

**RELEGATION OF THE YOUTH TO THE MARGINS OF PUBLIC SERVICE:
AN ENERVATING FEATURE OF CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN SOCIETIES**

Okoro Charles Kenechukwu, Ph.D

Department of Philosophy, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

charles.okoro@unn.edu.ng; kenecharles@yahoo.com

07032712275

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Abstract

The youth constitute greater percentage of the efficient workforce of virtually every human society. Indeed, healthy, educated, and gainfully employed youth are the drivers of national development. The African tradition has a socio-cultural framework that favours gerontocracy, as an ideal system of leadership. It also advances an epistemological orientation that associates wisdom with advancement in age. This system, as examined in this discourse, has unfavourable implications for development in Africa. The association of wisdom with age often culminates in the relegation of the youth to the margins of public service. Thus, the youth play second fiddle to the elders whose wise counsels are often presumed to be absolute ideals. This paper contends that the African socio-political climate is not altogether youth-friendly as far as leadership is concerned. Denying young people of the opportunity of utilizing their characteristic vigour for the society's development amounts to stifling useful ideas, occasions energy leakage and loss, as well as effects unwarranted wastage of invaluable human resources. As a panacea to this limitation, the paper recommends a radical re-orientation in Africa's perspective on leadership. The paper ultimately defends the thesis that a conscious and habitual integration of the youth's potentials into the mainstream of African leadership framework would make for efficiency and effectiveness, thereby fostering sustainable development in contemporary African societies.

Key words: The youth, African societies, gerontocracy, marginalization, public service

Introduction

The apparent setback experienced by many modern African societies lends credence to the urgency of the project of re-structuring and remodeling of their administrative policies and programmes. This paper identifies the underutilization of the youth's potentials as a factor militating against efficient

public service in contemporary African societies. It advances the thesis that the obvious, perhaps inadvertent, negligence of the youth's critical role in national development in Africa has a causal link with African socio-cultural orientation. It promotes an authoritarian-epistemological tradition that associates wisdom and insight mainly with advancement in age. Such epistemological tradition not only undermines the effective utilization of the youth's potentials and militates against their active participation in leadership but also weakens the fibers of development in contemporary African societies. While acknowledging that wisdom, to a considerable extent, correlates with accumulated wealth of experience, it is observed that age does not exhaust the essence of wisdom or experience. After all, precociousness remains a conceivable human attribute.

Against the backdrop that time is a critical factor in the utilization of ideas, this discourse observes that the useful ideas of a given generation of people could become obsolete, irrelevant, unsuitable and untenable if they are not timely utilized, as they would fail to square with realities and experiences of another generation. Such ideas could, at best, become square pegs in round holes. The contemporary African societies must tap from the resources availed by the progressive, innovative and adventurous mindset of their youth. It is imperative, therefore, to review the stiff-necked, inflexible, and age-conditioned approach to knowledge and leadership with a view to improving youth involvement in public service, since their novel ideas can add value to contemporary leadership principles and policies. Hence, it is argued that the wisdom and experience of the aged must be complemented with the characteristic vigour of the youths in order to ensure positive development in contemporary African societies.

The African Youth: Definition, Delineation, And Prospects

While an unquestionably universal and all-embracing definition of the concept "African culture" or "African ideology" may not be possible, the fact remains that a considerable number of values cut across the diverse African socio-cultural orientations. Thus, in spite of their apparently varying shades, there is a certain commonality in the different African ideological orientations. The common social, cultural, political, religious and ethical values shape their thoughts and worldview, determine their socio-political framework, and form the basis of their actions. Indeed, it is on the basis of such similar or common denominator-principles that they are conceived as a people. In furtherance of this line of thought, Martin Meredith (2011:14) affirms the existence of underlying common features among African countries thus:

Although Africa is a continent of great diversity, African states have much in common, not only their origins as colonial testimonies, but the similar hazards and difficulties they have faced. Indeed, what is so striking about the fifty-year period since independence is the extent to which African states have suffered so many of the same misfortunes.

Against this backdrop, one finds justification for such working concepts as African culture, African tradition, African ideology, African mindset, African worldview, etc. In the light of this, too, one can reasonably conceive and discuss the African youth as a group of young people having a mindset specifically formed by their immediate African socio-cultural environment. At least a geographical criterion belts the young people inhabiting definite African regions and sharing similar socio-cultural values and ideologies.

Generally, the youth have the natural wherewithal to play critical role in public service and in economic development of any nation, given that they constitute the greater percentage of the active and efficient work force of many human societies. A society that relegates its major work force to the background, inadvertently cuts off the branch on which it is sitting. In the foreword to the *Regional Situation Analysis Report* of the United Nations' Economic Commission for Africa, Abdalla Hamdok (February 2017) shares this view as he observes that the "potential of young people is the driving force of our collective prosperity. This is particularly relevant to Africa, whose population is projected to represent over 40 per cent of the world's young people, in less than three generations. By 2050, the teeming numbers of young Africans are forecast to form over a quarter of the world's labour force. Moreover, there is growing consensus that Africa's youthfulness will continue to grow for the next 50 years while the other continents are aging."

Corroborating the central idea expressed in this discourse, that the marginalization of the youths in African militates against the achievement of the sustainable development goals in the continent, Hamdok (February 2017) further writes:

...young Africans who should give momentum to the continent's transformation are largely alienated and marginalized. Although past decades have seen advances in terms of policy commitments to youth development, both nationally and regionally, such gains have not always been matched by actions on the ground. Far too many young people are still jobless, and struggle to access public resources and quality social services. They are barely involved in policy formulation and programme design as their participation in politics and decision-making is limited and often ad

hoc. At the same time, the yardstick for success of African countries will be adequately measured by future generations if policies are weighed against action to foster transformative and inclusive development.

The *United Nations* defines youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 24. The UN also recognizes that this varies without prejudice to other age groups listed by member states such as 18-30. However, within the universe of this discourse, the concept of youth goes beyond specific delineation of numeric age-bracket or definite age range. The emphasis is rather on the prime of human existence, when one expresses optimum functionality in terms of physical and mental relevance as well as maximal utilization of one's potentials for the benefit of the society. Thus, the youthful age is characterized by a great measure of creative powers, astute mindset, skilled hands and broad-range of positive ideas capable of engendering positive transformation of the society, positioning it for socio-economic progress.

In the Brookings Report, *African Youth Leadership: Building Local Leaders to solve Global Challenges*, Landry Signe (March 2019) identifies accountable leadership and youth empowerment as effective panacea to the challenges of development in Africa. Expressing the hope that youth inclusion in governance would lead to successful economic transformation, and strengthen democracy and governance in Africa, he writes:

Accountable leadership remains one of the biggest challenges to development in African. Leaders in Africa have not always responded effectively to the needs of the continent, but there is hope in the rising generation of youth who could play a critical role in building accountability for successful economic transformation, representation, and public service. The urgency of these efforts is not lost on the youth, as they have the most to lose if solutions are not enacted.

The *Human Resources, Science and Technology Department* of the African Union (January 2021) acknowledges the youth as a formidable force of development in Africa and expresses the imperative of promoting effective youth participation in public service. In its report on Youth Development, the Department observes that "Africa has the youngest population in the world with more than 400 million young people aged between the ages of 15 to 35 years. Such a youthful population calls for an increase of investment in economic and social development factors, in order to improve the development index of African nations."

In its effort to reposition the African youth, the Summit of the African Union, in July 2006, adopted the *African Youth Charter* (AYC) as a political and legal

document which serves as the strategic framework that gives direction to youth empowerment and development at the continental, regional and national levels. The Charter basically aims at strengthening, reinforcing and consolidating efforts to empower young people through meaningful participation and equal partnership in driving Africa's development agenda. Thus, the *African Youth Charter*, which is one of the AU's youth development policies and programmes, highlights the rights, freedoms and duties of young people in African; it recommends the protection of young people from discrimination and ensures freedom of movement, speech, association, religion, ownership of property and other human rights, while committing to promoting youth participation throughout the human society.

Gerontocracy: The Metaphysical and Religious Foundations Of African Epistemological Tradition

Gerontocracy, within the purview of this discourse, is understood as a form of oligarchical rule in which an entity is ruled by leaders who are significantly older than most of the adult population, or a society where leadership is reserved for elders (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>). It refers to a form of social organization in which a group of old men or a council of elders dominates or exercises control (<https://www.merriam-webster.com>). The concept succinctly describes the socio-political climate of most contemporary African societies. It advances a conceptual scheme in which wisdom is largely considered a function of old age. Thus, the subtle variations in individual African cultures notwithstanding, there exists a predominant frame of mind that undergirds its epistemological system, one that associates wisdom with advancement in age. This fosters a worldview or ideology that largely bears on Africa's leadership values.

Against the backdrop that the general characterization of authentic African epistemological tradition is that it consists of a canonization of age-related or experience-based knowledge, a popular expression among Africans holds, "the words of our fathers are words of wisdom." This expression has more than an epistemological or cognitive import or significance; it is an expressive index of profound African socio-cultural ideology. It largely squares with Francis Bacon's idea of associating knowledge with power (Bacon, 1902: XVII). The association of wisdom with age and experience not only culminates in the conferment of leadership authority on the elders but also projects them as reliable sources of knowledge and truth. They are seen as sages and often consulted for solutions in matters of great dispute.

The African epistemological orientation and the leadership roles assigned to the elders have both metaphysical and, especially, religious justifications. The high regard accorded the elders in African traditional religion transcends ordinary respect for elders associated with the ethics of the temporal order. Given that religion pervades virtually every aspect of life in Africa, including modes of dressing, eating, working, dancing, praying, etc., the authority of the elders has a religious undertone, and is considered uniquely sacrosanct. Moreover, the African ontology features a belief in an interlocking relationship between the physical and the spiritual realms of existence, as well as an intertwining hierarchy of beings, in which the elders are next in rank to the ancestors, who are closer to the gods. A considerable number of the ancestors are dead elders who lived decent lives and have received proper burial. This belief system, sometimes considers the gods as deified heroes of the past, including kings and warriors. Shango, the Yoruba God of lightning and thunder, for instance, is believed to have been the fourth king of Oyo, the ancient Yoruba capital (Parrinder, 1974: 47). Buttressing this thought, E. G. Parrinder (1974: 27) observes:

...but it should be clear that there is no sharp dividing line between sacred and secular such as is usually assumed in Europe. Material and spiritual are intertwined, the former as a vehicle of the latter. Those who have crossed to that further shore are with us still, in dreams in offerings, in rites performed and oracles consulted. Indeed, they are nearer than before, and as being invisible one cannot tell when they are around.

On the strength of its metaphysical and religious backdrop, the African epistemological tradition is predominantly authoritarian and has the tendency to stifle independent thoughts. While it often expresses critical and rational insights, it sometimes features uncritical thoughts, rationally unjustifiable body of knowledge and highly contestable assumptions. Unfortunately, when the latter is the case, its tenets and presuppositions are hardly opposed given their authoritarian feature. This approach to human knowledge finds an appropriate critique in Book I of Francis Bacon's celebrated work, *The Advancement of Learning*, published in 1605. Bacon (1851:35) identified and criticized what he characterized as the three "distempers of learning" or vanities in studies, namely, "fantastical learning," "contentious learning," and "delicate learning," (otherwise known as "vain imaginations," "vain altercations," and "vain affectations," respectively). These distempers of learning entail using fixed positions and unverified assumptions of earlier thinkers as starting points for epistemological inquiries and

contentious argumentation. They unduly emphasize trivialities, profess ideas that lack substantial foundation, and stifle genuine intellectual progress.

From Bacon's perspective, therefore, the distempers of learning offer a false route to knowledge and advance an epistemological tradition that mixes up superstition and unguided speculations, and has the tendency to distort the mind's capacity to acquire true knowledge. Jettisoning this approach, he advocates for a new approach to knowledge based on a new method of observation and interpretation of nature. In fact, for him learning and human progress require rechanneling human's creative energy into socially useful new discoveries.

Unarguably, the emphasis on the wisdom of the African sages has its merits. To a very large extent it highlights the pragmatic essence of knowledge. Its communalistic undertone naturally accords with epistemological values that enhance the common good. However, its extreme conservatism and rigidity do not often square with the innovative and progressive dispositions of the youth. Its dogmatism and "dictatorship of the old" contribute a great deal to the marginalization of the youth.

Notably, too, human knowledge, human experience and their concerns are sometimes generation-specific. Hence, current and useful ideas could, in the course of time, become obsolete and hardly square with contemporary realities. Insisting, therefore, on solving modern problems with obsolete ideas amounts to putting a square peg in a round hole. A more objective approach to human knowledge, therefore, should embrace dynamism and openness as its essential features.

Youth Marginalization In Leadership: Implications For African Development

The socio-cultural, political, economic, religious, and sciento-technological institutions of the modern human society are often sustained by the youth as its basic work force. The sublime imports of the youthful vigour would be largely undermined if they are not gainfully employed or brought to bear on the life of their community. Indeed, the relegation of the youths to the margins of public service or, worse still, their total exclusion from issues that naturally concern them has a plethora of unfavourable consequences for the youths in particular and the society in general.

The oligarchical political structure characteristic of most traditional African societies borders on traditional hereditary monarchies and chiefdoms. The

monarchical system of administration allows the king or the traditional ruler to stay in office till death. The exclusivity this feature brings to bear on leadership overflows into the mainstream administrative structures of the modern African countries, fosters a tendency for political office holders to remain sit-tight, occasions youth disenfranchisement and ultimately undermines national development. Corroborating Meredith's view that such unwholesome desire of African leaders to perpetuate themselves in office undermines socio-political progress in the continent, W.F. Deedes (See Meredith, 2011) writes: "It is true, as Meredith says, that fifty years after the start of Africa's independence, the prospects seem bleaker than ever before. He is right, too, in asserting that Africa has suffered grievously from its Big Men and the ruling elite's preoccupation with holding power for self-enrichment."

The authoritarian epistemological tradition stimulated by the African culture and tradition inadvertently advances a stereotyped and sacrosanct perspective on reality, which often stifles ingenuity and limits independent thoughts. There is a natural tendency among many Africans to hold onto their values and traditions with the pertinacity of the asp, thereby maintaining an attitude that hardly yields to the allurements of dynamism. With regard to human knowledge, such unyielding insistence that wisdom is an exclusive prerogative of the elder's smacks of 'adult chauvinism', stifles resourcefulness, and whittles creativity among the youth down to the lowest ebb. Such inadvertent negligence or subtle disregard for the youth, with its consequent exclusion of the youth from mainstream public service and administration, breeds disgruntled, unproductive and indolent youth. This often manifests in youth restiveness or indifference to public service, either of which weakens the fibers of the contemporary African societies and undermines their progress.

Among other identifiable positive imports, the modern advancement in science and technology occasioned an expansion of the frontiers of human knowledge, enhanced human cognitive capacities with a decisive impact on knowledge acquisition and utilization. Hence, sagacity cannot be considered an exclusive reserve of the aged. In addition to their youthful vigour, therefore, younger people could demonstrate wisdom and good judgment approximating to those of the elders. The wise saying in Igbo language "*Onye nje nje ka onye isi awo ama ihe*" (one who is widely travelled is often more experienced than the grey-haired) beautifully captures this idea, as it suggests that old age alone cannot guarantee wisdom.

An administrative system the mainstream of which feature mainly those at the twilight of their lives neither favours the old nor the young. Save in a number of cases where experience of the elders may be of essence, the ideas of the older generation may be unfashionable, untenable and even irrelevant to contemporary concerns. Moreover, the burden of governance with its attendant challenges may not be altogether good for the health and general well-being of the aged. The youth, on the other hand, are denied the opportunity to make their timely contribution in such a system. Sometimes the hitherto ingenious ideas of the youth also become obsolete by the time they are given opportunity to lead. The thoughts of Shakespeare (1951:993) in *Julius Caesar* (Act IV, Scene III, Lines 216 - 222), as captured in Brutus' words to Cassius, aptly express the imperative of timely utilization of ideas and opportunities thus: "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune: Omitted, all the voyage of their life, is bound in shallows and in miseries. On such a full sea are we now afloat, and we must take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures."

No doubt, a number of unsung heroes have lived and died in Africa without recognition and the society never benefitted from their gifts and talents consequent upon an epistemological system and worldview that often promote the subordination of ingenuity and even precociousness to age. Youthful ideas that are not timely and gainfully employed become redundant, fossilized, atrophied, useless, and eventually lost.

The youth, from the African perspective, may be limited in experience, but they are never bereft of decisive potentials capable of stimulating a positive transformation in contemporary African societies. In contrast to the older people who are naturally associated with more frequent health challenges, lower energy level, obsolete ideas or, at least, ideas incompatible with contemporary events and realities, the younger people often express higher energy level and physical strength, current ideas and increased desire for knowledge. In the youth, therefore, one finds an interplay of zeal, vigour and ideas necessary for socio-political development. On this stress, Robert F. Kennedy (June 6, 1966) in his *Day of Affirmation Address* at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, expresses the view that the panacea to most of the contemporary global challenges lies in the demolition of the borders of social class and ignorance, and especially the adoption of the characteristic dispositions of the youth. Hence, he writes:

Our answer is the world's hope; it is to rely on youth. The cruelties and the obstacles of this swiftly changing planet will not yield to obsolete dogmas and outworn slogans. It cannot be moved by those who cling to a present

which is already dying, who prefer the illusion of security to the excitement and danger which comes with even the most peaceful progress. This world demands the qualities of youth: not a time of life but a state of mind, a temper of the will, a quality of imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over the life of ease.

For the purposes of clarity, it is imperative to reiterate that the critique of what has been characterized in this discourse as ‘authoritarian epistemological orientation’, as a feature of African tradition, is far from any attempt to belittle ‘philosophic sagacity’ in Africa or to imply that African epistemological system is entirely bereft of positive values. Odera Oruka (1991: 123) had rightly asserted that “a person is a sage in the philosophic sense only to the extent that he is consistently concerned with the fundamental ethical and empirical issues and questions relevant to the society and his ability to offer insightful solution to some of those issues.” From the point of view of their social relevance, therefore, sages play critical roles in the sustenance of their traditional values, culture, and ultimate survival of their immediate communities. However, an epistemological orientation that considers knowledge an exclusive reserve of wise elders and considers an idea absolute and sacrosanct, merely on the basis of its purportedly sagacious source, is not only fallacious but often gives vent to social exclusion and marginalization of those who do not share such idea.

Obviously, any socio-political or epistemological value system that underrates or totally disregards the youth’s potentials lags behind in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. Relegating the youth to the background of public administration amounts to improper human resource control and management, as well as creates room for energy leakage and loss. Improved work force and efficient service delivery can only be guaranteed in African societies if the youth are given a sufficient sense of responsibility in public service.

Recommendations

In the quest for sustainable development, the authoritarian epistemological system that holds sway in contemporary African societies, with its consequent socio-political superiority claims, must be considerably reviewed. This system is often unscientific and largely reliant on age-conferred authority and experience of the elders, who pose as reliable sources of truth, as well as final arbiters and authentic verdict givers in conflict situations. This authoritarian approach to knowledge

limits its scope and perspectives given its presupposition that the views or opinions of elders exhaust all possible perspectives.

While acknowledging the pragmatic imports of many traditional African values, they must be re-assessed in the light of current demands and concerns of the modern world. Dynamism, as a necessary feature of virtually every progressive human society, must bear on African traditional values. The contemporary African societies ought to jettison unnecessary rigidity and unreasonable insistence on stereotyped mode of life or unnecessarily being pigeon-holed in some obsolete cognitive patterns. For the contemporary African societies to meet the high demands of the competitive modern world and be strategically positioned for meaningful progress, novelty, ingenuity, and open-mindedness must constitute their hallmarks.

More still, mutual collaboration between the youths and the elders, interactive learning processes, unprejudiced modelling, and proper mentorship also advance the course of achieving sustainable development in African. Indeed, effective mentorship remains a laudable and highly treasured value in social development. However, care must be taken that it does not degenerate to servitude or personality cult that eventually jeopardizes discrete individuality, the uniqueness of individual youths and initiatives. The youth often possess a peculiar sense of purpose and unique potentials that must be timely utilized for the benefit of their society. In addition to the experience and sagacity of the elders, therefore, the vibrancy of the youth must be allowed to drive development at all social levels and institutions of government. By so doing, African countries would not only surmount its present development challenges but would be strategically positioned to achieve sustainable development goals.

Landry Signe (March 2019), in *The Brookings Report*, observes that most African countries feature greater percentage of older people in governance, an arrangement which must be reviewed if meaningful socio-political progress must be made. He identifies specific agencies of administration where the youth could be of immense relevance, especially when they are included in decision making. Accordingly, he recommends more involvement of the youth in public service, especially in such executive positions as the presidencies, councils of ministers, parliaments, national committees, corporate boardrooms, and civil society organizational teams.

Most African leaders are 55 years old or older, with some as old as 75. This represents a significant gap between those deciding policy and those who have to weather its effects. At the parliamentary level, only 14 percent of

members are under 40 years old. African parliamentary compositions reflect the global trend, wherein only 14.2 percent of the world's members of parliament are under 40 years old. With African countries on track to account for half of the world's population growth and an exponential increase in the number of young people, the number of young parliamentarians should be higher.

As a reasonable and practical means of unlocking youth potentials and ensuring effective youth participation and representation in governance and public policy development, it is strongly recommended that definite quotas and specific elective positions and opportunities for appointment in ministries, agencies and parastatals be reserved for the youth. This proactive measure ensures an integration of youth development initiatives in the formulation of policies and programmes, especially on matters that directly concern them. Granted that a few instances of youth involvement in mainstream public service abound in the continent, the number of youths engaged in such instances is not sufficient to make significant impact. Youth inclusion in public service and administration would not only curtail youth restiveness but would give them a sense of responsibility and belonging, provide a formidable ground for effective mentorship and smoother transition from one generation to another.

In a typical traditional African society, the elders' position of authority is considered a sacred responsibility, which must not only be exercised with great wisdom, but must be carefully transmitted to the next generation through reliable heirs or successors. This is especially in the knowledge that posterity will judge them on the basis of their actions, and that their successful transition to ancestorhood is largely dependent on the quality of life they lead in the present world. For them, tradition is a treasure in an earthen ware which must not be allowed to break; it is like fire from the spirit world that must not be allowed to be extinguished out of sheer carelessness and acts of irresponsibility. Many elders, therefore, exercise great restraint and caution in order to avoid handing over the mantle of leadership to carefree, irresponsible, untrustworthy or incompetent successors either in their families or the wider society. Little wonder, some elders at the hour of death reveal some secrets and entrust some values and valuables only to trustworthy people or wise children, hoping that they would maintain the family tradition and preserve the family name, which are held to be sacrosanct. The youth must therefore demonstrate sufficient sense of social responsibility in order to win the confidence of the elders if the latter must in good conscience involve them in leadership and ultimately bequeath leadership positions to them.

While it is recommended that older people freely give younger people the opportunity to utilize their innovative ideas in public service, the youth must express significant interest, and manifest the necessary wherewithal and courage to shoulder the responsibilities of mainstream public service. In addition to the acquisition of leadership skills, the youth must embark on individual capacity building and acquire useful skills and knowledge that would boost their relevance in the society. In fact, a positive self-concept is needed to bolster the ego of the youth that is often cowed by the world outlook that presents them as second fiddle to the older people. With a positive air of confidence and demonstration of strength of character, the youth can consciously, through all possible legal means, acquire and exercise political power.

In essence, strategic inclusion of the youth in public service is a socio-political imperative. Complementing the experience of the elders with the vivacity of the youth or young adults in the different spheres of public service gives the youth proper sense of belonging and responsibility and makes for social and political stability. Mutual collaboration between the young and the old not only promotes understanding and mutual trust, but creates a conducive atmosphere for cross-pollination of ideas. In fact, this administrative strategy borders on poverty alleviation, reduction of youth unemployment and general improvement on the youth's social conditions, which invariably inspires a sense of patriotism and increases their love for their immediate communities.

Conclusion

The contemporary African societies may be inadvertently wasting their golden opportunities and losing highly treasured values embedded in their vibrant youth if they do not consciously and deliberately make good use of them. It is imperative to prioritize investment in youth development if a positive change must be achieved in African leadership and public service. Indeed, if meaningfully engaged and properly utilized, the exuberant disposition and vigour associated with the youth can promote socio-political progress in African societies.

In order to effect the desired positive change, the authoritarian epistemological world outlook characteristic of most African societies must give way for a more dynamic approach to knowledge. A more effective management of the African societies would be realized if an enabling environment is created for a crosscurrent of ideas between the youth and the elders. Mutual interplay of age-related experience and the vivacity of the youth would not only foster proper mentorship

but occasion a more effective leadership as well as improved state of affairs in the African societies.

Youth involvement in public service and governance would surely guarantee civil society growth, development and progress. Their vigour and enthusiasm contribute a great deal to ensuring a more viable socio-political climate, facilitate poverty reduction and economic expansion, and promote human rights and justice. The African youth must be properly and timely guided, empowered and positioned for global action and relevance. In the global and highly competitive modern human society, they must bring their vivacity to bear on the project of improving the fortunes of Africa.

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Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Tansian University

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