

From *Ọpa ego* to *ego mbute*: investigating into the intergenerational crisis of illicit financial quest among the Igbo youth

Evaristus Ifeanacho, (PhD)

Department of Religion and Human Relations
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Abstract

*In the traditional Igbo context, the earning of money is punctuated with patience and hard work and maintenance of one's integrity. The acquisition of wealth depends on how far one has honestly and properly invested his/her energy, resources and talent. No one claimed to be self-sufficient. Everyone needed the help of the other. This virtue of hard work was transmitted in the process of family education. Since the Igbo society was not a closed one thanks to its extended family system, it was therefore community-oriented; and thus everybody cares for the other. To that effect, in business ventures, apprenticeship was highly promoted. Mentoring was fully in vogue. The Ọga (Master) has some ỌmỌ-boi (apprentices) under him who he guides in learning a particular trade. The apprenticeship lasts for years after which, all things being equal, the Ọga settles the nwa-boi (apprentice) with a reasonable sum of money to help him begin his own trade. The nwa-boi based on his acquired trading skill gradually grows in wealth. In that context, acquisition of wealth was dependent on trading skill, patience and doggedness, hence the phrase Ọpa ego (that is, scouting for money) adopted from Ọpa akỌ (scouting for palm kernel nut). Usually scouting for palm kernel in the bush is a painstaking exercise demanding hours of engagement in search of palm kernel which can at times meet with disappointment when one ends up picking akỌ ufulu (palm kernel without the edible nut). This research has the objective of investigating into the sharp transition from Ọpa ego to *ibute ego* (quick money) among our youth and proffer ways of returning to the status quo ante since it is more value-oriented. Our methodology is descriptive and analytical. The researcher will make use of existing literature in this regard; explore into the various contexts that nourish this illicit quest for money and propose way forward.*

Keywords: Youth, Leadership, Diverse contexts, *Ikpa ego*, *Ibute ego*

Introduction

The young people form a formidable part of any society. A society that suffers persistent demographic shortage of young people gradually goes into extinction. That goes to say that the future of any society is fundamentally dependent on its youth. Consequently, that calls for unstoppable effort in the proper and integral education of young people in order to guarantee the tomorrow of the society. Incidentally the young people are the children of their societal environment because they are influenced and groomed consciously or unconsciously by the various environments or contexts within which they grow. The young people that grow up in a “country of one of the world's most traumatized,

pauperized and terrorized people” (Dahiru, 2022, p.32) will surely have the same tapestry of contagious ills in their process of growth. Aware of the fact that the future of humanity depends on how formidably the young people are founded on sound moral and Christian values, the onus lies on those occupy the mantle of leadership not to dash their hope against the wall of immoral conduct and hopelessness.

The Igbo traditional set up of the earlier generation places high premium on integrity and training of young people. The extended family system makes the training of children a joint affair. Everyone takes part in it. No one turns aside in the sight of misbehavior; rather a child is instantly corrected or even punished by anyone that is present in the occasion of any misconduct. The parents usually thoroughly cross-examine a child that comes home with any foreign item. Such a child must explain every detail of how he came about such item. Where he/she is unable to give a reasonable explanation, he/she is mandated to return the item to its owner. This is the usual Igbo context in the training of young people. At the early time, many parents did not see the importance of education especially for their male children. Consequently, some easily sent out their young children to business apprenticeship (*igba boi/igba odibo/imu-ahia*) in order to be guided by their master (Oga) in learning a trade with the aim of being stabilized in a particular trade after few years. Later, there was emphasis on education and many embraced education and enrolment to *igba boi* gradually dropped. Nevertheless after secondary or tertiary education many also went back to business apprenticeship on account of the dearth of white collar job.

In the recent generation of parents and young people, there came a new trend and a shift in mentality occasioned by some environmental trappings fueled by the get-rich-quick syndrome. Parents gradually began to abdicate their responsibility towards their children. Sequel to that, the inculcation of moral and social values began to suffer neglect. Hard work and giving primacy to integrity came to be relegated to the background. Hence, ill-gotten wealth was celebrated. The so-called 419 syndrome (**419 scam** is technically known as "advance-fee fraud", and is named after the article numbered 419 in Nigerian criminal code, which deals with fraud), drug trafficking, promotion of illicit wealth disseminated by the film making industries, and a more recent one which is Yahoo Yahoo and Yahoo plus founded on indiscriminate electronic and internet robbery and hacking of accounts became the order of the day. With this, virtue of patience that accompanied commercial spirit of *igba-bi i* sharply turned to inordinate ambition to by the young people to get rich overnight in popular parlance called *ego mbute* (quick money).

The research will delve into the exposition of *ikpa ego* and *ibute ego*, the various contexts that have nourished the tendency of *ibute ego* among our young people, and the leadership spirit that is needed to overturn this ugly situation for a mental redirection of our young people.

Intergenerational Relapse from *ikpa ego* to *ibute ego*

One of the village experiences of young people in the traditional Igbo socio-cultural set up is the adventure of *ikpa aki* (scouting for palm kernel) in which they search for palm kernels in the bush. It is a painstakingly patient exercise that guzzles a lot of time before a reasonable quantity is gathered. Since in the search palm kernels are not heaped at a spot but scattered and traceable at different locations, it usually takes several days of persistent

and skillful search. Knowing the suitable places where they could be discovered in greater number is usually an advantage; and as such places one at level above others. One is more successful in *ikpa aki* depending on how one is informed about the lucrative locations where *aki* could be found. Such knowledge helps in accumulating a big quantity which could be sold for a more profitable earning. The height of one's richness depends how he/she progresses in the *ikpa aki* which ultimately results in ability to have different heaps that could be sold. The joy of the whole adventurous exercise depends on what is gained after sale.

However, misfortune could strike when it happens that the heap of palm kernel one has gathered is dominated by *aki ufulu* (that is, palm kernel without the nut inside). It is usually an unfortunate situation that leaves one without much gain after having tirelessly laboured for many days. Therefore, it was as rewarding as it was therapeutic but also dotted with some dangers that could sometimes rear up their ugly heads like being stung by scorpion or bitten snake etc.

The nomenclature is equally applicable in the business ventures of the Igbo people where it is referred to as *ikpa aki* or *ikpa ego* (scouting for wealth or scouting for money). Following from the Igbo verb *ikpa*, it demands a regular perambulation in search of something; and in this case in search of wealth or money making ventures. That goes to say that the making of wealth abhors laziness; and demands hard work because *onye lui o rie* (He who works eats) and *aka aja aja na-ebute i ni mmanu mmanu* (hands soiled while working in the farm brings about oily). Simply put, hard work pays. One should be up and doing; and ready to sacrifice leisure and pleasure in an avid search for resourceful outlets for making money.

This process of *ikpa ego* is corroborated by the phenomenon of *igba-bi i* (business apprenticeship). According to Okonkwo (2022), *igba-bi i* is a “locally generated venture capital” that requires a business owner who takes an apprentice and 'settle(s)' him at the end of a term of engagement by assisting in setting him up in a business through cash infusion, the payment of rent or offering of goods to the apprentice to sell and share in the profit.” This is consolidated by the fact of *igba mbọ* (struggle) divested of every slothful attitude. In this entrepreneurial venture, it is gainful struggle that increases one's income and in the end creates wealth. For Chinweuba and Ezeugwu,

To overcome this disdainful condition, the Igbos tend to engage in economic struggle (*ogba mbọ*) displaying a resounding entrepreneurial initiative, skill, ambition, competition, enterprise and hard work. Consequently, the Igbo embrace entrepreneurial ventures as a means of dominating nature, achieving economic reliance, satisfying their competitive innate drive for achievement, leaving human imprint, and improving the quality of human life. (2017:17)

This *igba bi i* is strongly founded on the “Igbo philosophies of communality, co-prosperity and interdependence, the model is characterized by the transgenerational transfer of entrepreneurial skills and the reproduction of business champions”. (Oyewunmi, Oyewunmi and Moses, 2020). Inasmuch as the Igbos work unstoppably and

put in every form of ingenuity to create wealth and also help others to prosper, it is usually based on moral principles. Honesty and maintenance of one's integrity are the pillars of their conduct even in business ventures. Hence, the Igbo saying, *ezi afa ka ego* (good name is greater than money or wealth). That is why parents can go long way to cross examine their children whenever they come home with any foreign material. In ability to explain its source will merit the child a merciless lashing with cane. In the end, he/she is compelled to send back the item from where he/she got it. Chinweuba and Ezeugwu (2017) gave a detailed expose of how the traditional Igbo people detest ill-gotten wealth of any sort thus,

wealth acquired through dubious means and circumstances does not earn intrinsic respect in Igbo land. As such, wealth acquisition is expected to tow the means of hard work, integrity and honesty. In fact, the Igbo assertion of *akị luo ì nì okwuo ebe o si* (when wealth gets home, it declares its source) depicts Igbo probe for sources of wealth that enters the community. Even in this present epoch when global forces of westernization have disorganized some Igbos into reproachable ventures, the true Igbo communities still revere wealth made through honest means (*akọ akpalu na ọzọ kwọ ọtọ*) and repudiate ill-gotten wealth or money (*ajọ ego*). It is generally believed among the Igbos that ill-gotten wealth is a curse rather than blessing. Thus people are reluctant to associate with people whose source of wealth is suspected to be questionable. This is more so when it is money made through charms (*ogwo ego*) and shading blood (*ego obara*). (p.19)

Unfortunately, with the passage of time, the influx of western culture and its attendant eroding of some of our cultural values, the younger generation gradually became very much infested with the desire to be rich overnight without hard work. There was exaggerated and irrational admiration of the rich without thinking through on how far and how long it took the wealthy neighbor to attain his/her financial status. Proper thinking should have informed one on the necessity of making proper judgement before desiring unfounded and hurried admiration. But the flamboyant celebration of wealth demonstrated rampantly in Nollywood films, in Pentecostal prosperity gospel that centred on cross-less Christianity, in the inhumane amassing of wealth by most of our political leaders speedily began to collapse the social values of hard work, patience, honesty and integrity associated with *ikpa ego*. To that effect, inordinate quest for wealth culminating in *ego mbute* (quick money) began to assume the centre stage in the mentality of the young people. This has begun to increase in geometric progression because the recent dimension has been nourished by cybercrime.

Cybercrime: the Aiding of *Ego Mbute*

For Cross (2002), cybercrime refers to “any criminal offence committed using the internet or another computer network as a component of the crime” (p.2). Further still, cybercrimes are “offences that are committed against individual or group of individuals with a criminal motive to internationally harm the reputation of the victim or cause physical or mental harm to the victim directly or indirectly using modern/telecommunication networks such as internet and mobile phones” (Halder, D. and Jaishankar, K., 2012).

Nonetheless, cybercrime incorporates wide range of fraudulent conduct, such as cyber-bullying, cyber-bulldozing, cyberstalking, cyber terrorism, cyber espionage cyber fraudsters (Yahoo-boys) and a string of others. In the Nigerian context, Yahoo-boys is also connected with Advanced Fee Fraud (AFF) or “419” (Igwe, 2007; Adogame, 2009). It is important to note that in 1993 a giant stride was made in the area of information technology with the coming of the World Wide Web (WWW). But 1997 saw the introduction of the World Wide Web Technology known as “Yahoo E-mail”. This was aimed at speeding up and easing off communication in the global context. With that, the sourcing of information for research and personal improvement in the learning process was upgraded. Later, Yahoo Mail Plus came with many more improved and advantageous features for its users both in the storage capacity and accessibility to wide range of useful features.

However, just as this innovation was going on in the field of information technology, it was equally being malevolently accompanied by cybercrime. What was meant to alleviate the difficulties in the sourcing and dissemination of information became an instrument for an unimaginable rate of crime wave. Without ever intending it, Dalal (2006) notes that the advancement in science and technology has not only made a tremendously noticeable impact in every segment of human life like wireless communication, e-commerce, e-governance, e-library etc., it has also generated certain deviances and criminal tendencies like hacking, spamming, pharming, pornography, privacy violations, phishing etc. Thus cybercriminals are on the increase by day. In the same vein, juxtaposed with Yahoo Mail is Yahoo-boys. According to Lawani and Osagie-Obazee (2019) the Yahoo boys' mode of operation involves sending deceptive e-mails using Yahoo mail to unsuspecting victims which will finally lead to defrauding and swindling their victim(s);” hence the name Yahoo-boys. As time went on, the “yahoo-boys phenomenon metamorphosed and assumed new dimension; and came to be known as Yahoo Plus. Tade (2013) observes that,

the 'plus' in yahoo plus implies the addition of spiritual ingredients to yahoo yahoo. Within the yahoo yahoo family, a line is drawn between those who surf the net and defraud plainly (yahoo boys) and those who surf the net and employ spiritual assistance for increased defrauding (yahoo plus). The different approaches employed are esoteric to those involved in cybercrime while the larger society refers to both groups as yahoo boys. (p.690)

In fact, Lawani and Osagie-Obazee (2019b) maintained that most of them have discovered a new strategy of blending spiritual elements with internet surfing to enhance the chances of their success in defrauding their unsuspecting victims. The victims of this crime are the young people who are desperately sunk deep in unquenchable thirst for *ego mbute*. What matters to them is to be rich; the means is not called to question. These young people involved in cybercrime, generally known as the yahoo-boys, have been widely recognized as maintaining a distinctive lifestyle that confers a unique and/or a notorious identity on them in the society” (Lawani, C. & Osagie-Obazee, G. 2019b). Their life style is nothing to write home about. They cruise in flashy and classy cars, live in exotic apartments, dress in an outlandish manner, use scandalously expensive mobile phones, enroll in a club and possess a bevy of ladies, make a public bazaar of wealth at eateries

and most often sleep during the day and stay awake in the night for their ungodly ventures. Most of the young people who get involved in these odd jobs are equally addicted to Methamphetamine (mkpulu mmiri) or other related drugs. Definitely, such a lifestyle does not in any way correspond with their age. Outrageously, most of the parents do not query their children on how they acquired such wealth. Rather, these “young money bags” are celebrated by all and sundry as having attained an honorable feat; and in some cases chieftaincy titles are conferred on them by the traditional rulers whom they have mesmerizingly blindfolded with money.

The resultant effect is that many young people drop out of school and go into the yahoo-yahoo business with the desire of getting rich quick. This attitude creates a serious dearth in professionalism. Consequently, key areas that could boost the economy gradually begin to dwindle due to lack of competent hands. More so, leadership role that demands qualification in character and learning will be found wanting. For any society to grow there is need for transformational leadership, but when the young people who are the leaders of tomorrow engage in an untroubled manner in cyber fraud with the aim of amassing wealth, then the future will be very bleak as far as leadership is concerned. For no one gives what he does not have (*Nemo dat quod non habet*).

However, it is pertinent to note that these young people do not grow in a vacuum. To that effect, the various contexts in which young people grow help in a big way to either mar or channel them in the right direction.

Socio-cultural Context

Ordinarily, Nigerian society values family and human relation. In contemporary Nigeria, the nuclear family exists side by side with the extended family. The family includes not only the immediate siblings but also grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, nephew nieces etc. The family according to Mbiti (1992:143) also includes the departed relatives, whom may have designated as the living/dead. In family there is openness to life in which children are valued as a blessing from God. Therefore

children can contribute an enduring source of emotional satisfaction and joy to their parents. Parents look upon the development and growth of their children as their work. The successes and failures of their children are their successes and failures. If the parents have not achieved all their youthful goals in life, they rejoice in the thought that they will see these goals fulfilled in their children. (Getui, 1998:72)

Generally, Igbo traditional system is marked with the responsibility of the upbringing of children with regard to values, skills and techniques of traditional cultural heritage. The family structure also serves as a place for formal and informal instruction during initiation rites that prepare the child to assume adult responsibilities. The extended family also has a system of social control, which guide the youth in their daily choices. These inbuilt mechanisms therefore help to a great extent in ensuring the stability of the family. The parental care and nurturing of children depend to a large extent on the economic, social, intellectual and the emotional situation of parents, which go to contribute in making the home the first school for youth formation.

Nigerians especially Igbos express their culture in customs, values, social norms, religion and beliefs and their day to day living and interactions. The richness of this culture is being reinforced and manifested also in their mode of greeting, clothing, arts, music, dance, drama, proverbs, traditional marriage and other ceremonial activities.

However, fundamental to culture is knowledge. All these play prominent role in the life and behavior of the Igbo people. For example, storytelling is used in teaching moral to children and the young ones thereby stimulating them toward good conducts. It also serves as a documentation of some actual events and people's life in a given period of time. Proverbs serve to communicate the wisdom of the past generation. Unfortunately, because of social changes, we are gradually experiencing the disappearance of some of these cultural values. Nowadays, no pain no gain does not very much hold again. *Aka aja aja n'ebute onu mmanu mmanu* (soiled hands bring about oily mouth; meaning that hard work pays) is becoming obsolete. People today are less interested in hard work but want quick money and wealth. Today people want promotion without merit, employment without certificate, certificate without studying, marks without sitting for an examination; to pass through celebrated malpractice etc. In fact, oddities are boldly being celebrated. Solidarity is gradually becoming a thing of the past; everybody thinks of his/her own without looking out to see how to help the other.

The famous dictum of Bacon (1996) "Knowledge is power" is gradually being consigned to the literary lumber-room of forgotten events. The young people see money as power. The greatest culprit appears to be what Achebe (1996:1) identifies as 'the failure of leadership,' in all its ramifications. Some parents are bereft of moral values and as such have nothing to offer to the young people. The young people then become guides unto themselves.

The consequences are affecting everybody. These values used to be part of every Igbo person, because it is incorporated into the daily activities of people, as such, being a way people are being formed spiritually. Unfortunately, today's socio-cultural state in which our young people find themselves is marked by insecurity in the highest order and complacent collusion. The atmosphere is charged with anger and aggressive tendencies. The odour of corruption is oozing out from every corner to the utter consternation of the rest of us. It is inexhaustible.

Political Context

"Man", said Aristotle (1995), "is by nature a political animal" (p.1987). Being so constituted by nature, he/she lives in a community and associates with others thanks to the gift of speech with which he/she is endowed. Consequent upon this living together, comes the need to have leaders who will direct, make laws and guide the citizens towards a common good and who will fight for the welfare of the people. This will help to avoid a lawless situation where each person makes his/her own law as it suits him/her. An authority is therefore needed to guide the people towards a common good. Thus, the leaders should always bear in mind that,

there is no better way to establish political life on a truly human basis than by encouraging an inward sense of justice, and of service to the common good, **and**

by consolidating the basic convictions of all as to the true nature of the political community and the aim, proper exercise, and the limits of political authority. (Flannery, 1998:n.73)

The political authorities on their own part are urged to act within the limits of the law and not place themselves above the law. In the Nigerian context, what does the political situation look like? *The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) in its preamble states* that its purpose is for “promoting good government and welfare of all persons in our country on the principles of freedom, equality, justice, and for the purpose of consolidating the unity of our people.” To what extent these values are realised remains another question. In fact, Nigeria has experienced and is still experiencing unhealthy political arrangement that has engendered and almost institutionalised corruption in every imaginable dimension. More still, the endemic corruption that has eaten into every fabric of Nigeria further makes young people to jettison hard work and desire to become rich at all cost. Democracy is gradually metamorphosing into plutocracy that culminates in “selectocracy”, with the eventual relapse into kakistocracy and finally degenerate into ochlocracy. There is unguided sycophancy and public fund is embezzled with impunity. In fact, the Nigeria's political process has degenerated into a criminal franchise of power purchase by the highest bidder for self-service to the detriment of public service.... To put it simply, Nigeria suffers from acute leadership challenge” (Dahiru, 2022, p.32). Vote-buying is dangerously becoming the order of the day. According to Uchegbu (2022, p.16), “vote-buying is coming up very strongly as offshoot of the dollarization of the leadership recruitment process. The situation is as woeful as it is regrettable. It is the highest bidder that wins and not necessarily the right candidate.” Too appalling!

Unfortunately, this is the political environment within which the young people grow. In a similar vein, the young people in some cases have been used as instruments of violence during political campaigns and great have been the damaging effects. It is now the duty of the young people to be firm and act with right reason in every circumstance. John Paul II (1982) admonished them thus: “As true youth you will see, judge and then act according to the criteria of the Gospel of Jesus Christ” (n.5). This admonition stretches to all sectors of community life in which the young people find themselves because their duty is an integral and not a lopsided one.

Religious Context

Section 38(1) of the *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria* states that “Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private) to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.” Corroborating this stipulation, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council (1998) declared that,

Every person has a right to religious freedom. Freedom of this kind means that all men should be immune from coercion on the part of individuals, social groups and every human power so that, within due limits, nobody is forced to act against his convictions nor is anyone to be restrained from acting in accordance with his convictions in religious matters in private or in public, alone or in association with others. (n.2).

Based on this liberty, people have constantly exploited the gullible masses in the name of religion. In some religious houses, there is a mixture of evangelism with African traditional beliefs. Some Pentecostal churches for instance depart radically from the preaching of the crucified Christ; offer wishy-washy holiness and continue to inundate their followers with the doctrines of prosperity. The young people begin to hanker for prosperity at all cost. Such prosperity gospel Anyaegbu (2020) affirms is “essentially the message that God does not want us to be poor but that he has destined riches, good health, and wealth for his children. It is a type of Christianity that chooses only what is comfortable and sweet at the rejection of every discomfort.” (p.64) This religious context thus propels the youth to go in search of wealth by hook or by crook. Unfortunately, this state of religion throws the youth who are not grounded in their faith into a confused state. The next line of action for them is to begin desperately to attempt any means that could yield money for them. In the end, they pay back with a handsome tithe believing that in such a manner God is appeased and their conscience is tranquillized.

Factors Leading to *Ego Mbute* among young People

The young people are drawn to this tendency of *ego mbute* as against *ikpa ego* based on some obvious facts that surround them.

False Cult of Youth

This refers to those who build a future without deep roots. It is impossible for us to grow unless we have strong roots to support us be it academic, spiritual, proper use of reason, etc. It is a cult that dismisses hard work and seeks unstoppably for easy life. Such easy life seeks to amass wealth without hard work. To that effect, they can go to any imaginable length to get rich. That has lured many into hacking of accounts and such related cyber criminality. It is a massive deception if one rejects attention to academic work but wants to work in a government office after schooling; a generation of young people without academic roots that ground them is easily manipulated. However, there is need for them to interact with the wise and trustworthy elders because their wisdom and influence are keys to developing those roots. According to Pope Francis (2019) “If we journey together, young and old, we can be firmly rooted in the present, and from here, revisit the past and look to the future.” (n.199).

Peer Influence

There is no gainsaying the fact that peer influence remains a very crucial factor especially when students leave home with meagre resources to meet their basic socio-economic demands in the school. This situation is not limited to children of poor family background but also those of the rich. These students as soon as they are set free from the apron strings of their parents will find themselves unable to manage their freedom. Consequently, most of them are blown away by any passing wind of deviant behaviour.

Although parents are supposed to be the primary teachers of their children and wards, it is often evident that at times peer groups have greater influence. This is sequel to the fact that some of the parents get terribly engaged with their economic activities and thereby abdicate their responsibility to their children. Such children find succor in Internet and their peers. Evidently, they are not guided and they end up guiding themselves in

cybercrimes of every sort. Others are lured into *ego mbute* by their peers who are glued to Yahoo Yahoo business. This is very rampant in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria today. At times the parents make effort to inculcate Christian values on their children, but the peer group pressure often deletes these values from their head and reteaches their fellow peer the wrong attitudes that appeal to them. Incidentally, young people spend more time with their peers than with their parents. Therefore, young people must be vigilant and evaluate properly before adopting another's way of life.

Abdication of Parental Attention

Inattention of parents towards their children is tantamount to irresponsible parenthood. This is another obstacle that could negatively redirect the mind of the young people away from their rightful decisions in life. It is worthy of note that parents are the primary educators of their children at every level of their growth. This education entails taking care of their material and spiritual needs in order to help them grow into responsible adults that could be of desirable help to themselves, to their parents, to the society and eventually gain eternal life hereafter. When parents neglect this duty, the resultant effect is most often manifested in irresponsible children. Such irresponsibility in young people will culminate in making wrong choices in life like drug-trafficking, cyber fraud and inordinate hunger for money. In the words of Benedict XVI (2010), “young people need witnesses and teachers who can walk with them, teaching them to love the Gospel and to share it, especially with their peers, and thus to become authentic and credible messengers” (n.104). When there is lack of proper guidance on the part of the parents, surely the young people remain in the words of Erasmus of Rotterdam like a “rolling stone that gathers no moss.” The gap could make them susceptible to succumb to the tendency of cyber fraud of any sort with the aim of getting rich quick (*ego mbute*).

Near Collapse of Academic Learning

The main undoing of the young people is the speedy collapse of academic learning in Nigeria. More so, there is the tendency of seeing education solely as a means instead of an end. When education is seen solely as means of gaining white-collar job, then we got it all wrong. Education is to be seen primarily as an end through which one becomes a cultured human being and a well-balanced person. One who knows his onions has got to prove himself in his own field of learning. Education as a means also counts but it is purely secondary. In consequence of that, when education begins to collapse from its foundation as it is happening in Nigeria, then institutions of learning will be churning out a bunch of mediocre and half-baked graduates that parade about with certificates which they cannot creditably justify in the field of work. Terribly shameful! Nonetheless, given the fact that education should be seen also as a means but not primarily as such, it becomes pitiable when government has no plan in place for the absorption of young people in the field of work. Worse still, when education is made to be purely theoretical without a bent on the practical aspect that could promote self-reliance, it makes some young people to change their mind against the pursuit of learning that does not engage them at the end. Though such change is not right but not everyone has such intellectual capacity to reason in that direction. Many want to have something doing after their academic pursuit in order to help themselves, their parents, their younger ones and others.

When education is almost messed up as it is now happening in Nigeria, young people will now have reasons to look for criminal alternative like cyber fraud of every kind aimed at *ego mbute*, drug trafficking, and in some cases kidnapping in order to get rich from the ransom. There is a serious need for a positive turn around with regard to education; otherwise the nation will be sitting on a keg of gun powder with regard to her future leadership. A nation populated by uneducated young people who are zealously aiming at *ego mbute* is dangerously heading to ruin.

Unemployment

John Paul II (1981) laments: “it is particularly painful when unemployment especially affects young people, who after appropriate cultural, technical and professional preparation fail to find work, and see their sincere wish to work and their readiness to take on their own responsibility for the economic and social development of the community sadly frustrated.” (n.18)

The case of Nigeria is pathetic because one doesn't see any light at the end of the tunnel because there is no evident plan in place regarding nipping the problem from bud. Such situation can generate any imaginable crime: violence, drug abuse, young people being used as political desperadoes etc.

It is however an education that aims at self-reliance that can help in remedying this situation. When that is done, the young people can engage themselves in some concrete job without depending so much on white-collar jobs. But to realize that objective, there is need to diversify education. A nation like Nigeria with the huge population of young people but without diversifying her educational system in order to make for self-reliant learning can in no way absorb such a teeming population of young people in the labour market.

Sequel to that, the young people seek for an easy alternative which is readily at hand in cyber fraud and other related crimes in order to make quick money (*ego mbute*).

Conclusion

We make haste to say that the youth form a formidable part of the Catholic Church in Nigeria. In fact, it is a common-place opinion as Okafor observes (2004) that the “future of the Church and indeed of humanity is in the hands of the young. It depends on the fundamental options they make and essential values they embody in their lives. They need therefore to be offered hope that can spur them on in their journey of faith.”

To realize this objective, John Paul II (1995) noted that it is of utmost importance “to help young people to overcome the obstacles thwarting their development: illiteracy, idleness, hunger, drugs” (n.93). But incidentally, being a vulnerable group, and as such susceptible to any wind of change whether positive or negative, they are easily lured to the ephemeral fantasies of life, like *ego mbute* with its concomitant dangers. The old tradition of *ikpa ego* and *igba bi i* with which the Igbos were known has to be revived in order for the young people to imbibe its attendant virtues. Paul VI (1965) at the closing of Second Ecumenical Council made a passionate appeal to young people in these words:

it is you who are to receive the torch from the hands of your elders and to live in the world at the period of the most gigantic transformations ever realized in its history. It is you who, receiving the best of the example of the teaching of your

parents and your teachers, are to form the society of tomorrow. You will either save yourselves or you will perish with it.

The young people have to be saved from the impending danger in Nigeria. All hands must be on deck: parents, teachers, church leaders, government and indeed the young people themselves. With their immense vitality, they have a limitless disposition towards the confrontation of challenges. Therefore, when the leaders properly harness their burning energies and talents, they could be a vital force in the process of societal change.

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