**Unemployment and Youth policy in Nigeria's vision 20:
2020 agenda: intergenerational conflicts of perception**

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List of Acronyms

AU	African Union
AYC	African Youth Charter
AYI	Agricultural Youth Initiative
ESSP	Education Sector Support Program
EFRG	Economic Frontier Research Group
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IESCO	International Ecological Safety collaborative Organization
IFC	International Finance Cooperation
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
LCA	Local Content Act
MDA	Ministries Departments and Agencies
MDG	Millennium development goals
NEXIM	Nigerian Export Import bank
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NISER	National Institute for Social and Economic Research
NSAI	National Skill Acquisition Initiative
NYP	National Youth Parliament
NYPED	National Youth Entrepreneurial Development
NYSC	National Youth Service Corps
PYDF	Positive Youth Development Framework
SMEDAN	Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency
SSA	Sub Saharan Africa
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
WB	World Bank
VYO	Voluntary Youth Organization

Abstract

In the last decade, the debate on "youth" and "youth policy" has gained momentum worldwide, due to emerging demands by young people to exercise their rights and growing unemployment among young people in many parts of the world. Supra national institutions and national governments have all adopted a new approach to youth policy with the belief that this will help solve youth problems. The Nigeria experience, contrast with the international expectations about the efficacy of solving youth issues, by adopting this new approach. Since 2001, two national youth policies have been adopted by the Nigerian government; however, youth problems, particularly unemployment has steadily increased from 3.6% to 26.7% in 2012. This study explores how the policy environment around youth and development is affected by the conceptualization of youth; and concludes that, adopting youth policies alone does not guarantee that youth issues will be solved; there are other factors that affect young people's social situation.

Relevance to Development Studies

The relevance of is research to development studies lies in the fact it explores the how the process of development can be improved or hindered by the conceptualisation of key concepts such as youth. This research will contribute to the discourse about the role of youth in the Nigerian society and their contribution in the development process.

Keywords

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

Historically, the concept of 'youth' refers to an unstable and vulnerable phase in life to be studied through the framework of storm and stress (Lerner, 2005; UNESCO, 2004). In Europe, between 1900 and 1950, there was a dual representation of young people in society; young people were considered a source of optimism and hope for the future; however, the dominant perception was that young people posed a threat to the security and stability of the society, hence needed to be "tamed" by the government (Bessant, 1993). To tame young people, governments adopted the deficit-model[1] , a policy approach that emphasises the role of government institutions in identifying young people's problems and providing solutions for them (Bessant, 1993). In the 90's, the Positive Youth Development Framework (PYDF) emerged as alternative to the deficit model in dealing with youth issues, emphasizing the promotion of capabilities of the individual, rather than his weaknesses. Supra national institutions such as the United Nations (UN) describe young people as "a special category laden with risk and uncertainty" (UNESCO, 2004), based on the fact that they are more likely to work in the informal sector, earn less money, and are most vulnerable to economic shocks.

In past twenty years, supra-national institutions, governments and INGOs have adopted the PYDF as their dominant approach to dealing with youth issues xx. One of the tenets of this approach is the active engagement of the different stakeholders. For young people this means that, their involvement in identifying their problems, the possible solutions and interventions required xx. The implication for policy practice is that not only young people have to be included in designing youth polices, but also they should be included in the decision making process of institutions (e.g. education) which affects them. In line with this new approach the UN's General assembly, adopted several resolutions[2] that encourage youth participation across the different levels of policy process; the African Union (AU) took this a step further by adopting the legally binding African Youth Charter. The charter commits national governments to develop and adopt national youth policies; it also seeks to create platforms that encourage youth participation at the local, national, regional and continental level of governance and decision-making (African Union, 2006).

The Nigerian government admits it abandoned young Nigerians during the 80's and 90's, resulting in the underdevelopment of a generation of young people. In that era, the government equated youth development with sporting activities; there was no effort to promote civic, entrepreneurial, and scientific education to young people. The Ministry of Sports was mandated to cater to

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[1] See http://elearndesign.org/modules/ocada603_acn1/15/glossary/defici05.html

[2] The UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/57/165 (December 2002) on Promoting Youth Employment: They encourage member States to prepare national reviews and action plans on youth employment; they should ensure the participation of youth organizations and young people in every level of the process.

youth issues; they were responsible for the design and implementation of youth policies and initiatives. Young people's situation worsened after the global economic crises; governments around the world were compelled to liberalise basic services like education and healthcare; this negatively impacted young people's development. The Nigerian government reduced its budgetary allocation for education from 11% in 1979 to 1.1% in 1988 (Ohale, 2013). Furthermore, the Nigerian economy was imbalanced and monolithic, unable to generate sufficient jobs for young people entering the labour markets. The government heavily relied on revenues from the oil sector, and failed to develop other sectors of the economy; the unavailability of formal jobs, forced young people to turn to the informal economy for employment; they occasionally resorted to criminal activities to supplement their income and this heightened tensions and conflict between young people and the rest of the society (Agnes, 2010). The reality is that a generation of young Nigerians emerged that lacked civic education, entrepreneurial drive and employable skills; these deficiencies have restricted their ability to contribute economically or intellectually to the society.

Since 2001, the Nigerian government has drafted and has implemented two national youth policies in compliance with the dominant international norms (Aloy, 2010). The first national youth policy was introduced in 2001; the aim was to bridge young people's development gap, to improve their social conditions xx. Several steps and initiatives like the NEEDS and ESSP (National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies and Education Sector Support Programme) were launched to improve education and create more economic opportunities for young people. In reality however, the governments change in approach did not the desired impact on young people's condition; according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), literacy rates among young people (18-35) decreased from 76% to 68% between 2001 and 2007; in the same period, youth unemployment also increased from 3.7% to 6% in 2007 xx. Scholars and other social commentators blamed the weak implementation of the youth policy and corruption for the failure of Youth Policy. The government on the other hand, blamed the policy failure on the structurally imbalanced economy; in 2007, the government proposed the Vision 20:2020 agenda as a blueprint for industrialization and economic development[3] (Aloy, 2010). The underlying assumptions here is that economic development will address youth issues by providing more employment opportunities for them which will improve their economic and social situation. A second national youth policy was launched in 2007 in line with the principles[4] of the Vision 20:2020 agenda.

Young people's situation in Nigeria has continued to deteriorate despite the adoption of youth policies. Since Nigeria introduced youth policy unemployment has increased to 5.6% in 2007 and rose further after the second youth policy to 23.6%. Several reasons like the economy, corruption and poor implementation of policy have been blamed for young people worsening situation and the policy failure. An interesting dimension that has not been ex-

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[3] The aim of the vision 20:2020 agenda is to increase Nigeria's GDP from $170 to $900 by 2020.
[4] Broad –based development approach. Efficacy of preparing young people for self-employment

plored in the Nigeria context is how the conceptualisation of youth by the society impacts on the institutions that interact with young people.

1.2 Research Objectives

This research will be guided by the following objectives:

- To explore the concept of "youth" as conceived at national and supranational level and how it shapes the policy environment of "youth and development" in Nigeria;
- To examine the prevailing differences of perceptions between the generations about "young people" and unemployment in the capital city Abuja.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What is 'youth' and 'youth Policy'?
    - How are the concepts 'youth' and 'youth policy' conceptualised?
    - How does the conception of 'youth' affect policy practice?

2. In Nigeria's vision 20:2020 agenda, how is the conceptualisation of 'youth', reflected in the institutional framework around 'youth policy for employment promotion'?
    - Who are the main actors and what are their roles?
    - What are the key weaknesses of the framework?
    - How has the implementation of these policies affected the perception of the different stakeholders about the factors causing unemployment?

1.5 Methodology and data

This is a descriptive study employing a mixed research design. A combination of qualitative and quantitative research techniques were used in gathering primary and secondary data. The research was conducted in two stages; desktop and field work research. At the desktop stage, relevant literature was reviewed, synthesised and analysed; to understand theoretical concepts like 'youth', 'youth policy', unemployment, participation etc. This understanding was important in identifying existing gaps in the literature, and the scope of the research. The fieldwork stage comprised of surveys and interviews, the emphasis was to understand the subjective realities of the different actors involved in youth policy. The table below shows the different sources of data used in this research.

Primary Data Sources	Secondary Data Sources
9 Formal Interviews	Journal Articles
12 Informal Interviews	Books
1 Surveys	Newspaper articles

	Reports

Table 1: Sources of data

1.5.1 Text reviews

The text reviewed for this research was useful in understanding key concepts used in the research. The texts were gotten from the ISS library, Ministry of Youth Development, online academic sources like sEURch, and google scholar; I also relied on literature that was provided during the academic year. The texts enabled me to:

- Understand how youth is conceptualised and how this affects policy practice by institutions and government.
- To paint a factually accurate narrative about youth and youth policy in Nigeria
- To understand the discourse of unemployment particularly factors that contribute to unemployment.

1.5.2 Survey

In June 2013, I was in a camp with 3000 young Nigerians; a component of the mandatory National Youth Corps Service (NYSC) programme for all Nigerian university graduates. The programme is aimed at developing leadership, civic skills as well as fostering cultural tolerance and understanding between ethnically diverse Nigerian youths. In the camp, all the participants were assigned to 15 different brigades; the brigades were balanced in terms of gender, religion and ethnicity. The respondents in my survey comprised of the members of my brigade as I had better access to them. In total, in administered 80 surveys of which, 65 were returned. The objective of the survey was to understand young people's perceptions about youth policy and the factors affecting unemployment.

1.5.3 Interviews

The researcher conducted both formal and informal interviews. Informal interviews were conducted at the NYSC camp with young people; the aim of the informal interviews was understand personal subjective realities of young people, and their personal opinions about unemployment. The respondents were all selected at random; however, they were all members of my brigade.

The formal interviews were conducted in Abuja, Nigeria; the respondent chosen are stakeholders in Nigerian youth policy and directly or indirectly facilitates youth employment and were targeted because of their knowledge and involvement in this area. The interviews yielded information on the various actors involved in youth policy; the challenges involved in the tackling youth issues particularly employment. The interviewed 4 officials from the Ministry of Youth development, 3 officials from NGOs involved in youth issues and owners of private businesses. For analysis, the interviews were recorded and transcribed; notes were also taken during the entire process.

1.5.4 Scope and Limitations of Study

The scope of this research includes young people and government policies that affect them (youth policies); in Nigeria. Youth unemployment is also discussed in this paper, it has implications for young people (poverty) but also the wider society (increased crime rate). The limitations of the research include:

1. **Time constraint**: There was a clash in schedule[5] between the NYSC camp and ISS's term three examinations; this meant that researcher was unable to robustly test the survey instrument before it was administered; as a result, some of the questions were not clearly understood by the respondents and this affected their responses.

2. **Sample population**: All the young people that participated in the surveys and interviews are university graduates. The research didn't to get the voices of the uneducated young people, who represent the majority of young people in Nigeria; because of this, the findings about young people's perceptive should not be generalised but used when contextually relevant.

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[5] The NYSC camp started on the 25th of June 2013 which coincided with ISS's term three examinations.

Chapter 2 Debating Youth Policies: Concepts and Practices

2.1 Introduction

In the last decade, the debate on "youth" and "youth policy" has gained momentum worldwide, due to growing unemployment among young people in many parts of the world and emerging demands by young people to exercise their rights (UNESCO, 2004; UN, 2005). These debates have shown that the legal and social meaning of "youth" as a concept tends to be context-dependent; and thus vary between cultures and countries. From a policy perspective, the ways in which "youth issues" are defined and framed much depend on the specific socio-demographic and economic challenges of a country. This chapter provides an overview of how the concept of "youth" has been constructed by different actors; how the term has been operationalized in different institutions catering to the needs of young people which together make up "youth policy". Specific attention will be given to role of supra-national institutions (the UN but also INGO's) and the academic communities in the social construction of "youth" as a socially and economically vulnerable group, and the urge for their "participation" in the making, implementing and critiquing policies that affect them.

2.2 "Youth" as a Category in Social Analysis and in Policy

2.2.1 Defining Youth

Youth studies emphasize the differences of meanings ascribed to young people, and the importance of understanding the social, cultural and economic circumstances. The term 'youth' is often interchanged with young person and commonly refers to the state between childhood and adulthood[6]. In youth research, there is an important symmetry between biological and social processes (Spence, 2005). Age as a concept, represents ones biological reality; however, the meaning of age and the concept of youth (referring to the social process of "aging") are contextual, subject to historical and cultural processes. Although our lives can be measured objectively by the passing of time (age), cultural understandings about the different life stages give meaning to "growing up". There are cultural and political processes in societies that provide the framework within which the meanings of youth are developed.

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[6] See Spence, J., 2005. Concepts of Youth in Working with young people. *SAGE,* pp. 45-56.

Youth studies to a large extent have been Euro-centric; the field draws from the social conditions and prevailing western experiences and in the post-World War II period. Eisenstadt (1956) described the period between childhood and adulthood as a period of transition; transition involves the journey from one state to the other. In the case of youth, it represented the idea that childhood and adulthood are completely different states of being; with fundamental differences between them. Youth is the process of becoming an adult by going through the different transitioning phases agreed by the wider society (Eisenstadt, 1956). In Philip Ares's (1965) text, Centuries of Adulthood, he said the modern conception of childhood evolved from the Middle Ages; children then were seen as small adults[7]. He describes the conception of childhood as being different from adulthood; (Ares, 1965).

The personal and physical characteristics of transition concerns biological maturity which includes, going through puberty and adolescence; gaining sexual, emotional and intellectual maturity (Spence, 2005). The social aspects of transitioning involves the process of moving from a state of dependence to independence; achieved when young people change their relationship which institutions, particularly those concerned with family, education work and leisure. It is assumed that these institutions must be successfully navigated for an individual to attain full adult maturity, associated with citizenship in a democratic society (Spence, 2005). The transitional nature of youth is best illustrated by the clearly mapped out stages for adulthood in Western societies after the Second World War; the established patterns included: acquiring skills through formal or informal[8] education, getting a job, a car, establishing a career, getting married and buying a home (Finch, 1993); social class played an important role in determining the experiences of young people growing up. In this context, youth and adulthood were easily separated by "accepted patterns of consumption and production" (Wyn & White, 1997.

Youth is an important phase in life; the experiences in this phase of life shape our entire outlook on life. Mannheim (1952), believed that 'social location' and 'consciousness' plays a big role in locating the different age groups in society; he identified these age groups as belonging to different 'social generations' with unique experiences and ideas about things. According to him, people that are born within the same historical period and share the same social experiences growing up, leading them to develop similar meanings and outlook about issues and events which they carry through life (Mannheim, 1953). In his essay: The problem of generations, he posits that generational location points to certain definite modes of behaviour, feeling and thought" (Mannheim, 1952:291); he says that the formative experiences growing up plays an important role in creating social generations. He goes on to stress that even within generations they could be further stratified by geography or individual participation in social debates and movements in the immediate society (Ibid).

Margret Mead the famous anthropologist disagrees with the conception of youth a separate category; she argues that the concept of youth is socially con-

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[7] See Ares, P., 1965. *Centuries of childhood: A social history of family life.* New York: Vintage Books.

[8]Informal education included: Apprenticeships, vocational and trainings etc.

structed and exists only within certain societies and cultures, and is not a universal concept. She cites examples from the various communities which she has conducted her research[9]; the only difference she found was the way they grew physically, however there were no behavioural differences between children and adults (Mead, 1962). Others argue that the notion of 'youth' as a period of transition (Mitterauer, 1993; Wyn & White, 1997). Mitterauer (1993) disagrees with the notion of transition, claiming that it is too simplistic in understanding the different experiences of young people historically, but also in our complex, present day world. In his research, he attempted to validate the five transitions in status in post-world war two in Europe, which were: leaving school, find employment, moving out of home, finding your own home and marriage. He concluded that, "youth" as a phenomenon, could not be sufficiently explained as a period of transition because the meanings and timings of these transitions occur differently between the genders and geographic regions, reflecting urban-rural but also economic differences.

2.2.2 The meanings of "Youth" as context dependent

The economic, political and social circumstance of a society plays an important role in how youths are a perceived and understood by the society in general. For example, after the World War II (1950's and 60's), Britain experienced relative peace and economic prosperity. In this era, youth was considered a period of life to be enjoyed and celebrated; young people benefited from the social redistribution of resources by their government; making them wealthier and healthier than ever. They took advantage of this new found affluence and educational opportunities provided them to create new meanings, cultures and sub-cultures for themselves[10] (Spence, 2005). Being young was considered more important than being an adult; and stressed the importance of fellowship among them.

In the 1970s and 80's, Britain experienced economic crises and social problems, young people became perceived as a threat to society. The unemployment rate was 24% among young people in 1982, and this undermined their economic position in society, they became financially dependent on the family and the state[11]. There was an increase in social issues like violence and burglaries, mostly blamed on young people. In this era, young people were regarded as a threat to the peace and stability of the society, they were labelled a problem category to be 'helped' and guided by adult supervision and control. There was a shift from the notion of youth as a distinct sub-culture and toward renewed ideas about transition (Frederiksen, 2010). Young people were perceived negatively and youth sub-cultures were considered negative; it is ironic

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[9] Margret Mead conducted research in Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Fiji etc. See Mead, M., 1962. Growing up in Manus society. In: M. C. Beatson, ed. *Growing up in New Guinea: A comparative study*. New York: Harper Collins , pp. 5-145.

[10] This era was characterised by festivals and gatherings, young people wanted to find and meet with each other to share in new the experiences they were creating from themselves.

[11] The state increasing provided welfare programs like unemployment and housing allowance.

but telling, that the same subcultures that were celebrated in the 1960's were now considered a nuisance and anti-social.

This example, although simplistic, shows that the concept and understanding of youth is context dependent; the example also illustrates the changing conception of youth and finally the scope for generational differences. Young people experienced 'youth' differently in the 1960's and the 1980's; their experiences and the way they were perceived (both positively and negatively) by the society was influenced by the wider economic and social situation. The way young people experience youth are determined by structures controlled by adults, generational differences begin to emerge when a gap exists between expectations and achievement between adults and young people. It is important to understand that adult's expectations are formed based on their own experiences of youth, which might be very different from the current reality as illustrated in the example above.

2.2.3 The social construction of "Youth" as a vulnerable category in society

Historically young people have been constructed as a socially, politically and economically vulnerable category in society by scholars NGOs and governments; interestingly, since the 90's there has been a shift in both discourse and policy about how youth issues are addressed (Bois-Reymond, 2012). In early twentieth century research, adolescence was studied through conceptual framework of storm and stress (Lerner, 2005). Bessant(1993) said that there was a "dual popular representation"[12] of young people between 1900 and 1950: (a) as a threat to society and inherently bad; (b) the focus of hope and optimism, intrinsically good but vulnerable (Wyn & White, 1997; Bessant, 1993). The negative representation of youth was the most dominant in that time period, and she believes that the assumption was; young people were naturally uncontrollable, but could be "made respectable if tamed by social conventions and norms" (Bessant, 1993); this provided the legitimation for state intervention, protection and control (Wyn & White, 1997). The dominant discourse that emerged to tackle youth issues was the deficit model; according to this model, young people were damaged or in danger of being damaged physically or emotionally (Lerner, 2005).

Young people are constructed as "vulnerable" by supranational institutions, INGOs, NGOs and by academics. The UNESCO report in 2004 described youth as a special category laden with risk and uncertainty (UNESCO, 2004). The Youth Employment Network claims that young people are more likely to receive lower wages; to work in the informal sector and are most vulnerable to shocks in the economy; also, young people lack power and authority as they have little input in the major institutions and government. In the 90's, the Positive Youth Development framework was developed based on research by scholars that wanted to change the approach to youth issues; they believed in promoting the capabilities of the individual rather than highlighting the neg-

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[12] See Bessant, J., 1993. *The Life-worlds and 'Cultures' of Young Australians,* Hobart: National Clearing House

atives which was the case in the Deficit model. In practice, the main difference between both approach was regarding service delivery for young people; there are several differences between the Positive Youth Development Framework and the Deficit model approach to youth issues; these differences are highlighted in the box below.

Deficit Model	Positive Youth Development Framework
Problem solving	Healthy Development
Single program Single Problem approach	Continuity across settings; community wide strategies
Youth as recipients	Youth as active partners
Rely on public institutions and systems outside the control of young people to prevent and treat their problems	Strengthen young people support networks; families, school, neighbourhoods
Different interventions for risk youth	Equity: the same positive support for all youth

Table 2: Different approaches to dealing with youth

Source: (Experience Corps, 2007)
http://ca.mousesquad.org/volunteers/resources/Youth%20Development%20Info.pdf

The Positive Youth Development Framework in the past twenty years has emerged to become the dominant approach in tackling youth related issues. This approach has been accepted and adopted by INGOs and NGOs that engage with youth issues; there has been a shift towards actively engaging with young people in identifying their problems and possible solutions. This approach has also being promoted by supra-national institutions like the UN African Union among others; they have actively encouraged national governments to facilitate the inclusion of young people in decision making an important feature this new approach. Several resolutions[13] have been passed in the United Nations general assembly encouraging youth participation; furthermore, the African Youth Charter is a legally binding resolution from the African Union that compels all African governments to develop national Youth polices.

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[13] UN General assembly Resolution (A/RES/57/165)(December 2002);(A/RES/60/2)(2003); (A/RES/58/133)(2003) , These resolutions encourage national governments to include young people in the decision making process.

2.3 Policy and the operationalization of "Youth" as a concept

Policy-making bodies have operationalized the concept of "Youth" in two ways: (a) as relational category; (b) a categorical concept defined by age. As a relational concept, "youth is placed in relation to "adulthood". Wyn & White (1997:11) wrote "it exists and takes its meaning, largely in relation to the concept of adulthood". From this angle, youth is seen as being shaped by social processes in which the notion of "age" is socially constructed institutionalised and controlled in historically, cultural and specific ways. The idealised and institutionalised concept of youth supposes an eventual arrival at adulthood, hence, youth is the state of becoming and adulthood is the state of arrival (Eisenstadt, 1956). Cardinal to understanding young people's interaction with adults is the role of the power relationships between the two groups. Wyn & White (1997) said that, although youth are often portrayed as a threat to law and order, they have very little input in the institutions and policies that affects them; for example, in the education system. This lack of power and authority makes it easy to deny young people their rights; she concludes by saying that youths are portrayed as more powerful than they actually are (Wyn & White, 1997). The emphasis on power relationships, allows for a better understanding of the experiences of different groups of people at varying stages of growing up. Youths have been positioned as needing guidance and expert attention to ensure that the process of becoming an adult is properly conducted; this is another manifestation of the unequal power relations that exists between the two groups.

"Youth" can also be understood as a categorical concept based on age as the main criteria of identification. For example in adolescence, there are a series of developmental tasks that must be performed in order to develop into fully mature adult. This approach assumes the existence of similar characteristics among the age group categorised as youth. As a categorical concept, the focus of youth is on the assumed link between physical growth and social identity; it also serves a managerial outlook tool for the institutions concerned youth and youth policy (Bois-Reymond, 2012). There are two main limitations to operationalizing youth primarily as a categorical concept. Firstly the approach is static in nature and is ahistorical; the main premise of this approach, age, gives insufficient weight and insight to different experiences of young people, and how they negotiated the process of growing up (Wyn & White, 1997). The assumption with the approach is that the similarities between the age categories are more significant than the differences. It offers little explanation or understanding about young people's experience growing as a process that was negotiated but also imposed on them. The second limitation of his approach is that it ignores the impact of institutions on young people; it also ignores how young people are impacted by the economic and political circumstances and changes within the society. Wyn & White posits that there is a tendency for institutions to present youth attitudes and behaviours as normative, thus underestimating the diversity that exists within the group and the impacts of role of institutions and the society in shaping those behaviours (Wyn & White, 1997:13).

2.4 Implication for Youth Policy

. (Ashing, 2010), stated that "youth policy is the summation of all activities that affect young people in any way". The broad definition of youth policy is in line with the cross sectorial areas covered by youth policy (healthcare, education sports) and numerous actors (schools, NGOs families etc.) involved. The way a country conceptualises and operationalizes the concept 'youth', affects the way institutions are constructed, and how they interact with young people (Bois-Reymond, 2012). Most countries for practical reasons have both a relational and categorical approach to youth policy. A categorical approach provides governments with the statistical tools that allow them understand the size of the target population; it is also necessary for budgeting and planning by governments, international institutions, donor agencies and NGOs, involved in youth related activities. A relational approach gives the government greater understanding of the different experiences with the category 'youth'; as a result, young people can be provided specific programmes and services that match their needs and situation. Countries that have been able to develop and implement successful youth policies have been able to find the correct balance between a relational and categorical conception and operationalization of youth.

2.4.1 Balanced approach to Youth Policy

Sweden has been highlighted by scholars as having a relatively successful youth policy (O'Connor & Goodwin, 2013). The fundamental aim of Swedish youth and welfare policies are to make young people responsible adults. The Swedish government understands youth as a period of transition; and places a lot of emphasis on making each stage of the transition as seamless as possible. The government describes youth as an enjoyable stage of one's life, "When they (young people) are waiting to grow up". Based on this belief, they have initiated several programmes whose aim is to encourage young people to enjoy their youth but also preparing them to establish their own independent lives and moving away from home (Ashing, 2010).

The Swedish government has found the right balance in operationalizing youth both as a categorical and relational concept. As a categorical concept, the government has defined youth as people aged between the ages of 12-25. This has allowed them to effectively plan and provide the adequate types of public and support services needed by those within this age group; this ensures that they have adequate access to services and programs like: apprenticeships, leisure facilities, scholarships, affordable housing etc. As a relational concept, the Swedish government understands that differences exist within young people as group; and have devised processes and institutions that identify these differences and provide appropriate help to specific groups and individuals when necessary. They have been able to achieve this is by promoting youth representation in the different levels of government, but also in the various institutions that affect them. Young people are in a position in Sweden, where they can articulate their concerns and recommend possible solutions, and expect to be listened to by the government and institutions concerned (Ashing, 2010).

Young people are allowed to take part in the society on an equal footing with other groups because they are considered as a resource and not a problem; with valid and unique experiences different from other others (Ashing, 2010).

O'Connor & Goodwin (2013) claims that, it is the right balance between categorical conception and relational conception that has made Swedish youth policy very successful in empowering young people. Furthermore, the positive perception of youth in Sweden stems from the positive economic and social environment in the country, youth related problems like unemployment and crime are low and most young people successfully complete the different transition stages to adulthood, this could explain the positive perceptions of youth in Sweden.

2.4.2 Unbalanced approach to Youth Policy

Governments in Africa have been accused of having an imbalanced conception and operationalization of the concept youth (O'Connor & Goodwin, 2013); resulting in the failure of youth policy in the across the continent. This is because institutions are constructed on the premises of homogeneity in the category 'youth'; as a consequence, little emphasis paid to identifying the differences that exist within the group, and providing specialized assistance and interventions, when and where necessary. The policy implication of this is that African governments tend to roll out large scale programs, targeting all young people irrespective of their social conditions or needs; this has resulted in "small pockets of success" but generally, youth policies have not achieved their specified aims (Brempong & Kimenyi, 2010). According to Brempong & Kimenyi (2010:25); "there is a one size fits all approach to policy making for young people; as a result, young people are targeted with irrelevant policies by their governments, this explains the failure of youth policy in Africa".

Secondly, the conception of youth in Africa is extremely categorical, cultural notions of seniority play an important role in how young people participate in society; this affects the interactions between young people, the government and other relevant institutions, that deals with them (Bois-Reymond, 2012). The implication for policy making is that, young people are excluded from the policy process. Scholars like (Lintelo, 2011) confirm that youth policies in most African countries are designed without the input of young people. He goes further to say that institutions see young people as a 'problem category' to be helped (Ibid). This characterization of young people, justifies their exclusion from the decision making process; the institutions don't believe that young people have anything positive to contribute to the process. Brempong & Kimenyi,), cconcluded that the exclusion of young people from the policy process has resulted in the failure of youth policy; young people don't feel connected to the process, hence there is no ownership of the policies or initiatives by young people , ownership is an important factor for the success of any policy (Brempong & Kimenyi, 2010).

2.5 Youth Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa

Since 2000, many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have enacted national youth policies; they devised action plans for youth empowerment and set up institutions to work on youth issues. The governments in Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria, Mozambique and Tanzania have all drafted national youth polices; Nigeria, Mozambique and South Africa have also established national youth councils or similar youth-oriented institutions. There is no single definition of what youth policy is or what it includes; different countries decide on these parameters in line with their national policies. Youth policy cuts across a wide range of sectors and includes a large number of actors; the Youth Empowerment network defined youth policy as a summation of all initiatives aimed at young citizens; however, this definition has been criticised for being vague and a blunt instrument for analysis. Mozambique was the first country in Africa to adopt a national youth council whose mandate was structuring and harmonizing the different activities developed by youth associations, but more importantly, they were an interlocutor between the government and the youth.

Some scholars regard the creation of youth as a category in Africa as a post–colonial phenomenon, questioning the origins of the various national youth policies in Africa. Frederiksen 2010, said, "it is unclear to what extent these policies (youth policies) are home grown through interactions between various domestic interest groups" (Frederiksen, 2010: 1078). He argues that these policies are a result of international organizations involved in the policy-making process that have influence on the decision makers. Multilateral and bilateral donor agencies have engaged in promoting certain discourses, framing and narratives about youth; they identified youth as a problem category facing risk and uncertainty in terms of their social-economic political and social inclusion. These agencies have thus championed the creation of national policies that allegedly symbolises society's commitment it is young citizens.

The importance of national youth policies has been acknowledged in the international arena. UNESCO[14] reaffirmed their support for the idea of national youth policy saying, "every country needed effective strategies to help youth make the right choices, protect them from exploitation and neglect; and to ensure their participation in all spheres of society" (UNESCO, 2004). They urged governments to develop "a long term consensus based integrated and cross-sectorial youth policy"(Ibid 2004: 65). Furthermore, there is a legally binding framework in the African Youth Charter that mandates African governments to "develop a comprehensive national youth policy for subsequent enacted into law (African Union, 2006). The primary function of youth policy is to manage the socio-demographic challenges that a country faces. In demographic challenges faced by Sub-Saharan Africa SSA countries include rapid population growth without corresponding critical public investments in healthcare and education infrastructure; resulting in lowlife expectancy, illiteracy, unemployment and high crime rate. The AU argues that the creation of na-

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[14] United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization

tional policy will improve the poor socio-economic conditions including un-employment, crime, illiteracy etc. prevalent among youths, in SSA.

2.6 The rationale and challenges of youth participation in the Policy process

2.6.1 What is participation?

Participation is a concept commonly used in development discourse. Broadly, it symbolises the inclusion of different stakeholders in the decision making process. Youth participation involves creating opportunities for young people to be involved in shaping, influencing, formulating and contributing to the policy process. This requires "spaces of participation" being created that encourages exchanges between generations, cultural groups, languages and religions (Lintelo, 2011). These opportunities are created by developing a range of formal and informal mechanisms for youth participation like: youth and school councils, youth hearings workshops, volunteering etc.

2.6.2 Rationale for participation

Participation will increase the legitimacy of an initiative, program or policy to young people (Lintelo, 2011); it also compels young people to feel ownership towards the policy or program, thereby increasing the policies' overall chances of success (Lerner, 2005). Participation promotes the integration of young people into the society; this is beneficial not only to young people, but the community at large. UNESCO in its 2004 report, stressed that "a participative process in formulating national youth policy, has the potential to identify distinctive needs and concerns of young people, and to promote their integration into society" (UNESCO, 2004).; Within this context, UN's World Program of Action on Youth emphasises that the earlier young people are provided with the opportunities to participate the greater the benefits for themselves and community at large (UN, 2005).

Adding to this, The Youth Employment Network (YEN) argues that consulting young people, drawing on their perceptions, knowledge and ideas about their situations and realities of existence is critical for developing effective public policy and the achieving positive outcomes (Lintelo, 2011). Encouraging young people to contribute their ideas in developing new ways of delivering public services to them will increase the feeling of ownership they have towards the new process, it will also lead to identifying new more effective ways of addressing their needs. For example, when publicising a policy that concerns young people, it is important that they are consulted about the best way to advertise and promote the policy; they will be better placed to identify the right format and channels of communication most effective in spreading the message among the intended target group (Lintelo, 2011).

Young people should be part of the solution to the problem; they are social actors with skills and competencies willing and capable of helping in resolving the numerous challenges confronting them by using their unique set of

experiences (Lintelo, 2011; The Youth Employment Network, 2009). The UN states that there has been a marked improvement in policy design and implementation, when governments have successfully engaged youth (UN, 2005). The premise behind this argument is that adults are not capable of making the best decisions and choices for young people; the fundamental assumption here is the existence of a strong disconnect between the lived experiences of adults (decision makers) and young people. This implies that young people's views and ideas are shaped from their unique body of experience. By excluding young people from the policy process which affect them, that the policies are formulated in ignorance of its real impact on the lives of young people (Lerner, 2005).

There is a higher chance of failure for policies and initiatives that affect young people, if they are excluded from the process; societal problems like crime, violence, intergenerational distrust between young people and adults will become more pronounced (Lintelo, 2011). Lerner (2005) posits that, successful youth policy which mitigates social challenges is built upon the effective representation of young people. There is little chance for institutional learning from past experiences, if youth voices are not heard; there is no accurate way of understanding how the policies actually affect young people. Also even the best intentioned policies might not be in young people's best interest if they are not involved in the process (UNESCO, 2004; Lintelo, 2011).

Finally, communal harmony is enhanced by effective representation. When youths are excluded from the policymaking processes and power structures, this creates tensions in society manifested through crime and violence that threaten the social fabric of society. Participation is needed to counteract the 'immense social costs that can be created through apathy, frustration and social exclusion of young people' (Lintelo, 2011).

2.6.3 Limitations of the Participation approach

The two main concerns of youth participation in the policy process include: (a) the effectiveness of youth groups in the policy process and (b) the representativeness of youth association and groups.

Although the importance of participation has been highlighted by scholars and international institutions, there remain challenges that hamper the effectiveness of youth organizations in contributing meaningfully to national policy. Governments haven't made enough effort to institutionalise youth participation in the decision making process; some governments have created sustainable interaction mechanisms that allow young people to express themselves and opinions in policy design like national youth councils etc.; however, these consultations are often passive. Even though young people were given the opportunity to share their opinions, their role in the complete policy process remains marginal (Lintelo, 2011). The effectiveness of youth groups in the policy process has been questioned since they have very little influence over it. Furthermore, young people don't have an equal standing with the other actors (adults) in the policy process; this also raises further questions about the effectiveness of youth participation in the policy process.

The existence of youth organisations like the national youth council or similar institutions doesn't necessarily guarantee adequate, effective and independent youth representation (UN, 2005). These institutions and organisations have political and financial linkages with the state and political parties which makes them susceptible to external interference. Also, youth organisations have a strong urban bias because of their limited finances and logistical capacity. This has implications for youth in the rural areas as they are often excluded from this process. Furthermore, the proceedings are conducted in the official administrative languages, this restricts the ability of rural uneducated young people to understand and make contributions to the process. These organisations are composed of the most articulate and social engaged young people; again excluding the more marginalised fringe groups of people. In this section we have seen that although participation is encouraged, questions still exist about its effectiveness and representativeness.

2.7 Concluding remarks

The concept youth is a lot more complex than its common everyday use leads one to believe. There is no universal experience or meaning of youth because the period (youth) is experienced differently by young people across time and space (Spence, 2005). The society's economic, social and political situation, defines young people's role in it; and how they are perceived by the society; this is important in shaping their experiences in that phase of life. Furthermore, different social generations exist in society; Mannheim said "people are influenced by the socio-historical context that predominated their youth" this makes people in the same social generation to develop unique historical consciousness and behaviour from the other generations; this explains the generational differences and conflicts that exists in societies.

In policy making, youth is operationalized in two ways; as a relational or categorical concept. Both approaches have been adopted by governments and institutions in designing youth policy and programmes. The success of youth policy depends on achieving the right balance between the two approaches. In Africa, the categorical approach is still dominant in conceptualising youth and in designing youth policy; because of this approach, the diversity in needs and skills that exist among young people remains hidden. This approach by government restricts youth participation in the decision making process in designing youth programs; this could be a reason why these policies and programs in Africa have recorded "small pocket of success" in achieving their aims (Lintelo, 2011).

Chapter 3 Youth policy in Nigeria: A focus on the Institutional Framework of The vision 20:2020 Agenda

3.1 1ntroduction

This chapter presents the institutional framework of Youth Policy; highlighting its historical context and the key institutional weaknesses. Although Nigeria's transition to democratic regime after 17 years of Military rule in 1999 has opened up a new space for new policy initiatives in an attempt to differentiate the new government from past regimes (Ohale, 2013). in youth policy reforms, there remain major institutional problems for reasons related to the conception of "youth" as a category and target group, weak funding and a mandate which boils down to the task of coordination. Particularly in the area of employment, the current institutional framework for youth policy cannot be expected to produce the results stated in the vision 20:2020 agenda.

3.2 Historical context of youth policy in Nigeria

There are four distinct stages when looking at the historical emergence and development of youth policy in Nigeria. The stages include: the post-independence era, the oil boom era, the structural adjustment era and the current neo-liberal phase. There was no official youth policy after independence in 1960; however, the government promoted in-school programs to build physical and mental development of young people; they did this by promoting in school clubs groups like JETS[15], sports and art clubs. The government also supported and promoted out of school activities including voluntary organisations like the boy's scouts, girls guide and 'man o war' programmes; the aim of these groups was to shape characters and behaviour, promote competitive spirit among young people and to promote national unity and integration (National youth policy, 2001).

The expansion of the Nigerian oil sector in the 1960's and 70's led to an increase of the government's spending power; this allowed the government to invest in activities that empowered young people. One such initiative was the National Youth service Corps (NYSC) which was created in 1973 by the federal government. The primary aim of the programme was to expose university graduates to leadership roles in community development projects in different parts of Nigeria, before they officially enter the labour market. The NYSC scheme was praised by scholars because it allowed young Nigerians to experience and to interact with other young people from different cultures and tribes; this helped break down the different negative stereotypes that existed about

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[15] JETS clubs is the junior engineer's technicians and scientists club.

each other, particularly as Nigeria was rebuilding after the civil war that ended in 1970.

In 1975, the government created the Ministry of Social Development: Youth and Sports, the Ministry was mandated to design, manage and coordinate all the different youth programmes and initiatives. The creation of the Ministry was encouraged by the governments desire to efficiently implement the different programmes for young people, in a cost efficient manner. Consolidating all these programmes under the Ministry Sports and Youth, would achieve the operational efficiency for youth programmes that the government sought (Nwogu, 2009). In the 1970's, there was increased government investment in both education and the health sector. The government invested 8% of its annual revenue in 1976 in education (Anyanwu, 1992), and pledged to provide free access to primary education for all young Nigerians; there was a massive increase in the number of schools built across the country that promoted education, particularly in the rural areas (Rotgak, 1994).

One major criticism of the Nigerian government during the 1970's (oil boom years) is that the government failed to use the resources expediently. Nigeria accumulated huge debts and had serious balance of payment deficits because excessive, inefficient and ineffective spending of the previous regimes. The government neglected other sectors of the economy and focused solely on oil exports, creating an unbalanced economy where oil generated 85% of revenue in 1981 (Anyanwu, 1992). Furthermore, the government borrowed excessively from international financial institutions using its oil reserves as collateral, generating debts of $4 billion dollars; those funds however, were used in building white elephant projects[16] and were generally mismanaged, producing little economic benefits (Anyanwu, 1992). The drop in world commodity prices including oil in 1982 meant that the Nigerian government became unable to finance its debts and meet their local responsibilities. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) offered the Nigerian government its Structural adjustment package (SAPs) that was founded and designed along neo-liberal ideologies. Some of the policy recommendations of the SAP's include the removal of subsidies and the privatization of public services like education and healthcare.

The economic crises of the 1980's affected the Nigerian governments' ability to fund the various youth programs, which have suffered ever since. As a result of the SAPs, public investment in education and healthcare reduced significantly; investments in education fell to 5.6% in 1981 and reduced further to 1.1% in 1988 from a previous high of 11% in 1979 (Ohale, 2013). Young people were particularly affected because the quality of education declined steadily after the adoption of the SAPs. Teachers had to take up extra business activities, often in the informal sector to complement their static wages, particularly as inflation had affected the general prices of goods and services (Rotgak, 1994). Also, learning materials like books became scarce and expensive because they were imported; academic sessions were barely completed because teachers would embark on strike actions against the government, demanding better working conditions; this prevents students from valuable

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[16] See Eneh, O. C., 2011. Failed Development Vision, Political Leadership and Nigeria's Underdevelopment: A Critique. *Asian Journal for rural development,* 1(1), pp. 63-69.

learning time in the class room, all these factors further compromised the quality of education students were receiving.

In healthcare, there was a similar decline in both access to and quality of healthcare. Hospitals were under stocked with medicines that also, where predominantly imported. Investment in building of new healthcare centres to cater for the expanding populations where frozen and maintenance on existing healthcare centres and hospitals where also non-existent, leading to the dilapidation of the Nigerian health services (Rotgak, 1994). The reduced investment in young people activities by the government, and the economic difficulties in the country had a detrimental effect on young people's development; social issues like unemployment became more common and rising crime rate ensued (Agnes, 2010). In 1989 the government drafted the social development policy for Nigeria, primarily meant to focus on youth issues. The economic and political[17] situation in the country resulted meant these policies were largely neglected.

According to Agnes (2010) the Nigerian government equated youth development to sporting activities; as a consequence, programmes for civic education and leadership training were barely funded or supported. This greatly affected young people; they grew up without the essential understanding of civil citizenship and how to conduct themselves and contribute meaningfully to the society. There is widespread acceptance by scholars and even the government that the 1990's was a wasted decade for youth development in Nigeria (Agnes, 2010). The government acknowledges that the neglect of youth policies in the 1980's and 90's resulted in a huge gap in youth development, resulting in high unemployment, high school dropout rates, increasing crime among other negative vices.

In 2001, Nigeria unveiled its National Youth Policy. The policy was centred on the efficacy of preparing young people to have the competency and confidence for self-employment or other good job opportunities[18]. To this end, the government pledged to strengthen the capacities of institutions charged with providing the necessary skills for youths; they also pledged to seek private sector support to complement the government's efforts in providing skills acquisition and training exercises among other initiatives for the youth[19]. The shift in government policy is attributed to Nigeria's transition to democratic regime after seventeen years of military rule. The new government sought to differentiate itself from past regimes by initiating a raft of new policy initiatives; youth reforms were one of them. The new youth policy failed to achieve its goals for youth empowerment; there is still rising illiteracy, unemployment, and general lack of economic opportunities for young people; scholars attribute the failure to a lack of political will to address youth issues, a culture of corruption within the civil service, and ineffective institutions mandated to cater to youth issues (Eneh, 2011).

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[17] The Military was in charge of the Nigerian government; and were saddled with severe international economic sanctions.

[18] See National youth policy, 2001. *National Youth Policy,* Abuja: Federal Executive Council.

[19] See National youth policy, 2001. *National Youth Policy,* Abuja: Federal Executive Council.

In 2007, the Federal government unveiled its vision 20:2020 agenda; youth was identified as an important actor for the actualization of the agenda; this led to the creation of the Federal Ministry of Youth development as a full government Ministry. The Government realised that success of the vision 20:2020, particularly as it concerns employment, is heavily reliant on the empowerment of the Nigerian youth. The creation of the Ministry was an acknowledgement by the government that, the government's youth policy of 2001 was incapable of achieving the government's new objectives (full employment) for youths outlined in the vision 20:2020 agenda.

3.3 Institutional Framework of youth policy in Nigeria: Key actors and Weaknesses

Institutional frameworks are generally regarded to mean a system of formal rules, laws, regulations, procedures, informal customs and norms that mould and shape socio economic behaviour (Donnellan et al., 2012); it shapes the flow of ideas, the construction of interests, the nature of power relations and the forms of interactions between the competing actors and interests'. The institutional framework for youth policy coordinates programs and activities for young people in Nigeria; this includes identifying young people's challenges, deciding on the appropriate interventions and implementing the agreed intervention (National Youth Policy, 2001). The institutional framework for youth is shaped primarily by the government's policy, however partners can decide on specific causes which they want to champion and focus on. The `main three actors in the institutional framework for youth policy in Nigeria are: the Ministry of youth development, partners[20] and young people. In the context of youth policy, adults[21] have defined the institutions, their rules and their normative principles; they have built the institutional structures and make the policy decisions which affect or define a course of action to be taken in the future. These policies and institutional choices bias the policy discourse in the direction of certain policy frames so benefit adults and maintaining their dominance over young people (Levistsky, 2011); this is the case in Nigeria as young people have no input in the various interventions being prescribed to them by the government or its partners. Furthermore, the framework as it is, maintains the status quo in terms of power relations, youths are positioned to be needing of help and assistance from the adults, and no competent of making their own decisions.

3.3.1 Key actors

This section provides a brief overview of the actors main actors involved in youth policy in Nigeria.

[20] Partners include INGO's NGO's the private sector and MDA's

[21] All the decisions taken by the government are made by adults. See Spence, J., 2005. Concepts of Youth in Working with young people. *SAGE,* pp. 45-56.

3.3.1.1 Ministry of Youth and Development

The Ministry of Youth Development is an organ of the Federal Government directly responsible for policy formulation and review, designing priority programmes of action and broad guidelines for Youth Development in the Country. They are mandated to create opportunities for the youth to be involved in the decision making process of issues that affect them, the environment and the society; they are also mandated to equip young people with skills to find productive employment. Finally, the Ministry is to inculcate in the youth certain values like human rights, social justice, equity, fairness and gender equality. The responsibility of the Ministry is to oversee and coordinate the implementation of policy from the Federal State and Local government levels, other implementing agencies NGOs and Voluntary Youth Organisations (VYO). The Ministry is funded by the taxpayers; funds are allocated by the Presidency and approved by the National House of Assembly. The table below shows the Ministries budget for 2012.

NIGERIAN BUDGET	N4.697 Trillion
MIN.YOUTH DEVELOPMENT BUDGET	N77,658,063,385
TOTAL SPENT	N71,405,872,981.80
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL BUDGET	1.65%

Table 3: Budgetary allocation of the Ministry of Youth Development

3.3.1.2 Partners

Due to the funding constraints on the Ministry Youth Development and the large population of Nigeria youths, the Ministry decided that forming strategic partnerships with different institutions and NGOs will give them the best opportunity to efficiently implement the youth policy in-line with the vision 20:2020 agenda and reach a larger number of people[22]. The Ministry established partnership schemes on three levels. On the first level, they partnered with international institutions like the United Nations (UN) the African Union Commission, and Commonwealth. The second level consists of partnerships with international Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) and the third level consists of other government Ministries and institutions, local businesses and NGOs etc.

On the first level, an example of an initiative resulting from partnership is the Nigerian Youth Entrepreneurship Development Programme (NYEPDP) developed in conjunction with the Commonwealth commission that aims to provide 10,000 youths with jobs in two years. The commonwealth will provide technical support and funding to execute the program. An initiative on the second level is with IESCO; their programme aims to encourage poverty alleviation, disaster prevention and youth employment. They aim to do this by training the youth on modern ecologically friendly, agricultural practices; they will also provide grants for youths to purchase the necessary equipment to start

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[22] The Ministry is constrained financially and operationally by lack of skills, techniques etc. These partners could fill the gap.

farming in a sustainable way; their hope is that 1000 youths benefit from the program. Finally, on the third level, an example of an initiative is the YouWin promo that is currently being conducted by the Ministry in conjunction with other ministries and institutions including: Ministry of Finance, Trade, Information and Technology and institutions like SMEDAN and private business; to promote entrepreneurship, value re-orientation and skill trainings for young people. The programme hopes to create 240,000 direct and indirect jobs in 3 years.

Table 4: Ministry of Youth Development: Partners and Initiatives

	PARTNERS	INITIATIVES
LEVEL ONE	Commonwealth Commission	International Programme on Youth Entrepreneurship and training
	African Union Commission	African Union Youth Volunteer Corps
	UN Habitat	One-Stop Youth development and information centre
LEVEL TWO	IESCO[23]	International Youth vocational Training Plan
LEVEL THREE	Ministry of Finance, Trade, Education. SMEDAN[24] Private Sector NGOs	YouWin

3.3.1.3 Youth

According to the National youth policy, Youth is defined as persons between the ages 18-35. Although legalistically, youth has been classified solely by age by the government, other local cultures have a more relational conception of youth. In rural Nigeria, youth could be when you are able to contribute your fair share to local economy; this could be by farming, petty jobs, etc. Youth is also considered the period before marriage, as marriage is considered to be the final stage to adulthood in some communities' (Ohale, 2013).

This legalistic conception of youth by the government subscribes to the theories of transitions[25] which "emphasises the importance of structures outside the control of young people in determining the conditions of their exist-

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[23] IESCO-International Ecological Safety collaborative Organization

[24] SMEDAN-Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency

[25] Theory of transitions is directly relevant to the policy decisions that shape the active choices of young people (Spence, 2005)

ence" (Spence, 2005:50). The institutions that are related to youth like education, healthcare are controlled by adults with no input from the youths. This can be understood in the context of the local cultural norms existent in the Nigerian society that correlates seniority with authority, permitting and justifying youth exclusion from the decision-making process (Obumneke, 2012). Young people are the primary beneficiaries of the youth policy.

3.4 Key institutional weaknesses

The first weakness of the institutional framework is the lack of accountability by some of the major actors to young people the intended beneficiaries of youth policy. Youths issues are not a priority of the Nigerian government because they are not accountable to young people (Agnes, 2010). This should be seen through the lens of political accountability; which posits that, those who govern have to answer to the wider public for their actions; either directly when politically elected, or indirectly as subordinates of politically elected bodies. The constant threat of removal during the next election motivates the ruling government to produce results (Erkkila, 2007).

In Nigeria however, there is little participation by young people in the political process; the UNDP held a workshop in Nigeria aimed at encouraging youth participation in the political process; the body said they had noticed consistently low participation by youths in the electoral cycles of the nation in the last ten years (Jegede, 2013). The low participation of young people in the political process means that the government does not regard young people as important to its electoral success; hence little attention is paid to them (Obumneke, 2012). The way youth is conceptualised in Nigeria also prevents institutions from being accountable to young people. Youths is operationalized in a categorical manner, solely by age; the implication of this kind of categorization is that institutions relate to youth issues based on aggregates with little regard for group or individual experiences, removing the need for close interaction with them and hence accountability.

Finally, there are some questions regarding the mechanisms for accountability within the main actor for youth policy, the Ministry of Youth Development. The Ministry is part of the executive arm of the Nigerian government hence is directly accountable to the Presidency; the President appoints a Minister to run the Ministry in line with the government policy. This amount of control over the ministry has affected the way the ministry operates; the Minister and in extension the Ministry is more accountable to the President than the young people they are meant to serve. This implies that the ministry may not necessarily serve in the best interest of young people, if the interest of the President would be adversely affected. There are also questions about internal accountability within the ministry; there are two internal control mechanisms which are:

- **Monitoring and Evaluation Committee:** They are charged with reviewing the National Youth Policy and the different initiatives and programs being undertaken by the Ministry. It is supposed to be carried out on a continuous process.
- **Financial Monitoring Unit:** They are charged with monitoring the finances spent by the Ministry.

The ability of the Monitoring and evaluation committee and the Financial Monitoring Unit to objectively check the activities of the Ministry is questionable. In theory the units are supposed to be independent, however in reality, this is very difficult due to corruption and weak operational processes in the wider Nigerian civil service which the Ministry is part of.

The second weakness is the low institutional durability of the institutions that oversee youth issues. Low institutional durability means that formal rules change quickly; rarely surviving fluctuations in power and changes in authority (Levistsky, 2011). This definition describes the situation in Nigeria which has witnessed ten changes since the ministry of youth was official inaugurated in 1975. Within the context of persistent change, the different actors are uncertain about the rules and the possibility of change is high; to compensate for this, the actors particularly INGOs shorten the lengths of their programmes which prevent young people from fully enjoying the potential benefits of the program of initiative (Usman, 2013). The table below shows the series of changes to the main institutions overseeing youth issues.

S/No.	Name of Ministry	Year moved
1.	Federal Ministry of Social Development, Youth and Sports	- - -
2.	Federal Ministry of National Guidance with 3 Ministers	1983
3.	Federal Ministry of Information, Social Development, Youth, Sports and Culture	1983 – 1985
4.	Federal Ministry of Social Development, Youth and Sports	1985 – 1988
5.	Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports	1988 – 1992
6	Federal Ministry of Education and Youth Development	Nov. 1993 – Feb. -mid 1995
7.	Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports	1995 – 1999
8.	Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development	2000 – 2004
9.	Federal Ministry of Inter-Governmental Affairs, Youth Development and Special Duties	2004 – 2006
10.	Federal Ministry of Youth Development (full-fledged Ministry)	2007

Figure 1: Historical emergence of the Ministry of Youth Development

The problem of persistent change can also be observed by the frequent change of leadership in the newest institution charged with youth issues, the Ministry of Youth Development. Since its inception in 2007, there have been 4 Ministers and 7 permanent secretaries; each coming into the position with their own agenda and ideas on how the Ministry should operate; this has resulted in a constant change of policy focus, which has adversely affected the effectiveness and credibility of both the Ministry and their partners.

After its inauguration, the Ministry unveiled its National Job Creation Template. The major focus of this initiative was to identify employment gaps within government MDA's and fill those gaps with qualified Nigerians. An of-

ficial from the Ministry said "the initiative was never completely implemented because the Minister who proposed the initiative was replaced by Mr President" (Respondent 2). Since then, successive Ministers and permanent secretaries have initiated different programs that were partially implemented or discontinued when they left office. Investigation into what causes the frequent change in leadership revealed a couple of reasons. The Minister is a political appointment who the President can change or replace whenever he chooses. Illustrating this is the recent sacking of Minister of Youth Development announced on the 26th of August 2013 by the President, he gave no reasons behind this decision (Daniel, 2013).

The position of permanent secretaries is the most prestigious job in the civil service; appointments are based on seniority and promotion within the civil service. Those most qualified to for the position are usually at the tail end of their careers and usually retire soon after their appointment, leaving them little time to implement their ideas. The official tried to justify the frequent changes in policy by saying that "everybody wants to have a legacy and by implementing a new program is their way of securing that legacy" (Usman, 2013).

Another major initiative that has been started but partially implemented includes the National Skill Acquisition Initiative (NSAI) which aimed to teach Nigerian youth skills like: embroidery, carpentry, pottery etc. This was intended to help in reducing the unemployment by giving young Nigerians employable skills. This initiative was discontinued when the recently sacked Minister was appointed in 2011.

The frequent change in leadership also has a negative effect on the workers within the Ministry. An official in the Ministry said "It's very frustrating to put in so much effort and commitment into designing an initiative that you know will not be implemented or discontinued on later date, so why should I bother myself" Respondent 4. The workers are demotivated because of the constant change in policy focus, resulting from the lack of continuity of leadership. My impression from interacting with the officials from the Ministry is that they are frustrated with the ever changing policy focus, an official said that "I wish that our Ministers and Permanent secretaries are compelled by law to continue and finish any on-going programme they meet, that way we will be sure that we are not working in vain and will be much happier".

The credibility of the Ministry of Youth Development and their partners has been affected by the frequent changes in policy focus. Majority of the people that were interviewed said they had no faith in the Ministry; their reasons being that they (Ministry) are always launching new initiatives and programmes that are discontinued after a short period of time. During - fieldwork one young person was asked if he knew anything -about the current National Youth Entrepreneurial Development (NYED) program, his response was:

" *What is this NYED? Look, I am not interested in any of these things anymore; they are all scams, it is just a way to make money for them (ministry officials). Have you ever gotten anything from them? Please these guys are not serious"* Respondent 6.

In light of the above statement, it will be difficult for Nigerians, especially the youth, to embrace these initiatives if they don't know about the initiatives or believe that there are ulterior motives[26] behind them.

The third weakness of the institutional framework around youth policy is the insufficient funding for youth issues, by government and its partners. In 2012, the Ministry of Youth Development's budgetary allocation was 1.65% of the National budget, even though by their mandate they are supposed to providing programs and services for 60% of the population of the country. The lack of funds has greatly hindered the capacity of the Ministry to reach a substantial amount of people. An official from the Ministry said "sometimes it is embarrassing when you hear the numbers of people trained directly by us, maybe 1000 per annum; you wonder when we can reach sixty million youths out there if we are training only 1000 per annum" Respondent 2. His statement reveals the reality in which the Ministry officials operate in; their hands are tied regarding what they can offer the youths. He spoke about not being able to offer enough workshops and training programs as intended; he highlighted lo-gistical challenges like: transportation costs especially to remote areas in the Nigeria, staffing, and office space as some issues they face because of their cur-rent financial situation. This ultimately affects their ability to fulfil their man-date, including tackling youth unemployment as they are unable to provide young people with the necessary tools they either employ themselves or find employment.

One consequence of the funding challenge is the lack of trained personnel and technical know-how by the Ministry, and local organisations involved with young people; this has led to an over-reliance on foreign partners in designing and implementing these activities. In the Ministry of Youths' 2012 annual re-port, all the major programs and initiatives were carried out in conjunction with foreign partners; the Ministries individual accomplishments were capital investments and administrative related activities like: building community cen-tres and overseeing the annual NYSC program. The Ministry was unable to successfully develop and implement any of their own programs for the youth. Highlighting further the dearth of technical staff in the Ministry was the Com-monwealth Commission's decision to send their technical staff to the ministry, to oversee the designing of National Youth Entrepreneurial Development (NYED) initiative.

It should be noted that, the aim of this research is not critiquing the strat-egy of the Ministry to form partnerships with different institutions and organi-zations as they have experience and the technical understanding of designing and implementing such programs. However, the research is concerned that the Ministry is over-relying on these partnerships particularly with foreign organi-zations; and has thus far failed to take any initiative to increase the skill-set of the employees and officials in the Ministry. The 2012 annual report mentions one training initiative for staff of the Ministry, this was also confirmed from my interviews with Ministry officials; the training was organised by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) and only 15 staff members were trained in Porto Novo in Equatorial Guinea. Although this is a

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[26] People believe that these programs are funded by the government and the Ministry officials take the Money for the programme.

start, but given the scale of their task, many more people will have to be trained in many different skill sets for the Ministry to competently and successfully design and implement their own programs, to the benefit of youths in Nigeria. The success of the vision 20:2020 agenda as regards youth employment is reliant on the Ministry being able to meet its mandate of youth empowerment. However the capacity gaps identified above could jeopardise the Ministries effort to provide the necessary programs, training and support mechanisms on a large enough scale for the vision 20:2020 to become a reality.

3.5 Concluding remarks

The main actors in the youth framework are the Ministry of Youth Development, partners[27] and young people, in that order if relevance. The categorical conception of youth as age by the government, and the dominant cultural norms of seniority equating to authority, have relegated young people to a position of only receiving assistance. The institutions that interact with young people were created in this environment; this has negatively affected the way they interact with young people. Although young are described as partners in official documents and by officials, that is not the case; this explains why the current framework lacks a structured space for interaction between the young people and the government. This contrast with the dominant international discourse on youth policy; institutions are encouraged to actively engage young people during all the levels of designing and implementing youth policy. In this context, young people are supposed to be the most important actors in youth policy.

Apart from the problem of conception, sufficient resources are yet to be allocated to youth issues by the government. In 2012, 1.65% was allocated for youth issues despite the fact young people make up 60% of the population; this indicates that they are not a priority of the government. The lack of funding has affected the Ministry of Youth's effectiveness in providing programs for young people due to logistical and capacity inadequacies. They compensated for the insufficient funding by engaging with a lots of different partners to provide services for young people, the reality of this is that this has resulted in an over-reliance on partners in providing services for young people, this has implications for the long term sustainability of the current programs and initiatives. Furthermore, the reality is that, mandate of the Ministry has become one of coordination of their different partner's activities and programs rather than actively seeking to achieve its own aims in lieu of the Vision 20:2020 agenda.

Finally, accountability concerns and the regular change of government policies; affects the credibility of the youth reform process and the quality of programs offered to young people. International partners have been known to shorten to length of programmes offered in Nigeria to mitigate the risk of constant institutional or policy changes (Eneh, 2011); this prevents the young people from the enjoying the full potential of these programs. Furthermore, the

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[27] These include the different INGOs NGOs and other government MDAs involved in providing programs and services for young people.

credibility of the Ministry of youth is affected by its lack of mechanisms for accountability to young people; in the current framework the ministry is accountable to the President rather than the young people. Although it can be argued that Nigeria's democratic system of governance allows for political accountability via elections, young people are known not to participate in the electoral process.

Chapter 4 Youth Unemployment and the Vision 20: 2020 Agenda

4.1 Introduction

Though young people in Nigeria make up 60% of the population they have also been most affected by the unavailability of employment opportunities. Policy-makers are fully aware that, if left unchecked, youth unemployment poses a serious threat to the Nigerian society in terms of security and economic development of the country. This chapter discusses youth unemployment in the light of Vision 20:2020 agenda and the discrepancy between reality and aspirations of policy. To make this discrepancy vivid, the chapter will presents the data gathered during fieldwork on the different views held by policy-makers, employers and the young people themselves, showing sharp differences between the generations about the causes of youth unemployment. The emerging picture is that, beyond the issues raised previously about the institutional framework of youth employment promotion, the conflicting perceptions that prevails between youth and adults could hinder the chances of success of the vision 20:2020 agenda since they express more apathy, antagonism rather than co-operation, on issues that must be seriously pursued further by those in charge of youth unemployment.

4.2 Youth Unemployment in Nigeria

4.2.1 Overview of unemployment in Nigeria

Nigeria's unemployment can be grouped under two categories: those that lost their jobs through retrenchment, redundancy or bankruptcy and then the younger unemployed youths, majority of whom have never been employed (Okafor, 2011). Out of 80 million Nigerian youths, 64 million are unemployed and a further 1.6 million are under-employed; representing 82% of the youth population as either unemployed or underemployed (Aluede, 2012). It is interesting to point out that the statistics on unemployment in Nigeria does not consist of only uneducated rural groups "uprooted by their failing agricultural production resulting from an absence of mechanisation and decreasing incomes, but also of some very highly educated populations, "who are normally core of the productive vanguard in a developing country" (Obumneke, 2012). Take University graduates for instance, 130,000 students graduate from institutions of higher learning but it is estimated that only 10% of these graduates are able to find jobs in the formal economy (Aluede, 2012); the other 90% are absorbed by the informal economy or join the ever-growing list of unemployed graduates.

Official data from the central bank of Nigeria stated that the rate of unemployment averaged 3.7% in the period between 1990 and 2002; implying that unemployment was not a problem during this period (Adawo & Ukpo, 2012). This claim is disputed by institutions like the Economic Frontier Research Group (EFRG) and the National Institute for Social and Economic Research (NISER); based on their research, they claimed unemployment was 37%

and 72.1% respectively. Adawo & Ukpo (2012) believes that given the rampant nature of unemployment in Nigeria, the 72.1% estimate is more likely to represent the actual unemployment situation in Nigeria. In 2012, the National Bureau of Statistics stated that unemployment was 23.9% however this figure is also disputed by scholars that claim the government is deliberately reporting low figures because of the positive image that presents to the international community (Adawo & Ukpo, 2012).

4.2.2 Factors contributing to youth unemployment: a literature review

Four factors have been identified as having impacts on unemployment in Nigeria; namely: poor education system, the imbalanced economy, the neglect of local technologies and industries and corruption. From a historical perspective, many scholars have emphasized a faulty education system as a major contributing factor for unemployment in developing countries[28] (Adawo & Ukpo 2012; Obumneke, 2012). The the case of Nigeria, Scholars like Adawo & Ukpo (2012) and Obumneke (2012) have blamed the Nigerian education system for promoting unemployment. Obumneke (2012) paints a picture of a dysfunctional education system, incapable of equipping graduates with the appropriate tools to contribute meaningfully to society or gain self-employment. The education system is inadequate due to an outdated curriculum, insufficient investment in academic infrastructure (including schools and classrooms) and learning materials like text-books etc., while teachers are regularly owed their meagre salaries, for months at a time (Obumneke, (2012). Adawo & Ukpo (2012) claims that Nigerian graduates are "quarter baked" and possess questionable skill sets; this assertion was confirmed by Depo Oyedokun, the Chairman of the House Committee on Youth and Social Development who revealed that "of the over 64 million unemployed youths in the country, 23 million are unemployable" (Nwanguma, 2012). This raises serious questions on how these young people can be re-trained with new skill- sets that are useful to them but also sought after by employers.

The second factor affecting unemployment is the imbalanced nature of the economy. Social researcher Art Hansen (1977), carried out research on the root causes of unemployment in west African countries; one of his major findings was that, these countries attempted to shift from an agricultural to industrial based economies; most countries failed to achieve this shift because there was not effective planning and investment of the resources received during 1970's, when commodity prices were high. Due to this failure in planning, most African countries now have monolithic economics, supported by a single resource, sector of the economy (Chukwuka, 2013).

Since oil was discovered in the 1970's, the Nigerian government increasingly focused its attention on this sector; the total economic output subsequently increased with the development of the oil sector. However, there has

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[28] For example, Rodney's (1972) work on the efficacy of post-independence educational systems in Africa concluded that the system left behind by colonial powers was non-functional. He argued that the system was over-reliant on theory and did not give students the practical skills needed for immediate employment.

also been a corresponding increase in unemployment, as less attention is given to other sectors of the economy. Looking at Nigeria's economic history, the agricultural sector was the mainstay of the Nigerian economy prior the discovery of oil; it employed over 60% of the Nigerian workforce (Obumneke, 2012). Currently, the oil sector is biggest contributor of the Nigerian economy and accounted for 65% of the Nigerian government revenue in 2012 but currently employs only 1.2% of the workforce (OPEC, 2013). Obumneke (2012) contends that unemployment in Nigeria has risen steadily as the oil industry in Nigeria grew. He explains this by highlighting the low employment capacity of the oil sector, and in addition, the skills required in the industry are highly specialised and above the skill set of many Nigerians (Obumneke, 2012). These (specialised skill sets), represents a barrier to entry for Nigerians into the oil sector, this directly affects unemployment. The qualifications needed for the sector are expensive and not readily available locally; explaining why companies in the sector prefer to employ foreign trained Nigerians or expatriate staff, further adding to the unemployment problem.

The decline of local technologies and manufacturing contributes to unemployment. In his study of unemployment, Lampman posits that the degree of unemployment in developing countries is affected because governments have abandoned local technologies; did not patronise local companies and tolerated the very high reparation of profits by foreign companies; who did not contribute to infrastructure development and human capital (Chukwuka, 2013). According to the National Bureau of Statistics, manufacturing in Nigeria currently makes up 4% of national GDP; the sector collapsed during the 1980's after the liberalisation of the Nigerian economy, one of the conditions of the structural adjustment programs. The local industries were unable to compete with cheaper more advanced products that were imported leading to decline of the sector (Anyanwu, 1992). The manufacturing sector is very important because of the economic value it adds to the country, another benefit is the employment it generates. The unemployment problem in Nigeria has been further compounded by the collapse of this critical sector (Adawo & Ukpo, 2012); to remedy this problem, the Nigerian government in 2009 passed the Local Content Act, as part of the Vision 20:2020 agenda to promote and stimulate Nigerian manufacturing sector. ; Thus far, significant progress has not been recorded in the manufacturing sector despite the introduction of LCA.

The final factor affecting unemployment in Nigeria is corruption; it is endemic in all aspects of Nigerian society (Okafor, 2011). Achebe (1982) did a comparative analysis of Nigeria titled: "The trouble with Nigeria", in this study, he claimed that public officials were solely motived by self-interest; this leads to a system were public officials regularly abused their power and authority for personal gain. The prevalence of corruption in Nigeria has meant the diversion of funds that would have been invested in education, healthcare and the infrastructure (transportation, power etc.) which improves the business environment, encourages Foreign Direct Investments (FDI's) and promotes job creation. In a recent survey by Transparency International, Nigeria ranked 172 out of 215 countries survey that was measuring corruption in the public service. Furthermore Nwokwu (2012) claims that since independence, about $400 bil-

lion have been stolen from the Nigerian government's[29] resources. 4.2.3. Implications of Unemployment for Nigeria

The implications of unemployment are diverse. Here, two main areas are brought into focus: security and the economy. Agnes (2010) indicates that "unemployment dehumanises the unemployed and causes partial or total loss of esteem among peers"; typically this allows them to be easily exploited. The low esteem and psychological-fragility pervasive among the unemployed young people is exploited by gangs and politicians. Gangs can restore their self-esteem with the camaraderie they provide them (young people) while the politicians have financial rewards that can provide a false sense of self-esteem (Agnes, 2010).

The French based global news network "the Observer" published a report in 2008 claiming that, young people in Nigeria are increasingly becoming frustrated due to the rampant-poverty and unemployment. They posit that this frustration has resulted in re-emergence of street urchins known as "area boys" and Almajiri's, who "target the very society that alienates them" (Nwanguma, 2012). Furthermore, a survey was conducted on the socio-economic characteristics of various armed militant groups in Nigeria including: MEND, O ódua People's Congress (OPC) and Egbesu Boys; from the results, "40% of the group composition were in the 16 - 17 year-old age group, 10% were in the 18 - 19 year-old age group, 20% in the 20 - 21 year-old age group and a further 20% between the ages of 20 – 23 the remaining 10% where comprised of people 24 and above. Approximately 60% of them were unemployed" (Nwanguma, 2012). There is a growing sense of insecurity in Nigeria across the major cities; violent crimes like: kidnappings, armed robberies and car snatching are now commonplace especially in urban unemployment is most pronounced. Frustrated young people have resorted to illegal means to cater for their needs and that of their families.

Youths have also been used by "others[30]" to perpetuate violence in purse of their interest;(Egbuna, 2013) said

"the utilization and manipulation of unemployed ignorant youths to perpetuate post-election violence in 2011 adjudged free and fair by the international community but claimed over 500 lives and displaced over 15,000 in 5 States across the North is a clear indication of an attempt to use the category 'youths' to bring democracy to a brink and destabilise the Nation" (Egbuna, 2013).

The poverty and desperation faced by the Nigerian youth, makes them easy recruits for terrorists like Boko Haram in the North who are destroying lives and properties with increasing frequency. In Southern Nigeria, youths are the foot soldiers engaged in the militancy engulfing the Niger-Delta region in Nigeria. They are involved in the destruction of oil infrastructure like pipelines, kidnappings of local and expatriate oil workers for ransom and on several occasions, become hired guns for political or business assassinations (Okafor, 2011). The militarization of these young people originates with the idea that

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[29]   Read   more: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2387359/Nigeria-country-corrupt-better-burn-aid-money.html#ixzz2jyQsRIz3

[30] Others here are suspected to be politicians who use youth to further their political aspirations by intimidation and other electoral related crimes.

youths constitute a 'potential' commodity that can be plundered alongside natural resources and public fund to serve the agenda of warfare (Nwanguma, 2012). For the street youth however, the warfare is that of survival and making ends meet.

There has been an increase in social vices like; prostitution, drug-abuse, drug-dealing, alcoholism, gambling etc. An examination of those apprehended show that the large majority are unemployed youth (Agnes, 2010). Although they are willing and able to work, there are no jobs available; they resort to vices to deal with the shame of being unemployed by drinking or drug abuse; others engage in drug dealing and prostitution as alternative source of income. All these activities if left unchecked will affect the economy and continue the cycle of youth unemployment (Okafor, 2011. The insecurity and the disruption of production it will inevitably cause will be detrimental to the Nigerian economy, since oil production is its biggest component.

4.3 The vision 20:2020 agenda

4.3.1 Background and context of the Vision 20:2020 agenda

The Nigerian government in attempting to solve poverty, unemployment and other societal ills designed and adopted the Vision 20:2020 agenda. The Vision 20:2020 agenda is a strategic 10 year development plan, conceived by the government of Shehu Musa YarÁdua in 2007. The main objective of the Vision 20:2020 plan is for Nigeria to become a member of the G-20, i.e. among the top twenty economies in the world. The fundamental values underpinning the Nigerian Vision 2020 agenda is "the productivity and well-being of the Nigerian people" (National Working Commitee, 2010). This value provides the framework for the Vision 20:2020 policy practice that aims to; optimise the national resources for economic growth, which brings social and economic development. The Federal government, aware of the crucial role of the market in facilitating economic development, pledged to improve the efficiency and competitiveness of the Nigerian market. The plan was to adopt modern technologies to increase transparency and innovation, modernise the infrastructure (roads, ports, airports power supply etc.) and improve governance and accountability structures (Nationa Working Commitee, 2010). This would lay the ground to facilitate market efficiency, and to effectively coordinate the different sectors.

To spur this economic growth, the government proposed diversifying, modernising and growing the Nigerian economy by 2020, the output in terms of GDP would grow from $170billion to $900billion, the global benchmark (Aloy, 2010). The government claims that its efforts at economic diversification and growth will create productive work[31], which results in increased employment and income opportunities particularly for young people; this will bring about a significant reduction in the overall levels of poverty in Nigeria (Nwogu, 2009) 4.3.2 The Vision 20:2020 debate

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[31] According to the National technical working group, productive work refers to improved job and income opportunities for Nigerians.

There are diverging opinions by scholars about Nigeria's vision 20:2020 agenda. Supporters of the neo-liberal policies like Edward (2012), asserts that rapid economic growth measured by growth in GDP, per-capita national income and declining unemployment, is the key to reducing poverty and facilitating development. These are similar to claims made by government about its Vision 20:2020 agenda. Edwards posits out that, economic growth can reduce poverty in two ways: by increasing the productivity of the economy and by pursing a broad based economic strategy. He asserts that by pursing a broad based strategy, there will be improved job and income opportunities, which will help people, find jobs and escape poverty (Edward, 2012).

Another group of scholars contend that the underlying logic behind the Vision 20:2020 is flawed. They question the government's assertion that economic growth always results in job creation. Aloy (2010) noted that between 2000 and 2007, Nigeria had consistent economic growth of 5.7% per annum, however there was not corresponding job creation (Aloy, 2010). He argues that the economic growth recorded during 2000-2007 was because of better fiscal management and the cancellation of the debt by donors. Respected Nigerian economist Pat Utomi contributes further by questioning the role of the Nigerian elites in promoting productive work and job creation. He said that

"Typical Nigerian elites are more adept at making money than at creating jobs and wealth. Money could be made in a network of capital transfer without generating genuine growth. The Nigerian elites have learned the technique of circulating money without a talent for creating new wealth" Pat Utomi (2007).

Erhagbe is another scholar that questioned the Vision 20:2020 agenda. He asserted that the Vision 20:2020 agenda was simply a remodelling of the structural adjustment programs that failed miserably when implemented in 1986 (Erhagbe, 2012). He argues that the institutional framework that promotes economic growth is not entrenched in Nigeria; he says that corruption is rife, and distorted the efficient functioning of the market. In addition, the rule of law isn't paramount and always respected in Nigeria; he asserts that, these among other factors prevented the SAP from being a success. He concluded by saying: "the Nigerian economy is still mono-cultural; moving from over-dependence of agriculture to overdependence on crude petroleum, realizing the goals of the vision requires not only increasing the size of the economy but creating a transparent and efficient institutional environment for the economy to flourish" (Erhagbe, 2012:104).

It is evident that the government relies heavily on aggregates when designing and planning the Vision 20:2020 agenda. These aggregates fail to identify the social realities of youths who have different needs (Mietzner & Reger, 2005). For example, in the urban centres, youth predominantly are employed by the informal sector doing petty trading, hawking etc. while in rural areas youth are more involved in farming; in this example, both sets of young people have different needs; however, the government persistent use of aggregates in development planning, makes the different needs young people have harder to identify (Mietzner & Reger, 2005). The supporters and the detractors of the Vision 20:2020 agenda, fail to identify youth as an important resource in the development process. The "Youth" voice is absent from the decision making process even though they constitute 60% of the Nigerian population; the lack of participation by young people could have unintended consequences that could hinder the success of the Vision 20:2020.

Conflicting perceptions between the different stakeholders is one unintended consequence of an institutional framework that excludes certain stakeholders from the decision making process; mutual distrust, negative labelling, and a general ignorance to each other's realities are created between them (Rotgak, 1994). These contribute to build a toxic environment that restricts an effective collaborative effort between the different stakeholders. This negative environment will hinder the overall chances of success of any policy initiative (Rotgak, 1994). In the next section of the chapter, this research paper outlines different perceptions that adults and young people have about the factors that influence unemployment in Nigeria.

4.4 Perception of "Youth" and the employment process in Nigeria: Some snap shots

This section presents the data gathered during field work conducted in Abuja –the capital city — on how young people, officials from the Ministry of Youth Development, NGOs and business people perceive the causes of youth unemployment. All the respondents are involved directly or indirectly, in providing or facilitating youth employment. The data is separated into 2 categories. The first category covers the voices of adults (4 formal interviews with officials from the Ministry of Youth Development, 3 interviews with NGOs, and 2 interviews with private business owners). The second category covers young people's voices, gathered by means of a survey involving 65 respondents implemented during the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) camp in June 2013[32]. In addition to the survey, informal interviews with 12 participants in the camp were also conducted. Bringing people's voices into the picture helps contrast the statistical interpretations which can mask individual subjective realities and perceptions, which can play a role[33]. Understanding people's perception allows for better insight about why people act the way they do, how they feel about certain policies, and their responses to it. Likewise, understanding the perceptions of the different stakeholders is important for policy design because their fears and concerns will be addressed or considered. Moreover, doing so will increase the legitimacy and acceptability of the policy and improve its chances of success.

4.4.1 Youth Unemployment and its Causes: Perspectives of Officials, NGOs and Owners of Private Business

The officials from the Ministry, NGOs and private businesses identified three major causes of unemployment in Nigeria, they are: (1) Bad attitudes by young people (2) Weak economy (3) Poor infrastructure. The negative views regarding young people held by officials point to two main areas of concern,

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[32] The camp is a mandatory youth program for all Nigerian University graduates, where young people are expected to live together in the camp and are given cultural civic and leadership training for three weeks

[33] The Webster dictionary defines perceptions as the mental images a person has about idea or a concept; this mental image plays a role in shaping the individuals future attitudes and behaviour

namely young people's unrealistic ambitions and their bad work ethic, which make them unattractive candidates for jobs that are available, further contributing to the unemployment problem.

A respondent from an NGO involved with young people's issues states that the biggest problem that he has to contend with is managing young people's expectations about the future; this is because they have aspirations and goals that are unrealistic. He said:

> „*in Nigeria, our youths now aspire for impractical, unsustainable things; they all want to own big houses, fly on private jets and yachts and drive sports cars but if you ask them how do you intend getting this, they cannot give you any reasonable answer*", (respondent 1)

He continued that that these tendencies are warped ambitions and has played an important role in the rise of crimes like internet fraud, armed robberies and kidnapping. According to him, in seeking to achieve their impractical ambitions, young people turn to criminal activities, which is for them a faster route to the lifestyle they want. The failure to manage young people aspirations, in his view, will affect their attitudes towards certain types of jobs which they assume are beneath their standards.

An official from the Ministry of Youth confirmed this view, referring to several instances when job positions had been advertised by his Ministry and very few young people applied for the positions. In his words:

> "*Young people have developed a negative attitude to low paying jobs; they don't believe these jobs will allow them the lifestyle they want*" (Respondent 2)

The jobs were not attractive to young people because of the pay is at level of the minimum wage. Most applicants were older women, many of who did not meet the employment criteria[34]. Young people chose not apply as these jobs are deemed beneath their social standing. Overall youth unemployment in Nigeria may have been exacerbated by this negative attitude.

In addition, poor work ethic seems to prevail. One of the respondents, the owner of an embroidery business said that:

> "*young people these days aren't interested in working hard anymore; they are simply looking for quick money and a flashy lifestyle*".(respondent 3)

She also stated that she preferred employing people from the neighbouring countries like Benin, Chad and Mali to work in her shop; they are more hardworking and eager to learn than their Nigerian counterparts.

This view is resonated by the perspective of an official from the Ministry of Youth who said he did not believe that Nigerian youths had the mentality and culture of working hard. In his words:

> "*they are not interested in trainings and workshops, and when equipment are given to them after the workshop, most of them end up selling the equipment instead of using it to work and earn a living*". (Respondent 4)

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[34] Educational qualification : Senior school certificate and age criteria: Below 40 years old.

According to him, the government attributed this problem[35] to "bad values" among Nigerian youths. More broadly, the negative attitudes and poor work ethic of young people in Nigeria seems to make employers hesitant to employ young people. To rectify this, the government has introduced a values re-orientation program as a compulsory component of all future government youth initiatives. This program is intended to impact behavioural change on young people, provide civic education and alter their attitudes to work. The government believes that this will change young people attitudes to work, improving their chances of finding and keeping employment. It is impossible to know the success of this scheme as it was introduced in January 2013.

The weak state of the Nigerian economy is another area related to youth unemployment of concern. As few sectors are thriving, there are limited amount of jobs available for young people. An official from the Ministry said, in smaller states in Nigeria, there are very few employment opportunities, especially for young people. He explained that the government has historically focused its attention on the oil sector, ignoring other areas. The respondents attributed the weak economy to, the government's failure to develop other sectors of the economy which would have provided new employment opportunities. This assertion by the adults supports the claims by scholars like (Hansen (1977) Obumneke (2012), who have warned of the dangers of monolithic economies. Obumneke (2012) was particularly critical about the Nigerian government's over-reliance on the oil sector; he concluded that Nigeria will continue to experience social problems like crime and poverty, since the government has failed to adopt policies that open up other sectors of the economy and create jobs for young people.

Poor infrastructural network is the last factor raised by the respondents as contributing to unemployment. It poses serious challenges to doing business in the country, thus affecting employment opportunities. One of the respondents, a business woman, spent approximately 2% of her profits on fuelling electricity generators that provided power for her company; she claims that this extra expense makes it difficult for her business to expand and employ more people. Another respondent said that multi-national companies like Shell and Elf had gradually started divesting their investments in Nigeria; citing weak infrastructure as one reason. The adults all agreed that, the infrastructural challenges were caused by corrupt government officials stealing government revenue instead of investing in public infrastructure that encourages business.

This resonates with the views of scholars like Achebe (1982), who claims that corruption was the biggest factor contributing to unemployment in Nigeria. According to Achebe, public officials had systematically looted the country's finances and prevented sufficient investment in critical areas of the economy (Chukwuka, 2013). Other scholars like Nwokwu (2012) contended that there has been a collaboration between the politicians, local and foreign business people, to steal Nigerian resources which could have been invested in infrastructure and the economy creating an environment that is conducive for business; which invariably will create more jobs.

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[35] (negative attitudes to menial jobs and poor work ethics)

4.4.2 Young people's perspective on unemployment:

The results of the survey conducted at the youth camp and individual interviews show that young people designated the Nigerian government as the main contributor to youth unemployment. They identified two biggest factors contributing to unemployment in Nigeria today as (1) Inefficient Government and (2) the unfair employment process. To them, the government had failed in its responsibility to provide stability in the economy which is capable of absorbing the young Nigerians into the labour force. They attribute these failings to a history of poor leadership by the Nigerian government. Successive Nigerian governments have attempted to diversify the economy; however, none has been successful thus far. One respondent said:

> *"our leaders do not know what they are doing; they are all concerned about self-enrichment and ethnic politics instead of concentrating on fixing the economy so it is capable of creating jobs for us".* (respondent 5).

Young people identified corruption within the government as being a major obstacle in tackling the unemployment problem.

Table 5: Survey responses about factors that affect unemployment

Response options	**Question:** The Nigerian government is responsible for unemployment
Agree	27
Strongly Agree	35
Neither	0
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1
Total	65

Most believe that critical infrastructure like power, transportation and the education systems have all been compromised because of corruption; and as a consequence, businesses are not able to operate as easily as they should, which has implications for how many people they can employ.

The second factor affecting unemployment in Nigeria, particularly for young people is the employment process. The employment process refers to the process of identifying, applying and getting a job. Young people believe that this process is very unfair, and this discourages many of them from applying for formal sector jobs in the first place. One respondent said that "applying for a job in the public service is a waste of time because they already knew who they would hire", insinuating that the recruitment process is fixed. They believe that factors like family prestige, wealth and social status improve the chances of finding employment, which is unfair as majority of young people do not have these which seem to be the prerequisite for finding employment. The tables below show the responses of young people to questions pertaining to unemployment process.

Table 6: Survey responses about connections as a factor that influences employment

Responses	Connections are important to finding Jobs
Agree	16
Strongly Agree	46
Disagree	1
Blank Responses	2
Total	63

Responses	Social Status affects your ability to find employment
Agree	22
Strongly Agree	41
Neither	1
Disagree	1
Strongly Disagree	-
Total	65

Table 7: Survey responses about social status as a factor influencing employment

Table 8: Survey Responses about qualifications as a factor that influences employment

Responses	Qualifications are important to get a good job
Agree	5
Strongly Agree	10
Neither	-
Disagree	29
Strongly Disagree	21
Total	65

From the table's presented above, young people do not believe that merit and competency are necessary prerequisites to getting employment in Nigeria; instead connections, family status and wealth are vital. Many of the respondents believe that they will be better of starting their own businesses to make an income, instead of depending on finding employment either in the public or private sector. This agrees with Chukwuebuka (2011) who said; young people had rejected the employment process in Nigeria; he said that, although a lot of young people in Nigeria are unemployed, they are not actively looking for employment; they would rather hustle on their own, look for informal jobs or turn to illegal activities, he concluded by saying that young people do not believe they can get a job if they do not have the right connections.

4.3 Concluding remarks

There is a consensus in the responses of young people and the officials about unemployment being caused by structural economic issues (poor infrastructural network, monolithic economy and corruption of public officials). Differences of opinion between the two categories (officials and young people) hinge on how they perceive each other. The officials strongly believe that unemployment was further exacerbated by young people's negative attitude to work and bad work ethic, a view also supported by business. Young people on the other hand believe that getting a job in the formal sector is ridden with biased practices of selection, requiring connections and prestigious social status. The conflicting perception between adults and young people increases the complexity of resolving the issue of youth unemployment; because, under the Youth Policy of Vision 2020 agenda, the officials, the business sector and young people are in general charged with providing solutions for social problems. The singling out the attitudes of young people and their work ethic as a major problem, without a dialogue with young people can intensify the conflict of perceptions. Young people do not believe their attitude to work is the problem; they rather see the unfair employment process as the issue. They are likely less receptive to the values-orientation programme recently introduced by the government, as they are not convinced about its relevance. It can be said that the distance between the government position on youth unemployment and that of young people could be bridged if there were recognition by those in charge of youth policy about the need for a space for structural interaction young people and adults to learn from each other lived experiences (Spence, 2005). This kind of interaction will promote better understanding of the realities and issues each group must face. Including young people in the decision making process will allow them share their concerns about the employment process, and the necessary steps and policies needed to address the situation.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

The original objectives of this research were (1) to explore the concept of "youth" as conceived at national and supranational level and how it shapes the policy environment of "youth and development" in Nigeria (2) to examine the prevailing differences of perceptions between the generations about "young people" and unemployment in the capital city Abuja. The study used the theoretical conception of youth and youth policies as the analytical base of the study. The fieldwork phase of the research included both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (interviews) research techniques.

5.2 Major Findings

The major finding of this research can be separated into three categories, they include: (1) Conception of youth (2) The effects of this on the policy environment (3) Conflicting perceptions between generations on 'young people' and 'unemployment' in Abuja.

5.2.1 Conception of youth

The research shows that the experience of youth is context dependent; and not universal. The prevailing economic, political and social situation, society impacts on how youth is conceived by the society. Historically there has been a dual conceptualisation of young people and this has given justified governments intervention in young people's issues. Furthermore more the research has shown that the concept of youth and youth policy can be conceptualised as a categorical or relational concept. The dominant conception of youth is relational as promoted in by supra-national intuitions like the UN and AU; however, youth is still conceptualised as a categorical concept in Nigeria.

5.2.2 Effects of this conception on the Policy Environment

The 90's witnessed the emergence of the Positive Youth Development Framework as the new approach adopted by supra national institutions and governments in tackling youth issues. The effect of this approach is that young people are actively engaged in the policy process; the approach also commits government to show its commitment to young people by investing sufficient resources in young people affairs. In Nigeria, because of the categorical approach to youth and youth policy, there is minimal interaction and engagement of young people in decision making. Furthermore young people issues are not a priority for the government explaining the miserly investment of 1.65% of the national budget youth affairs despite them making up 60% of the population.

5.2.3 Perception between generations on young people and unemployment

There is consensus between generations that unemployment is caused by structural economic issues like the monolithic economic, poor infrastructural network and corruption by public officials. The differences in perceptions between the generations hinges on how they perceive each other. This can be explained by the gap between expectation and achievement that currently exists between generations due to their different realities and experiences.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Interview respondents codified

- Respondent 1: Ngo official
- Respondent 2 First Official from the ministry of youth development
- Respondent 3 Business woman owner of an Embroidery store
- Respondent 4 Second official from the Ministry of youth Development
- Respondent 5 Young person interviewed at the camp
- Respondent 6 Young Person interviewed at the NYSC camp

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