

INFLUENCE OF YOUTH ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGE IN KAKAMEGA MUNICIPALITY SINCE INDEPENDENCE

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ABSTRACTS

Socio-economic transformation among the youth falls into three periods namely the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial phases. The study objective was to establish the influence of the youth on socio-economic change since independence. The study employed a descriptive research design. The sample was taken from Kakamega Municipality. It comprised included 30 informants, all above 18 years. The informants included 15 youths and 15 youth leaders. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to select the informants. The study used primary data where the interview schedule was used to collect data. A qualitative technique was used to analyze the data. The study was guided by the critical social theory of youth empowerment, a perspective that is oriented towards critiquing and changing society as a whole. The study established that the youth participated in activities such as environmental conservation, business enterprise and capacity-building, cultural and cross-cutting issues, and that youth activity was geared towards solving economic, social, environmental, and political challenges facing them. The findings will provide additional material to the scanty existing literature on youth socio-economic transformation and also information that governments and donors need in enhancing youth's participation in development in Kenya and globally, with a view to creating a safe environment and encouraging meaningful participation and engagement of the youths in the community.

Keywords: Socio-economic, Change

1.0 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Youth are one of the greatest assets that any nation can have and therefore, need to be developed and empowered. Not only are they legitimately regarded as the future leaders, but they are, potentially and actually the greatest investment for a country's development (the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). The youth are also the core of a nation's future, yet this significant stakeholder is rarely involved in poverty reduction strategies, environmental planning, and sustainable urban development (United Nations, 2004).

The Kenyan state's attempts to address the problem of youth unemployment have largely been guided by a vision that neither addresses the livelihoods needs nor meets the 'real' expectations of young people (Bennell, 2000; Mkandawire, 1996). As a result of the situation, the Government has cooperated issues to do with Youths and empowerment as seen

in Kenyan Constitution (2010) Many observers attribute this to the failure by many African governments to come up with comprehensive youth policies and institutional frameworks. Indeed, Bennell (2000) wonders why a continent that has such a huge population of young people accords low priority to their livelihoods. Available evidence shows that very few African countries have come up with what can reasonably be called a 'comprehensive national youth policy that specifically seeks to address the concerns and needs of their young people within the context of national development plans or broad macroeconomic policies. Nonetheless, some African countries, especially Anglophone countries, have come up with explicit national youth policies.

Bennell (2000) explains that only exceptionally are the youth policy documents based on a detailed and comprehensive analysis of youth livelihoods and the social and political aspirations of young people. Significantly, most of the policies lack a coherent strategy, which is properly integrated with national development policy and, in particular, sectoral policies and poverty reduction programs. Fryers and Collings (1991) observe that even where youth policies exist, most of the provisions seem to originate in adults' perceptions of youth 'concerns' and 'needs'. Young people have generally only been marginally involved in the formulation of a national youth policy. This means that many youth policies are designed with youth as 'subjects' and not 'objects' of policy.

Therefore, the youth being the backbone of the society have the potential energy that when utilized will bring high-quality output in different sectors. After independence, Kenya still faced challenges such as unemployment, poverty, and inequality which mostly affected and continue to affect, the youths of this country who constitute two-thirds of the total population (Kenya Economic Report 2010). During this era, drastic changes were anticipated changes for the better, and changes that would bring a difference from the colonial period.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In 1964, the government started the National Youth Service to empower the youth with relevant skills to participate in various sectors of the economy and has supported it up to date. To address the situation the NARC (National Rainbow Coalition) government instituted a wide range of policy reforms and in the process empowered the youths who are the majority. The coalition government also initiated and implemented a draft of sound policies and reform frameworks that included the flagship vision 2030. Despite these efforts, youth unemployment has continued to be a major challenge in Kenya. Besides this, existing literature has largely been devoid of the socio-economic activities that young people are engaged in and the unique defining nature of these activities as an alternative to formal employment. Youths in Africa still do have problems in taking any other activity apart from formal employment seriously. Hence the study, therefore, sought to establish the influence of youth on socio-economic change in Kakamega Municipality, Western after independence.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine socio-economic transformation among the youth in Kakamega Municipality after independence.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

To establish the influence of youth on socio-economic change in Kakamega Municipality since independence.

1.4 Assumptions of the study

The study assumed that youth socio-economic activities can directly be businesses, employment-based activities, or professional youth activities- which require youth to be equipped with some specialized kind of knowledge.

1.5 Scope of the study

The study focused on the influence of youth on socio-economic change in Kakamega Municipality since independence. The study covered the year 1963 to 2012. The year 1963 marked Kenya's independence when the five-year economic planning was adopted. In 1964, the government started the National Youth Service to empower the youth with relevant skills to participate in various sectors of the economy and has supported it up to date. The study was geographically based in Kakamega Municipality.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the critical social theory of youth empowerment (Campbell, 1991). It is theory-oriented towards critiquing and changing society as a whole. The main goal of critical social theory is the improvement of the human condition. Critical social theory of youth empowerment focuses on the promotion of community actions and social justice. The theory is suitable for this study because it focuses on the promotion of community actions and social justice. Critical youth economic empowerment (CYE) encompasses those processes and contexts through which youth engage in actions that create change in organizational, institutional, and societal policies, structures, values, norms, and images. CYE promotes self-, collective-, and political efficacy through youth-led community engagements that focus on sociopolitical change (Wallerstein, Sanchez-Merki, & Verlade, 2005). Socially integrating youth in responsible roles with shared power encourages community development that better serves not only the needs of youth but potentially the needs of all community members (Zeldin, Camino & Calvert, 2004).

2.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive research survey design. This design was useful to the study which sought to make a dynamic account of the past youth activities that communicated about the present and the future.

2.2 The Study Location

The study focused on Kakamega Municipality in Western Kenya, which covers an area of 417.4km² with a population of 160,229 persons and a population of 220,100 youths aged between 18-25 years old (Kenya National Census Report, 2009). Kakamega is a town in Western Kenya located about 30km north of the Equator. It is the headquarters of Kakamega County which is Kenya's second-most populous county after Nairobi. Kakamega County has a population of 1,660,651 persons and covers a surface area of 3,051 Km² with a population density of 544 people per Km²

2.3 Sampling Technique and Sampling procedure

Purposive sampling was used to identify 15 youths. Snowball sampling was used to capture 15 youth leaders that were knowledgeable enough on issues that were being discussed in the research topic. The researcher considered important factors such as age, gender, a command of historical knowledge, and geographical distribution in the Municipality.

2.4 Data collection instruments

The study employed interview schedules and historical document analysis to collect data. The interview was administered to 15 youths from the Municipality.

2.5 Validity and Reliability

An interview schedule was used to interview the 15 youth leaders. The interview schedules made it possible to obtain data required to meet the specific objectives of the study. The method offered the flexibility of sensing whether the questions had been fully answered. In such a case, a follow-up question was introduced on the spot. It also helped to standardize the interview such that the interviewer could ask the same questions in the same manner. According to Drew, Hardman, and Hart (1996), the advantage of the interview techniques is that it enables the participants to enlighten the researcher about unfamiliar aspects of the setting and situation. Although the interview method is one of the most expensive methods of data collection it had one advantage of completeness and accuracy.

Validity refers to the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences made based on results obtained. The content and face validity of the instruments were addressed. Content validity enables data being collected to be reliable in representing the specific content of a particular concept. An instrument that will yield valid data is designed and then subjected to subjects of similar samples; inferences are then made and compared to the existing theories. Content validity was established on three levels. The researcher critically considered each item to ascertain if it is a real representation of the desired content and to see if it would measure what it was supposed to measure. Developed instruments were then presented to the research experts to evaluate the applicability and appropriateness of the content, clarity, and adequacy of items in the instrument from a research perspective. The instruments were then presented to a randomly selected number of youths to ensure content clarity. Upon completion of the pilot study, the data were reviewed and the items that were clear were modified accordingly. Content validity was determined to establish representation of the items with respect to the objectives of the study (Saleemi, 2011).

According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), the reliability of instruments chosen is based on the extent to which the instrument or instruments employed measure what they are supposed to measure. The reliability analysis is used to test consistency of respondents' answers to all the items of independent and dependent variables in the questionnaire, whether the items are highly correlated with one another or not (Hamidun, 2009).

2.6 Data collection Procedure.

Oral interviews were conducted by the researcher who took relevant notes. This information had to be corroborated with library books, journals, and other unpublished literature. Information was then synthesized and analyzed to produce the findings. Archival research was conducted at the Kenya National Archives (KNA) record office in Kakamega Municipality. Documents on youths were examined. The validity of the information was corroborated using oral interviews and library resources. Oral interviews were conducted by the researcher to cover the 15 youth leaders and 15 youths. During the interview sessions, the researcher took notes. Oral interviews had their shortcomings and had to be corroborated by archival sources to ensure the authenticity of the information. Secondary sources included library materials such as books, journals, theses, and dissertations. The libraries visited included Masinde Muliro University, Moi University, Mount Kenya University, and the National Library at the Kakamega branch. The data collected from these libraries were used to corroborate the findings from oral and archival sources. Information was analyzed to come up with comprehensive work.

The data collected by the historical approach was checked by the process of external criticism which determines the authenticity of the source, internal criticism which determines reliability and accuracy of the information, and positive criticism which assumes that statements made are understood. These were ways of validating historical records. The study proposed the use of corroboration, which is comparing documents to see whether they produce the same information, sourcing which identifies the authors and date of publication, and finally contextualization which identifies when and which event took place. Only then, shall data be deemed ready for historical research analysis (Calmorin and Calmorin, 2008).

2.7 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed by qualitative Qualitative research includes designs, techniques, and measures that do not produce discrete data. Secondary data and library research findings were analyzed while responses from the interview schedule to enable meaningful interpretation and then used to draw conclusions and recommendations

3.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1 Youth and Socio-Economic Transformation 1963-2002

Available evidence in Kakamega municipality (Archival, HB/1/34) shows that, in practice, the actions taken by the government to address the needs of youth have been very limited. In the period 1963 to 2002, there was a low impact of youth influence on the socio-economic change in Kakamega Municipality. Many youths in the area were economically empowered

to enable them to engage in socio-economic change. Most youths did not have abundant finance and resources and this greatly hindered their participation in socio-economic change. Five of the youth leaders who were interviewed indicated that during this period most youths were not economically independent and fully aware of their rights to enable them to raise concerns about their community. This argument agrees with the (Draft of the Kenya National Youth Policy, 2009), which asserted that about 75% of the Kenyan population constitutes an age bracket of thirty years and below which forms the highest source of human resource. However, their status has been placed on the periphery and not accorded due recognition. They have been excluded from designing planning and implementing programs and policies that affect them.”

3.2 Youth Participation in socio-Economic Transformation 2003-2012

However, from 2003 to 2012 they made some slight progress in the development of socio-economic change in Kakamega Municipality. The fifteen youth leaders were in consensus that the youth during this period had an impact on their community socially, economically, and politically. Their main argument was that socio-economically the youths had made an immense contribution to the economy by investing their time in entrepreneurship and the creation of employment. The youth formed youth groups to enable them to get funds from the program which enabled them to undertake their projects which were mainly businesses enterprise such as printing, typing, and photocopy, selling second-hand clothes, boda-boda business, vegetable farming, fish farming, and poultry farming among others. This changed the lives of many youths through improved income and employment as well as opportunities to associate as people with similar interests.

The youth who were interviewed were in consensus that literacy level increased and had made the youth in the Municipality economically independent and fully aware of their rights. In addition, the resources at their disposal enabled them to raise their concerns about their community. The informants affirmed that some of the youth in the Municipality had been educated and were working with different ministries. The youth in Municipality during this period had been able to start businesses, sought leadership in society, and to some extent contributed to social development. The findings agree with (Kilemi, 1999) who asserted that literacy levels improved significantly due to accessibility and proximity to educational facilities. The youths in the Municipality had developed an interest in the community's decision-making process as they were concerned about how such decisions would affect their businesses directly or indirectly. It is worth noting that the youth had contributed to infrastructural development such as roads and other public facilities that had been built and maintained, thanks to the (KKV) kazikwavijana project.

Through the KKV, the youth had come together to construct and repair roads. They also noted that youth in the Municipality through the KKV had drilled boreholes and wells, constructed small water reservoirs and tanks, pipework, and maintained waterworks. The end results include improved health status arising from access to clean water as well as improved livestock production and agricultural output in the case of irrigation projects. Water has spin effects on the development of social amenities (GOK 2013). Starting income-generating projects. Another important objective of most of the groups was given as; starting and

participating in income-generating activities with an aim of eradicating poverty among members.

It is therefore evident that the youth in Kakamega Municipality have played a role in the development of socio-economic change. The interview with the 15 youths revealed that the majority of the informants 88% showed that youth activities had enhanced ease accessibility options to loans and other forms of financing. At the same time, 84% of the informants cited that youth activities had propelled the youth to develop joint action plans for their various activities. While 80% were of the opinion that youth activities increased youth employability as a good avenue for their advancement and empowerment. Moreover 50% were of the opinion that youth had sought leadership in society while 53% were of the opinion that youth contributed to community development. 90% were of the opinion that the youth were preoccupied with activities that enabled them to reduce anti-social activities. The findings agree with other studies by Schuemar and Kobrin (1986), who stated that the socio-economic level of young people determines the prospects of empowering or creating additional livelihood opportunities for them. Consequently, this will determine the level of their participation in community development.

According to World Bank (1994), socio-economic factors can hinder or enhance youth empowerment in development programs at all levels. They affect youth participation in agricultural activities, and information and communication technology. Socio-economic factors determine the extent to which the youth can partake in developing their communities through cultural activities. They constitute the framework that determines the general outcome of youth behaviors and their influence on society at large (World Bank, 1994). Most of the socio-economic factors that affect the youth in development programs are infrastructural facilities, working capital, and standard of education, policy reversals, and systems of taxation, systematic corruption, and violence.

The study observations are in line with previous historical studies affirming that the youth should be provided with opportunities to engage in meaningful activities through which they make an authentic contribution that is essential to critical youth empowerment (CYE) efforts. Participation in youth affairs may provide an opportunity for the youth to learn and practice important leadership and participatory skills such as planning, organizing, oral and written communication and try on different roles and responsibilities. The youth need to engage in activities relevant to their own lives, ones that excite and challenge them and 'count as real' (Heath, 1994). Kim et al. (1998) stressed the notion that activities need to promote underlying competence and intrinsic motivations of youth so that they can test and master their own interests, develop skills, and gain confidence. This observation is in line with the current government initiative of creating jobs for youths from the year 2015-2021 which is ongoing.

To develop and empower the youth for community development participation, the government and other stakeholders (NGOs) must coordinate and organize youth empowerment programs aimed at integrating the youth into the crucial task of community development. Generally, the youth are one of the greatest assets that any nation can have and therefore, need to be developed and empowered. Not only are they legitimately regarded as the future leaders, but they are also, potentially and actually the greatest investment for a country's development. They serve as a good measure of the extent to which a country can

reproduce as well as sustain itself. The extent of their vitality, responsible conduct, and roles in society is positively correlated with the development of their country (Zonal Youth Summits, 2000).

4.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the period 1963 to 2002, there was a low impact of youth influence on the socio-economic change in Kakamega Municipality. Most youths did not have abundant finance and resources and this greatly hindered their participation in socio-economic change. Five of the youth leaders who were interviewed indicated that during this period most youths were not economically independent and fully aware of their rights to enable them to raise concerns about their community. However, their status has been placed on the periphery and not accorded due recognition. They have been excluded from designing planning and implementing programs and policies that affect them.”

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To develop and empower the youth for community development participation, the government and other stakeholders (NGOs) must coordinate and organize youth empowerment programs aimed at integrating the youth into the crucial task of community development. Generally, the youth are one of the greatest assets that any nation can have and therefore, need to be developed and empowered. Not only are they legitimately regarded as the future leaders, but they are also, potentially and actually the greatest investment for a country's development. They serve as a good measure of the extent to which a country can reproduce as well as sustain itself.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The government should fast-track the implementation of youth programs and fasten youth empowerment.

The ministry of Youth should empower Youths by offering them socioeconomic activities that help youths to realize their potential achievements.

6.0 SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Research should be done to establish the role and significance of youth empowerment on rural development

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