

The Future of Democracy in Nigeria: Harnessing Nigeria's Youth Potential to Drive Development in the Fourth Republic

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Abstract

Nigeria's democracy is nascent and still undergoing litmus test. However, the slow pace of economic growth and development experienced in Nigeria's democracy could be attributed to the nation's inability to harness the potentials of its youthful population. Nigeria's burgeoning human capital strength if properly utilized can move the country further into the status of a developed nation. This study focused on 'The future of democracy in Nigeria: harnessing its youths potential to drive development in the fourth republic'. The study used both primary and secondary sources of data to establish that Nigeria's youths potential if properly harnessed can drive economic growth and development, because the economic growth and development of any nation is anchored on the quality of its human resources found in its youthful population. This study, however, concludes that the future of Nigeria's democracy and economic development lies in the effective harnessing of the Nigeria's youth potentials in all ramifications, because this is the plank upon which the needed economic growth and development of the nation can be actualized.

Introduction

Despite momentous efforts made by successive governments in initiating economic and social policies aimed at driving development, Nigeria's development has remained slow. The nation had remained a casualty to political instability, social malaise, abject poverty and acute youth unemployment, this in turn had created an environment for social crimes

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to not only thrive but persist. These crimes find expression in the youths who could not find any meaningful economic doings and thus engage in all sorts of criminal activities in a bit to eke a living.

The sphere of Nigerian political economy has been characterized by untapped youth potentials; in governance, mining, agriculture, education, ICT, to mention a few. The inability of government to harness its teeming youth potentials and material resources through viable policies have been hinged on the near absence of democratic institutions and the intermittent intervention of the military in politics in the years that followed Nigeria's independence. Moreso several other factors such as colonial legacy, red tape and corruption, inept leadership, unpatriotic followers, and unfavorable international political environment had contributed to Nigeria's underdeveloped state.

The central theme of this study is that an inclusionary political system alongside an enduring economic foundation are the critical junctures needed to drive development through harnessing youth potential. This paper suggest ways of harnessing Nigeria's teeming youth potentials to drive the desired development, especially in the areas of governance, agriculture, mining, ICT, entrepreneurship, etc. It provide explanations on how these burgeoning youth potentials can be harness efficiently in Nigeria's contemporary democratic era to engender the desired growth and development with government playing the leading role. However, before engaging in any analyses it would be important to clarify some concepts, terms and terminology.

Conceptual Clarification

As a prelude to this discussion, it will be important to offer clarifications on terms that will run all through the discussion in this paper. The terms are, democracy, development and leadership. The classical idea of democracy is "rule by the people" and this is derived from the combination of two Greek words – *demos* (people) and *kratos* (rule). The most widely referred and asserted definition of democracy was that offered by Abraham Lincoln which is that democracy is a government "of the people, by the people and for the people". Joseph Schumpeter defined democracy as "that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the peoples' vote".¹ In the words of Dahl, democracy is a form of "elective polyarchy" which guarantees popular participation and inclusiveness in decision-making.² Przeworski posited that "democracy is a system in which parties lose elections".³ For any system of government to qualify as a

democracy it must “ensure peaceful competitive political participation in an environment that guarantees political and civil liberties”. Scholars had argued that relying on a minimalist definition of democracy cannot quite capture the challenges besetting regimes that had transited but have yet to consolidate their incipient democratic structures.⁴

As a result, a growing number of democratization experts are turning towards a more substantive definition of democracy, one that gives greater prominence to the role and importance of accountability. Three dimensions of accountability are usually distinguished: (i) vertical accountability, which enables citizens to hold their political leaders to account through the electoral channel at specified points in time; (ii) horizontal accountability, which refers to accountability mechanisms that exist within the distinct bodies of government itself, whereby state institutions are authorized and willing to oversee, control, redress and, if need be, sanction unlawful actions by other state institutions; and (iii) societal accountability, which refers to the (ongoing) watchdog functions of civic associations, other NGOs and an independent mass media over the actions of the state.⁵ However, democracy is that system of government which in theory and practice, guarantees periodic free and fair elections, separation of powers, checks and balances, the rule of law and most importantly, respect of the fundamental human rights as well as popular sovereignty exercised directly by the people or through their elected representatives.

Much of the answer to the question about the links between democracy and development will of course depend on how one defines ‘development’. Amartya Sen adopts a definition of development as ‘freedom’ – these incorporates not only economic indicators but also freedoms like human and political rights, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security.⁶ Also, recent debates on a rights-based approach to development had focused on participation, accountability, and other elements that are very similar to those values underlying substantive forms of democracy.⁷ However, Joseph Stiglitz averred that development is understood as a ‘transformation of society’ that goes beyond economic growth alone to include social dimensions like literacy, distribution of income, life expectancy, etc.⁸

The question of leadership comes readily when considering the connection between democracy and development. There is no democracy without leaders and followers. A proper analysis or definition of the term will help. On leadership, various scholars have opined what leadership is, but for the purpose of this paper, leadership will be considered from the purview and discourse of the social scientist. According to ATG Educational

Series, leadership is the process or the ability to motivate others to unite and work towards achieving a common goal.⁹ Nevertheless, in a democracy, leadership is anchored on representation, thus representation is leadership, and true leadership is effective representation. This brand of leadership is anchored on trust. The leaders are servants of the people, and are supposed to exercise their power and authority in the interest of, and on behalf of the people, and most importantly in accordance with the terms of the mandate given to them by the people. In a democracy, it is the duty of the leadership to understand that this is a trusteeship.¹⁰ However, democratic leadership have come to mean group decision-making, active member participation, honest (constructive) criticism, and a degree of comradeship.¹¹

Review of Related Literature

In general, there exist extant literature on democracy and development in Nigeria and the leadership question. Significant number of journal articles and commissioned papers have not focused on harnessing youth potentials to drive development. Though, the current state of literature is a good glean into what has happened and offers a wider spectrum for analyses. Tolu Lawal and Ogunro Victor Olukayode, in their work *“Democracy and Development in Nigeria”* avers that democracy is development imbued. The more democratic ethics a nation is imbued, the higher the dividends of democracy; the better the level of sustainable development. Development can hardly be felt or achieved when democratic ethics are not imbibed and adhered to by the leaders and administrators. This is because the accommodation of ethics of democracy enhances performance and facilitates development. Democracy and development are inseparable. Components of development such as; discipline, commitment, honesty, transparency, accountability peaceful co-existence, integrity, etc are also embedded in democracy. The success of one leads to the success of the other and vice versa. They suggested that the problem of development in Nigeria does not result from lack of competent personnel or absence of adequate financial resources. Rather it is more associated with lack of democratic ethics, which is an ethical lapse in democracy.¹²

Kareem Olawale Bestoyi writing on *“Democracy and Development: A Comparative Analysis of Nigeria and Malaysia”* enunciates that the lack of constitutional order and respect for the rule of law that characterize the actions and inactions of the present crop of Nigerian political elites make one to wonder whether the system we have in place in this Fourth Republic is a democracy or a mere civilian rule. Perhaps apart from the regular

elections, the only difference between the present Republic and the past military regimes is the degree of abuse of the fundamental human rights of Nigerians as well as the use of constitution instead of decrees to govern.¹³ He, however, likened the Malaysian democracy, as one been deliberately and calculatedly sustained, and also creates authoritarian procedures and institutions to hinder the transition of Malaysia to a full-fledged democracy. To understand why the post-independence Malaysian state is semi-authoritarian and at the same time semi-democratic, one has to go back to the events of 1969 whose remote cause dates back to the negative legacy of colonialism. Malaysian democracy, at best, could be described as a benevolent dictatorship however, what endears it to many particularly plural societies where political stability has remain elusive is its ability to achieve over four decades of racial harmony, a cordial ruling coalition comprising major political parties from both the ethnic majority – the Malays, and the minorities, the Chinese and Indians, periodic elections, and above all, political stability and good governance.¹⁴

Abdulhamid Ozohu-Suleiman in his full length research paper on “*Democracy, good governance and development in Nigeria*” identifies Nigeria as a potential trigger of development in Africa, opining that the location of the country on the map of Africa is like the trigger of a short gun which the map of the continent seems to symbolize. In spite of these resource endowments, Nigeria has been plagued by several development bottlenecks. At the heart of the general debates on good governance and its requirements is the urgent call for democratizing societies to combat corruption and promote transparency and accountability.¹⁵ Thus, more than any other single factor or a combination of factors, corruption remains the most outstanding impediment to good governance and sustainable development. The consequences of this social affliction (rising social inequality, unemployment and widespread poverty, plummeting economy, ignorance and disease) are evident in the negative development indicators of Independent Reports, Ozohu-Suleiman noted. He states that, it is common knowledge that corruption and development are strange bedfellows. Since both cannot co-habit, one must give way. Thus, democracy which reflects the will of the people, suggests loudly that corruption must give way for good governance and development. However, after seventeen straight years of democratic rebirth in Nigeria, there is considerable reservation on the gains of the good governance project. At the onset of regime transformation in 1999, democracy raised citizens expectations of a life of contents and fulfillment, it promised to guarantee peoples economic and social rights for the realization of their collective and individual hopes and aspirations. These

promises and expectations were the summation of a people's vision of good governance that has remained largely unfulfilled.¹⁶

Ake, in his *Democracy and Development in Africa*, acknowledged the following as crucial:

... the colonial legacy, social pluralism and its centrifugal tendencies, the corruption of leaders, poor labour discipline, the lack of entrepreneurial skills, poor planning and incompetent management, inappropriate policies, the stifling of market mechanisms, low levels of technical assistance, limited inflow of foreign capital, etc.¹⁷

Although these factors are very useful in explaining the failure of development in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular, Ake observes that political conditions of the continent are the greatest obstacles to the development enterprise. These political conditions which have conspired to trigger a crisis of governance in many parts of Africa lie at the heart of the failure of development in Nigeria. The crises of political governance has led to underdevelopment of Nigeria in various ramifications. This is so because leadership is everything in a democracy. There is the urgent need and attention for leaders to address these institutional gaps. This will in turn entrench the gains of democracy.

Background to Nigeria's Democracy

The formative years of Nigeria's nascent democracy could be said to begin with the intrusion of the colonialist and subsequent amalgamation of the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria and the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria in 1914 under Sir Frederick Luggard. A major characteristic of this period (1914) was the emergence of a country called Nigeria in the international scene, though as a territory under British colonial rule. The continued pressed for increased participation in the internal affairs (governance) by the elite or nationalist evolved into a period called the years of Nigeria's constitutional development. This period of constitutional development started with the Legislative Council (1914), Nigerian Council (enacted immediately after 1914), to Clifford Constitution of 1922 (first introduced elective principle), Arthur Richard Constitution of 1946 (defined Nigeria along regional lines), John Macpherson Constitution of 1951 (widespread reach in consultation with Nigerians), Lyttleton Constitution of 1954 (it established a unicameral legislature for the federal government and regional government were made independent of the central government in respect of subjects and legislative powers allocated to them.¹⁸ This was

followed by the 1957/58 London Constitutional Conference, where the federal constitution for an independent Nigeria was drafted.

After the 1959 general elections, the NPC and NCNC formed an alliance, in order to form the government at the centre, and Sir Tafawa Balewa became the first Prime Minister (i.e the head of government) and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe became the Governor-General (i.e ceremonial head).¹⁹ Gaining its independence on 1st October 1960, Nigeria's first independent democratic republic was birthed. The democratization processed in the First Republic (1960-1966) aroused pity and cost Nigerians pains, as this period was shortly followed by two major events that choke the democratic foundations of the country. These events were a *coup de tat* (1966) and a civil war (1967-1970), which taught Nigerians a bitter lesson after the failed attempt of democratic experiment.²⁰ The country's political system was plagued by religious and ethnic politics which threaten the future of Nigeria's democracy, heightened ethnic suspicion among the major ethnic groups (Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo). Although the death toll of the Nigeria civil war was not well documented, it is estimated that about 3 million to 6 million people lost their lives as a result of malnutrition, disease etc.²¹ With democratic principles shielded, the military continued in power long even after the civil war.

The military, subsequently, held on to power for almost 33 years after the 1966 coup (1966-1999) except for some flashes of civil rule between 1979 and 1983. In 1979, there was a major institutional shift in Nigeria's democratic process, as the country moved from a parliamentary system of government to an American modelled presidential system of government. According to Elaigwu, Nigeria's short-lived democracy could be attributed to the following reasons among others: there was complete breakdown in the rules of politics, gross misuse of power among public officers, issues of human right abuse, blatant rigging of elections, and relative strong regional government as against weak federal centre with widespread corruption.²² The military under the Murtala/Obasanjo's regime was faithful to a transition to civilian rule. Consequently, the Olusegun Obasanjo regime handed over power to Alhaji Shehu Shagari whose electoral victory was contested by Chief Awolowo and roundly condemned as a farce by other political parties. The election was petitioned by Chief Awolowo on the grounds that Alhaji Shehu Shagari was not duly elected by a majority of lawful votes in contravention of section 34A (i) (c) (ii) of the Electoral Decree 1977 and section 7 of the Electoral (Amendment) Decree 1978 (210).²³ The second republic failed due to the loss of faith in the electoral umpire, the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) declared Shehu Shagari winner even

after pulling majority of his votes from the North. Under Shagari's administration political office holders were corrupt, ruined economy, inter/intra party rivalries and the 1983 electoral fraud which returned Shagari for a second term was instrumental to the military coup of 31st December, 1983.²⁴

The incessant incursion of the Nigerian military in politics was no longer a surprise. Nigerians groaning in pains had gotten use to the reign of generals in a replete of coups and counter coups. The General Buhari regime was sacked in a palace coup by General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, who urgently took over the realms of government. Under IBB's regime, Nigeria's democratization process was again stalled. Evidence of this suppression was the annulment of the 12th June, 1993 general elections, which was said to be devoid of ethno-religious sentiments won by Chief M.K.O Abiola. It is tempting to make the correlation that, since military *coups* terminated Nigeria's democratic administrations in 1966 and 1983 and frustrated the 1993 transition, Nigeria therefore has a military problem, that the military is "the major obstacle to democracy".²⁵ The military were originally greeted as a corrective instrument, helping to reset Nigeria's democratic clock but military rule in Nigeria had always turned out to personal rule and the regime of both Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993) and Sani Abacha (1993-1998).²⁶ In the face of intense public opposition to his rule, General Babangida reluctantly handed the reins of government to a non-elected military-civilian Interim National Government on 26th August 1993 which was later ousted from power by the military under the leadership of General Sani Abacha on 17th November 1993.²⁷

The demise of General Sani Abacha in 1998 culminated in the emergence of General Abdulsalami Abubakar, who eventually handed over the reins of government to a democratically elected civilian government in May 1999 after having spent eleven months in power. Through dedicated commitment Abudulsalami Abubakar returned the country democratic rule, with Olusegun Obasanjo emerging as Nigeria's President in the Fourth Republic.²⁸ With return of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as president, the democratization process in Nigeria was again set in motion, and this process has been plagued by numerous challenges which have continued to threaten the stability of the country. However in Nigeria, the youths are usually relegated to the background because the youths were ignored in the policy making process of government and when listened to, their opinions were not taken serious.²⁹ Some youths who advocated for independence and opportunities for their people, the young Africans who protested against the misery of their people were imprisoned, exiled or even murdered in

cold blood. For instance, Dele Giwa was killed through a letter bomb on Sunday 19th October, 1986 in Nigeria at the age of thirty-six because his journalistic prowess towards democracy was a threat to the survival of the militarily junta.³⁰

Democracy as a system of government has been operational in Nigeria for over a decade now, and for its stabilization and entrenchment, all the stakeholders must be involved especially the youths.³¹ The youths represent a very important stake in any society. They make up the future of any nation, and remain unarguably the best resource to fast track nation-building. With worsening living conditions for the youths in Nigeria, what is the guarantee that the ever increasing army of unemployment youths will not engage in activities that would undermine the stability of democracy in Nigeria? The problem of chronic youth unemployment is very evident in Nigeria. Every year thousands of graduates are turnout to the labour market, for whom there are no jobs. Nigerian streets are littered with vendors who ordinarily would have found gainful employment in some enterprise.³² The self employed youths are in quandary as scant infrastructure and capital makes it impossible for them to ply their trade favorably. Giving the large number of youths who are unemployment, this is capable of undermining democratic practice as they constitute a serious threat if engaged by the political class for clandestine activities.³³

The Future of Nigeria's Democracy

The future of any nation's democracy lies in its youths because the youths have tremendous and towering ambitions. In Nigeria, it has been great wastage of human resource potentials of the youths, as they are not given an opportunity to exercise their talent. The government inability to explore its youth potentials to drive development among other factors is responsible for the forward and backward drift of Nigeria's political economy.³⁴ The government have not been able to expand its educational system to absorbed the ever increasing youthful population, who might intend venturing into scholarship. More so, this will acquaint the youths with skills to do jobs that will fast-track Nigeria's economy. If empowered with the needed education, these youths could read, write, think, understand, analyze and find lasting solutions to the issues faced by their country. Hence it is the government's responsibility to provide the youth with proper facilities for getting equipped with the knowledge of this modern era since the youth forms the work force of any developed economy in the world.³⁵ Youth is the spring of life, the age of discovery and dreams. The youths have the capacity to transform Nigeria into a better place if their potentials

are properly harnessed. The youths have been underplayed in politics, economy and social relations, hence the need to give them some sense of belonging or a chance to prove themselves.

Leadership, Development and Youths: Interrogating the Nexus

Irrespective of the differences that prevail in respect of the theoretical formulation of leadership, development and the youths, there is a growing consensus on the nexus amongst them. However, Nigeria has had a chequered political history since independence. Over the years, inept leadership has been a recurring decimal in the Nigerian state. It is with this, the late literary giant, Chinua Achebe once decried that “the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership”.³⁶ The political culture of flagrant disrespect of the constitution among the Nigerian political elites had reared other anti-democratic characters such as ethnicity and nepotism, corruption, religious bigotry, electoral tampering and political intolerance, etc. The implications of these are escalation of social vices which are unhealthy inter-ethnic rivalry, religious crisis and political instability.

Sanusi L. Sanusi opines that, it is essential for the political leaders in Nigeria to be visionary and transformational, to be able to see, project and assemble a vision of a desired future for the nation. In addition, they should be selfless, engaging and motivational as these are the fundamental prerequisite for mobilizing followership, particularly in a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multicultural society like Nigeria. As a motivator, leadership vision must be clear, attractive and attainable. An engaging leadership would be able to build bridges across divides, and as such be able to foster necessary harmony for collective good. Leadership that would be effective in a setting like Nigeria must also be courageous to take radical and progressive decisions.³⁷ This is because leadership is the hub upon which every other thing revolves. Nigeria’s most cherished need now is a visionary, purposeful and persistent leadership who would be able to garner democratic support that will usher the country to another phase of development.

As leadership is important in a democracy, so also is development. Every modern society envisages development for its citizens for better welfare and optimum delivery of the social contract. In the estimation of the World Bank, development implies a qualitative improvement in the living standards of the people as exemplified by levels of industrialization, food production, size and distribution of the labor force, pattern of income distribution, access to education, health facilities, good housing, regular supply of electricity, good drinking water, etc.³⁸ Nigeria still struggles to provide the basic social amenities for its burgeoning population. The spate

of development is far from the expectations of the average Nigerian on the eve of democracy as development has not trickled as expected due to corruption and policy implementation failure. Considering Nigeria's resource endowment, Nigeria's development was expected to be on the trajectory, because, Nigeria is home to rich natural endowment and solid mineral deposits. What can be gleaned from these; however, is that leadership has been weak and unable to recognize viable economic enterprises aside oil wealth and agriculture as sources that can boost economic development. In a democracy, development depends upon good leadership. This is the very one ingredient that has been missing in Nigeria's democratic engagements for the past sixteen years. This, unarguably is the change that can unlock Nigeria's youth potentials.

Just as leadership is critical to development, it is also critical to youth participation and building a civic culture for an enduring democracy. The future of any nation lies in their youths, because youths are the future leaders. An emerging area of great attention in building strong democracy is focusing on youth participation in political governance. A clear litmus test for the strength of a nation's democracy is an active youth engagement in governance and decision making processes. The National Youth Policy defines youth as all young persons of ages 18 – 35.³⁹ Nigeria's burgeoning youth demography readily provides a hub of human capital required to drive socio-political and economic development. But leadership has not harnessed these potentials.

Youth participation in government in Nigerian political space is sequel to the legal requirements for various political offices. Section 65 (1)(a) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) provides that an aspirant to a senatorial office must have attained the age of 35 years, while section 65(1)(b) provides that those aspiring for the House of Representatives seats must have attained the age of 30 years. The age requirement for the state house of assembly seat under section 106(b) is 30 years. Likewise, aspirants for the office of president and vice president must have attained 40 years while sections 177(b) and 187(2) stipulate that one has to be 35 years of age to contest for governorship or deputy governorship position.⁴⁰ A defining characteristic of youth is dynamism. This encompasses dynamism in thought pattern, perception of issues, orientation, ambition and a certain unbridled passion for change through engagement (peacefully or violently) with the established order.⁴¹

After a decade and a half democratic practice, it is expected that the dimensions of youth political participation in the general elections should extend far beyond the use of NYSC members and students of tertiary

institutions as polling officials, as party agents, as election observers, as security agents and as media personnel. Nigerian youths deserve a better deal in the political process of democratic consolidation.

The debate on leadership, development and youth: interrogating the nexus is anchored on the presence of political conditions that promotes an inclusionary political process - a process that involves the participation of mass organizations such as civil society, labor unions, youth movement and women groups. These will in turn provide the required political space for civil society and other stakeholders to set the agenda and push for the common good by articulating and reflecting the needs of society on a more specific and continuous basis.

Harnessing Nigeria's Youth Potential to Drive Development

Nigeria's greatest asset is not found in the oil wealth or endowed natural resources, but largely in its youth demography. Youths form the core and they remain an indispensable facet of any given society. The task of developing them to enhance societal growth rests squarely on the shoulder of the government that beholds them. For most part of Nigeria's political history, the conventional political propaganda of government has always been youth development as an important economic development strategy in their manifesto. However, it is evident that this has not manifested into reality in many cases, to suggest the least, it has become a regular political rhetoric. It is time we shift from rhetoric to action.

Obviously, there is no universal definition of the youth population. "Youth is conventionally described as a period of transition from childhood to adulthood. According to United Nation Economic Commission for Africa, (UNECA), "youth are defined as people between fifteen and thirty-nine years of age."⁴² For statistical purposes, the UN defines youth as individuals between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four.⁴³ One of the challenges of developing policies for youth in Nigeria is finding the appropriate data/statistics on the youth demography in Nigeria which is not frequently collected by government agencies.

Nigeria's burgeoning youth demography offers a ready pull of untapped human capital, and if properly harnessed has the capacity to jumpstart the economy. Every great democracy that has transformed its economy falls back on its youthful population. A critical turning point for Nigeria will be for leadership to leverage on the human capital available and explore it for sustainable economic prosperity. More than ever, education remains the bedrock of any society and offers the platform for human capacity building and skills acquisition. Education remains key to advancement and

development of Nigeria. The nation's ivory towers were envisaged as centers for incubation of fresh technological and scientific ideas, research and development (R& D), which will in turn spur innovation and creativity thus, leading to development. Critical attention to this sector will not only harness youths untapped potential who fall within the schooling age but, will also create the needed development. Education has the capacity to sustain Nigeria's socio-economic development needs, because education is a continuous investment platform. Investment in education is investment for the future. Education remains the single most important currency contributing to the capacity of young people to live a productive and responsible life. This form of education could be formal or informal with a lifelong learning scheme. For Nigeria to realize its vision of an emerging economy, focus has to be paid on the advancement of science and technology in our educational institutions and young people need be encouraged to access education.

As education is critical to harnessing youth potential for development, so also is investment in health. A healthy nation is a wealthy nation. Sound health not only improves productivity but also increases the supply of labour in the market. A healthier labour force is also expected to be more flexible and adaptable to changes e.g. changes in job tasks, in the organization of labour etc. Therefore, the healthier the youth population, the more productive the workforce. Productivity could increase directly due to enhanced physical and mental strength, which could be reinforced by the efficient use of technology, machinery or equipment.⁴⁴ This government could do positively to drive development.

A contingent path to development for Nigeria through harnessing youth potential is encouraging start-ups and entrepreneurial development. Nigerian economy possesses a pool of both human and social capital found evidently in her youthful population. Start-ups has the capacity to employ a vast number of Nigerian youths who have skills in business, arts and crafts, farming, cobbling, fashion and design, to mention a few. There is therefore the need to set a machinery that would foster the development of start-ups in the communities and urban areas. Government should build partnerships that would identify these skills in the youths and nurture it to full realization. This in turn will spring up small and medium scale enterprises, (SMEs). The place of entrepreneurial skills development amongst the youth as a driver to development cannot be over emphasized. Every industrial and advanced economy leveraged on building their entrepreneurial manpower which advertently spurred industrialization and technology. Entrepreneurship studies should not only end as a course of study in tertiary institutions but

be a life-wire for economic growth and development through the creation of incentives and grants to youths who show commitment to the drive of development.

The type of democracy practiced by a nation can affect the nature of development that springs up in that country. Nations that practice an inclusionary political system also tend to have an inclusionary economic institutions that allows for free market enterprises, efficient use of resources, property rights are not restricted on individuals but protected, economic structures are built based on land, labour and capital productivity. Nigeria's democratic structure is yet to support the inclusion of youths in the decision-making process of governance in the country, however, if found its theoretical on pages of political discourse. Youth inclusion in political participation will build needed capacities for leadership in governance and lead to accountability in public office, confidence and positive self- image.

Conclusion

The future of democracy in Nigeria, squarely rest on the youths, who are the future leaders of tomorrow. For the leaders of tomorrow to have a sound knowledge of their society, the tool of education has to be used to user them into a world of competition and survival. Once education has been completed successfully, the benefits of initial investments in youth starts trickling into the economy. For this reason, human capital formation need to start at an early age. Early investments in education are crucial. Human capital is even transferable to future generations.

In terms of developing youth entrepreneurship, there is a need to ensure that schools deliberately provide sector specific skills necessary for the development of human capital, use professionals and entrepreneurs as instructors and mentors; teach entrepreneurship and creativity at an early age; and community development; plan program to transform Nigerians.⁴⁵ Finally, in order to reposition youth to drive development, there is a need to transform them into confident, aggressive and purposeful individuals. The ideal profile for emerging professionals with respect to entrepreneurial education would include strong scientific, technical and research skills. The individuals who opt for non-degree training in skill acquisition with entrepreneurial background are also not left out. All must have a high level of creativity and innovation and the ability to think about the future and relate these ideas to his/her business. The health of the youth deserves special attention. In addition to the various health programmes by government, the prevalence of HIV and AIDS needs to be addressed to safeguard the army of youth for economic development.

In conclusion, since the youth population is the heart of any economy, it must be restated that investing in youth should not just be seen as end in itself, rather it should be approached with a comprehensive set of policies and programmes coordinated in the form of an economic strategy. While investing in education is a priority in youth development, other areas such as health need to be accorded special attention.

Notes

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