CULTURE OF CREATIVITY AND THE QUEST FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract:

The objective of this paper is to x-ray the nexus between culture, creativity and empowerment of the Nigerian youths. A survey method was used to collect data, while the systems theory, as propounded by David Easton, was adopted as a framework of analysis. It was found that the Nigerian youths have become great victims of acculturation, as they have abandoned our great cultural heritage of industry, integrity, honesty, dependability, and embraced all forms of social vices that negate creativity. Immediate over hall of our educational system, cultural re-armament, as well as coordinated sensitization and empowerment programmes will motivate our youths towards creativity and entrepreneurship for national development and transformation.

Keywords: Culture, Creativity, Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and development

Introduction
There is no consensus on the exact definition of culture among scholars and practitioners in the field. Culture is a concept used to describe a spectrum of dressing, language, ideals and the gamut of the peoples' ways of life. Jakayink (2002) states that from wider perspective, culture includes the total repertoire of human actions which are socially transmitted from generation to generation. In a similar vein, Fotopoulus [1999] defines culture as the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief and behaviour. Fotopoulus likens culture with what he calls dominant social paradigm, which he explains as the system of beliefs, ideas and the corresponding values that are dominant in a particular society at a particular moment of its history

Similarly, Obiora (2002) sees culture as the tradition and general maze way of a people, which is transmitted from one generation to another in a definite pattern that distinguishes them from other stocks of the society. Culture is a continuous process of change. It changes exactly the same way as the human beings change. It is dynamic, learned, acquired,

transmitted or diffused through contact or means of communication flow from generation to generation. On the other hand, creativity is the untapped and innate human resource, whose potentialities could be harnessed for effective operations in ones' environment. It can contribute to prosperity, to cultural exchange and social justice. Creativity is the inspirational energy and knowledge that spurs many individuals, including young men and women, to undertake new industrial ventures with a vision of the future transformation of their societies. While no nation inhabited by people can be short of creativity, innovation tends to emerge where the value of creativity is favourably perceived, with a high degree of freedom to set one's own agenda, as creative talents are better organized through competitive business and supported by institutions and agencies, which strive to promote and reward creativity. The institutionalization of creativity explains why certain societies are able to productively organize creativity to solve their most pressing national problems and achieve progress, while others lag behind in spite of abundant creativity and a rich civilization.

Youths occupy strategic position in the process of economic development of any country. Their productive capacity and income generating activities contribute immensely to the national development of any country [Emechebe and Kanyip: 2018]
The youths are said to be the leaders of tomorrow, because they are being prepared to take over from the leaders of today. People between the ages of 15 and 40 are said to fall with the youth category. They are one of the most active groups in the society, as they are found in large number in every sector of the society. The various ethnic nationalities in Nigeria, including the Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa/Fulani, Kanuri, Ijaw, Igala, Ibibio, Egom, among others have deep cultural heritage which emphasize industry, honesty, obedience, perseverance and creativity. This paper is aimed at x-raying the nexus between the diverse and deep cultural heritage of Nigeria and the creativity of her youths.

Conceptual Considerations

Culture, creativity and youths are central to this paper. Faltin [2001] sees culture as a collective programming of the mind which distinguishes one group of people from another in terms of norms and values. He argues that culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, values, moral habits, customs and other capabilities acquired by man as members of the society.

The above view of culture is in tandem with Obiora (2002), who sees culture as the tradition and general maze way of a people, which is transmitted from one generation to another in a definite pattern that distinguishes them from other stocks of the society. Culture is a continuous process of change. It changes exactly the same way as the human beings change. It is dynamic, learned, acquired, transmitted or diffused. Duke

[2013] shares the views of both Faltin [2001] and Obiorah [2002] when he defines culture as a way of life of a given people which includes any piece of a pattern of behaviour, attitude, norms, values, objects, skills, belief system, and world outlook which human beings learn and adopt as members of a living human group or society.

For the purpose of this paper, culture should be seen as the totality of people's maze way, which includes mode of production, dressing, language, belief system and tradition, which are peculiar to them and transmitted from generation to generation. Nigeria, despite her rich and diverse cultural values, is beginning to lose most of her cultural ideals especially through the adoption of foreign culture showcased through the mass media. Nowadays, it is observed that our youths have abandoned our local attires such as the 'Adire' and 'Ankara' for alien attires. It is common to see young people (youth) walking across the streets half nude putting on micro-mini skirts, handless top, trousers and other outfits that are not part of our cultural identity.

Africans and, indeed, Nigerians have their traditional attires but how many youths proudly abide by the culture and wear such traditional attires today? One of the negative roles the mass media play in our today's society is the dominance and propagation of violence particularly on television and video film industry. A lot of the foreign film content on television is mainly scenes of violence. The actors who engage in murder and other violent actors are portrayed as heroes. Home video, which is very popular now with Nigerian films, also carries the same theme. Research has shown that children who watch violence on screen are most prone to violent behavior in adulthood. Irked by the above abnormalities, it is my desire in this paper to discuss the following: why attention should be focused on youth, how can youth entrepreneurship be facilitated in the creative sector, how can the culture of creative entrepreneurship be promoted among young people? And finally, what is the future for youth and creative entrepreneurship.

On the concept of youths, the United Nations defines youth as people who are between the ages of 15 and 24. Unachukwu [2008] sees youths as young people who fall within the age bracket of 15 and 40 years. Emechebe and Kanyip[2018] describes the youths as the young, agile, virile and dynamic people in the society usually between the ages of 18 and 35 who highly spirited and make things happen. In a divergent view, Manoj[2010] states that it is important to see the youths not just as an age, but a state of mind and attitude. This means that youth should be seen as a state of the mind, not necessarily how old or young one is, but ones' level of thought and general attitude towards issues of societal importance. Generally, people who fall within the age bracket of 15 and 40, whether married or single, employed or not employed, but hold high expectation of life are considered as youths in this context.

On Creativity, it important to note that it is an abstract concept which describes one's ability to visualize and create new thing from the old order. This is the ability of one to demonstrate imaginative and entrepreneurial spirit geared towards problem solving for effective adaptation in the environment. Young people are media-oriented in that youth subcultures are informed by, as well as expressed through, a wide array of texts, images, music and lifestyles. Youth culture is often considered transient because of its association with what is modern, hip and cool and thus future-oriented. Through popular media this has also entailed an aestheticizing of everyday life. Thus, young people do not vote with red ink on their fingers but with their various expressions in popular culture.

Youth expressions, however, tend to be subject to much criticism and are hardly ever allowed a voice in the established media. The tendency is to point fingers at young people and to consequently marginalize their voices. Instead, what is required is to exploit the emancipatory potentials that modern youth culture and popular culture offer. It is here that the real power of the youth culture resides. The youth culture has long been associated with social protests as well as future hopes, thereby promising a new life and social change. Young people's biological, social and culturally-conditioned flexibility also give them an ability to unearth deep but hidden social contradictions and the creative sector allows them to express alternatives in a format that is popular. In essence, young people's imaginations are a productive source for the economy and social entrepreneurship and thus need to be released from the shackles of convention and outmoded strictures.

Creativity is often the biggest asset for young people who can afford to experiment and take calculated risks in the early stage of their lives and careers when a whole range of possibilities exists. Indeed, one can argue that the absence of opportunities for young people to experiment on new ideas and take on risk usually differentiates a creative, flexible, entrepreneurial society from another in which institutions are becoming increasingly rigid, hierarchical and risk adventure.

An entrepreneur's relentless search for opportunities is made possible by the "rules of the game"—an economy's entrepreneurial reward structure. For a society to support and invest in youth entrepreneurship today is like a venture capitalist investing in the early stage of an innovative company that later achieves equity growth. An economy's future structure is determined by today's investment in human capital and new skills. Investing in creative industries which share boundaries with the traditional cultural sector is investing in culture, as today's arts and the way of life become tomorrow's heritage. With 43 per cent of the world's population currently under twenty-five, today's youth is tomorrow's consumer who has significant purchasing and bargaining power—something no business can fail to overlook or be influenced by.

Theoretical Framework

The Systems theory, as propounds by David Easton, is adopted here as a framework of analysis. According to Easton, every system performs two major functions, namely, the input and the output functions. The input functions include the demand and support, while the output functions consist of policy, programmes and projects. The demands in a society may include the request for pipe borne water, electricity, health centres, roads and problems confronting the people, while the various channels, such as, the mass media, delegation to government, representatives in the National or State assemblies, among others, form the support. The requests are processed through the bureaucratic machinery and churned out in form of policies, programmes and projects.

Every system, explains Easton, comprises several sub systems, which though diverse in form, size and functions still strive for unity for the survival of the system. If any sub system is faulty or dysfunctional it will affect the entire system; hence it is the business of the entire system to see that all sub systems are functional, in order to avoid stress which may lead to system break down associated with crises, violence and lawlessness in the society.

Facilitating and Empowering the Youth in the Creative Sector

The Hungarian Nobel scientist Albert Szent-Gyorgyi once remarked that "discovery consists of looking at the same thing as everyone else and thinking something different". This aptly defines the essence of creativity. While no nation inhabited by people can be short of creativity, innovation tends to emerge where the value of being creative is favourably perceived, where there is a high degree of freedom to set one's agenda, where creative talents are better organized and supported by business and institutions, and where competition encourages, but most importantly, rewards creativity and entrepreneurship. The institutionalization of creativity explains why certain societies are able to productively organize creativity to solve society's most pressing challenges and achieve progress, while others lag behind in spite of abundant creativity and a rich civilization.

Compared with lifelong employment in Government or a career in the traditional corporate sector, young people need to be encouraged and become fully prepared to take on risk and a leadership role since these are all part and parcel of entrepreneurship. They can do with the support of appropriate business services that help to develop new opportunities, facilitate learning and mitigate risks. From the perspective of public policy, this is especially important for countries with a declining "demographic dividend" as investing in youth entrepreneurship provides timely opportunities for upgrading human

capital and reorienting the economy towards new skills needed for future growth, development and national transformation.

The EU report on promoting entrepreneurship in the creative sector suggests that there are at least six areas for intervention that would improve the prospects for the sector: access to markets; access to finance and investment; promotion and protection of intellectual property rights; access to knowledge and training; networking and cluster development; and last but not the least, governance in the area of innovation and technology. The foregoing analysis suggests that there are specific areas for intervention, which differentiate from the traditional goods sector. One of the key interventions required is that of intellectual property protection. The creative industries cannot survive in the market place without adequate protection from copyright infringement. Without such protection, creative entrepreneurs would be at the mercy of piracy, bootlegging, counterfeiting and other forms of infringement, such as, unlicensed broadcasting.

Furthermore, a strategic system of intellectual property rights specific to the creative sector is needed to mobilize all forms of intellectual property rights as assets for development. This should include a system of trademarks, collective/certification marks, design rights, geographic indications, patents, traditional knowledge as well as copyrights. Effective management of these intellectual property rights/assets is the first step towards designing a legal and policy system conducive towards creativity and culturally inclusive development.

Young People and the Culture of Creative Entrepreneurship
All creative work is built on the inspiration of designers, artists and creative workers. Democratizing the information flow involves the free flow of ideas, opinions and knowledge. Such freedom is imperative for the development of the personality of each person, and consequently, for the cultural, social, scientific and economic development of humanity. In short it can be defined as a basic human right (Art. 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

The first step in the democratization of the "information infrastructure" is the alignment of data collection and research with support for key policy issues. In the creative industries sector there tends to be a misalignment of critical data that start-ups and emerging businesses need for business and strategic planning in order to tap into new markets and build new enterprises. Many public agencies maintain data base rich with information, but do not make it available to the public due to a variety of concerns relating to security, technology or bureaucracy. Where they are available, data sets often cannot be compared or cross-referenced because common indexes do not exist. More significantly, critical data on pressing policy issues are simply not available because the information is

not collected consistently. This approach recommends that policymakers and the organizations involved in collecting and analysing data should work together to ensure that the necessary information is available to craft effective policy and better understand the sector.

Democratizing information involves especially the empowerment of young people to realize their opportunities themselves. Conventional culture tends to reinforce its value through parental influence which does not generally encourage risk-taking behaviour when compared with more stable employment options. However, creative entrepreneurship requires changed mind-sets and behaviour that often go beyond conventional wisdom and personal comfort zones. These important behavioural characteristics provide initial conditions to allow policy tools to work at both individual and group levels. Through interaction at different levels, lasting institutional changes can be produced.

Youths and Creative Entrepreneurship in Nigeria

This is not the best of time for Nigerian youths, who are consistently confronted with increasing unemployment, hunger, industrial and academic unrest, insecurity, social vices, such as, armed robbery, prostitution, kidnapping, among others. Uncertainty, insecurity, trauma, risks and all forms of threats have become regular features of our country, yet our youths are still expected to manage and conquer these challenges in order to become the leaders of our much dreamt tomorrow. The role of a creative leader is not to have all the ideas; it's to create a culture where everyone can have ideas and feel that he belongs [Robinson (2014) This is the challenge before us in order to empower our youths to make exploits, conquer their environments and position themselves as viable and dynamic leaders of tomorrow.

There is an increasing need to create new mechanisms that make it possible for the development of ideas from the younger generation. Open systems, free of bureaucracy, will be required to bring the creative world together for the realization of their ideas. It should be noted that the new generation often do not have the opportunity or financial muzzles to access the high cost of software and hardware.

Developing youth entrepreneurship represents a viable but insufficiently explored policy and programmatic option to deal with the challenges of youth unemployment through employment creation by young people. The failure of the mainstream economic and financial systems and the exit of the "old guards" coincide with the meritocratic rise of creative minds whose ambition, drive and imagination readily exceed the expectations set for them on their paths by traditional business and institutions. Schumpeter's idea of

"creative destruction" resonates behind the growth of creative entrepreneurship and the major innovations and paradigm changes that we are seeing today.

UNIDO considers the concept of creative industries a powerful advocacy tool for development. However, to enable creativity we need to empower young people to change their mind-sets and behaviours in "taking entrepreneurial action" and create favourable rules of the game to play in today's competitive and innovation-driven creative economy. Empowered with the tools to express creativity through the Internet and global media networks, the young people of today have the means to exceed their own expectations on the challenges and barriers of the digital divide to overcome, within and across nations.

Platform companies, such as, You Tube and Twitter have realized this huge potential and have thrived on the principle where investment is customer time and the business model is their open creativity through sharing, learning and influencing, and innovating. It is paradoxical that these seemingly unimportant social activities, overlooked by the controlled media, have brought about a wave of democratic change from Tunisia to Egypt and other regions. The lessons learnt demonstrate that, unless youth creativity is unleashed and transformed into constructive businesses and productive enterprises, it can easily turn into something which can create major instability within societies and their economies.

From this perspective, today's youth stands at the threshold of yet another great global transformation. The spirit of creative entrepreneurship defines the expectation of this age. They are the generation of opinion entrepreneurs and are increasingly challenging the society's most pressing issues, such as, the matters relating to sustainability, ethical consumption, environmental issues or other controversies. They are often not driven by profit maximization, as they invest their time in speeding up institutional changes through social movements and popular opinion. As such, the process of global institutional change is now driven by innovation, thus signifying a new world order underpinned by global connectivity and limitless creativity. The promotion of investments in this new wave of creative entrepreneurship and social economic development would facilitate sustainable job impact that the creative economy portends.

Our educational system should be overhauled and revitalized in order to make the products of our universities, polytechnics and colleges of education job makers and not job seekers as has been the order of the day. There should be a cultural revival in order to minimize the impact of acculturation occasioned by unprecedented wave of westernization now sweeping across African continent. Westernization has economic, social, economic and technological consequences on Nigeria generally, but the youths specifically.

The cultural agencies are the institutions whose mandate or official duties include the sustenance, protection and promotion of the country's art and cultural heritage. These institutions, individually and collectively, should step up their enormous responsibilities of sustaining, packaging, promoting, marketing and protecting Nigeria's culture and tradition for the realization of the objective of resuscitating our deep cultural heritage of industry, creativity, respect for elders and constituted authority, dignity of labour, integrity, honesty, humility, selfless service and patriotism for sustainable empowerment of our youths for national development and transformation.

Conclusion

The impact of westernization and the subsequent acculturation of the Nigerian youths is most obvious in their unrepentant craze for foreign food, language, wears/fashion, sports, movies and music. The Nigerian youths, including the ones that live in rural areas, have abandoned traditional dress in favour of European and American fashion. Music, movies and other maze ways. The local community with its communal lifestyle, and influence on an individual's identity, is gradually losing its grip on the youth.

African (Nigerian) cultures are, however, not likely to be completely replaced by the new global culture if the government put in place sustainable efforts and machinery to halt the drift. There appears to be a growing appreciation of certain aspects of local cultures and traditions even among youths. The government, public and private organizations and individuals should intensify the promotion of our cultural and traditional native fashions, food, medicine, native language, traditional entertainment, among others. It is worthy of note that despite their love for Western fashion, movies and music, many Nigerian youths do appreciate and encourage the unique Nigerian popular music (mostly in Nigerian pidgin English), and still follow fashion trends in native wears which they prefer for some religious and social occasions.

Though there is a growing global awareness among them, community and regional outlook can still have influence on Nigerian youths rather than global networks. Moreover, religion still has a strong hold on some of them and still contributes in shaping their morality. Thus, though the effect of the global youth culture is minimal compared to youths of other societies, most Nigerian youths can still be gradually re-oriented to rediscover the beauty and imperative of their relegated deep cultural heritage.

Our youths must go back to land and pick up the pieces of our deep cultural heritage, which forms the basis for creativity, entrepreneurship, empowerment, development and national transformation. This is the sure road to changing their westernized mind set, and embracing the innovative spirit for creativity, industry, honesty, dignity of labour,

integrity, economic empowerment and leadership mentoring for a predictive and secured tomorrow.

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Explanatory Note

The term "BRICS" refers to a group of countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) that are considered to be at a stage of newly advanced economic development.

Biographical Note

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