon as the game of electioneering folds up.

Surely, the youths, who are educationally less privileged but who have vocational skills are rarely engaged in such political thuggery. Instead, they take advantage of possible economic gains that may surface. So, it is very important to always strive to keep the adolescent and youth of the community who are not in school, engaged in good things where they can earn for themselves. Thus, they think constructively and morally as an integral part of the society in which they belong. They will be the type of social citizens who think rationally and also, who contribute to the economic well being of the community.

In conclusion, this counselor researcher believes that vocational training of the educationally less privileged youth will lead them to be responsible to living a life that is socially worthy and economically viable. The government, the rich individuals and the Non Government Organizations (NGOs) should open vocation centers to absorb these less educationally privileged youths for skills development that can change their orientation from irrational to rational behaviour that conforms with cherished societal norms i.e. to build their character for the civil society. Instead of the government to only give money out for small-scale industries, the government should, as matter of priority open

vocational centers in towns and villages to train the educationally less privileged youth for skills acquisition. By this, the educationally less privileged youth will be helped in restructuring and reconstructing the economic and social life of the citizenry which is embedded in the package of UBE. Indeed, creating an enabling environment, such as providing counselling and vocational centers for training the educationally less privileged youth and adolescents is a mission to realizing the UBE vision of "Non formal skills and apprenticeship training for adolescents and youth who have not had the benefit of education" (UBE 2002:4), in the 21st century.

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