Youth Culture and Development in Mauritius

By Rajen Suntoo, Hemant Chittoo

University of Technology, Mauritius

Abstract - Development of any society depends largely on young people and investment in today's youth is actually an investment in the future of the nation. Properly cultured youth become responsible citizens, good parents, effective decision-makers, efficient workforce and leaders of tomorrow. This study explores the relationship between youth culture and development. The main objectives of this work are to: take stock of the youth culture in society and examine the relationship between youth culture and development. Analysis, reflection and discussions are based on both secondary data and observation of youth culture in society The principal finding shows that youth culture has much positive impact on societies that inculcate good cultural values in youth and create opportunities for them to build character, acquire knowledge and skills, and develop talent and abilities. One main recommendation based on the study would be state investment in young people should be encouraged and given high priority on governmental agenda by societies willing to ensure sustainable socio-economic development and political stability.

YOUTH CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT IN MAURITIUS

Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:

Youth Culture and Development in Mauritius

Rajen Suntoo[α], Hemant Chittoo[Ω]

Abstract - Development of any society depends largely on young people and investment in today's youth is actually an investment in the future of the nation. Properly cultured youth become responsible citizens, good parents, effective decision-makers, efficient workforce and leaders of tomorrow. This study explores the relationship between youth culture and development. The main objectives of this work are to: take stock of the youth culture in society and examine the relationship between youth culture and development. Analysis, reflection and discussions are based on both secondary data and observation of youth culture in society The principal finding shows that youth culture has much positive impact on societies that inculcate good cultural values in youth and create opportunities for them to build character, acquire knowledge and skills, and develop talent and abilities. One main recommendation based on the study would be state investment in young people should be encouraged and given high priority on governmental agenda by societies willing to ensure sustainable socio-economic development and political stability.

Keywords : Development, Youth, Youth Culture, Values and Society.

I. INTRODUCTION

Culture is a way of life. Different societies have different ways of life and even in the same society there are variations in the behaviour, thinking, attitude and action of groups based on class, caste, ethnicity and age, amongst other factors. Young people, normally including adolescents and teenagers, have their own culture which most of the time differs from the mainstream societal culture. Their way of life has much influence on society and its development. Therefore, no responsible state in this global world can ignore investment in young people if it really wants to progress and modernize. Given that the future of a nation depends on the younger generation, the state should have proper policies, action plans and guidance for the youth enabling them to get the necessary space, opportunity, education, training and motivation to develop their potential and creativity thereby making positive contribution in society.

This study aims at taking stock of the youth culture in society and examining the relationship between youth culture and development. For the purpose of this study, use of secondary data has been made. There has been a review of literature on youth culture and development. Available data has been critically analyzed, discusse and reflected upon.

The first part of the paper deals with the literature review where youth culture and development have been conceptualized and also an overview of the link between them in few societies has been provided. In the second part there is an analysis, discussion and reflection on available secondary data. A conclusion based on the study followed by some recommendations has been stated in the last section.

II. NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY IN MAURITIUS

Since its independence in 1968, successive Governments in Mauritius have always laid emphasis on the youngsters of the country. However, due to the absence of a proper policy for the youth, the latter could not develop their potential to the maximum. At the beginning of the new millennium, this big weakness was partially brought on the agenda by the preparation of a "National Youth Policy" (NYP) launched by the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam in 2000. In his message, for the revised 2009 NYP, Dr N. Ramgoolam wrote: "The National Youth Policy is an important framework for tapping the energy and the creative drive of the youth for the development of our country………..Our youth are our future and they are active contributors of the making of a dynamic and compassionte society."

The message of the head of the government reflects the consideration that the state should give to help young people develop their potentials for the sake of socio-economic development of the country. The number of youth was estimated at about 311789 in 2008 representing roughly 25% of the whole population. Therefore, government stands to gain by catering properly for the need of the youth who will be future decision makers and voters as well. The NPY ensures that equal treatment and facilities are offered to all young people and no discrimination be made on the basis of gender, ethnicity, caste or class. Such a measure is highly beneficial for the population where the youth learn values like meritocracy, democracy, unity, cooperation and tolerance which are essential preconditions for living in multicultural Mauritius.

A deeper analysis of the 2009 NPY reveals its main aim is to empower youth through proper holistic and inclusive education, training, counselling, participation in decision making, sports activities and access to the right Information and Communication

Author [αΩ] : University of Technology, MauritiusLa Tour Koenig Pointe-aux-Sables MAURITIUS . E- mail [Ω]: schittoo@hotmail.com

2

Technology. It is believed that in this way youngsters will at the end become more capable, skilled, knowledgeable and above all responsible contributors to modernize and sustain development of the economy. Consequently, the benefits reaped by the society can help to strengthen the standard of living of the whole population.

III. Conceptualising 'Youth'

There is no universal definition of the term 'youth'. Different societies attach different meanings to who they consider young people, teenagers and adolescents. For the United Nations, youth refers to those persons who are between 15 and 24 years of age. In Mauritius, the National Youth Policy (2000) defines youth as those who fall between the age of 14 to 29. Going by the definition of the United Nations, the world has a youth population of about 18%. United Nations has adopted numerous declarations, conventions and covenants concerning youth. One of them is the World programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and beyond 1995 which identified ten important youth-related issues that should be of highest priority to governments willing to cater for the needs and aspirations of youngsters. Amongst others, much emphasis was aid on the full and effective participation of youth in the development of society and in decision making.

IV. Youth Culture and Youth Subculture

According to Macionis (2000), culture means beliefs, values, behaviour, and material objects that constitute a people's way of life. Christopher Jencks (1993) describes culture as all which is symbolic: the learned aspects of human society. For Haralambos and Holborn (2000), culture has two main elements, first it learned and second it is shared. Culture is in fact a shared way of life of people. In societies different groups have different lifestyles, values, beliefs, dress codes and symbols. The mainstream culture is the one that is usually the norm of any society. However, there are subculture and counter culture groups whose values and beliefs and behaviour differ from the main stream culture. For the different cultural groups to live peacefully, the state has develop common goals and vision it has of the society. The latter has to manage the diverse groups properly.In all societies, whether developed or developing, young people have a different way of living. They have their own norms, mores, folkways, values, symbols and lifestyles. Youth culture simply refers to the ways young people differentiate themselves from the culture of adults and older population of the society.

Most of the adolescents and teenagers are trendy. They like to keep up to date with new music,

dress codes, mobiles, perfumes, hair styles and activities. They are the main consumers of branded products. Peer pressure and mass media force them to be trendy. However, in any society youth culture differs among young population based on mainly class and sometimes on caste. The working class youth culture often has different values from those of the middle and upper classes. There are also youth subcultures that emerge where young people have distinct life styles than those of the mainstream youth culture. Sometimes, youth counter culture arises in societies where the values, beliefs and behaviour of the young people are totally different from those of the mainstream groups. Adolescents and teenagers often get an identity that is different from the one they get at home or at work. Juveniles who are in search of identity often find solace the peer where they are valued.

V. Theories on Youth Culture and Subculture

For Functionalists when youth move from the family cocoon to the larger society they are faced with an anomie situation. Their values at home differ from those of peers and workplace colleagues. Sometimes youngsters forget about their own traditions and customs and adopt new ways of living. The family has a primordial role to play in the socialization process of adolescents and youngsters enabling them to smoothly adapt to changes and choose behaviour that are in line with societal mainstream culture.

From a Marxist perspective, Clarke et al. (1976) argue that although material circumstances limits the forms of culture, yet the possibility for human creativity in producing culture exist in societies. For Clarke et al. youth culture represents the creative attempts of youngsters to try to maintain or win autonomy and space from the mainstream dominant capitalist culture. Tony Jefferson(1976) argues that the youth culture of Teddy boys represented an attempt to rebuild the sense of loyalty and working class community which were affected by urbanization and development. The youth culture with its distinctive style of dress and music act as an attempt to find solution to problems like unemployment, poverty and alienation. Although the problems are not solved yet they feel doing something worthwhile for protecting their community, gain status and offer solace to others who are in vulnerable situation.

VI. Development

For the sake of this paper the term development comprises economic and social development. Economic development is defined as a sustainable increase in the living standards that encompass material consumption, education, health, and environmental protection (World Development Report, 1991). On the

other hand, social development refers to socioeconomic justice, that is, fairness in income and occupational distribution, preservation and respect for human rights, equal access to education, mutual understanding among members of different groups and peace and stability in society. The overall goal of development is to increase the economic, political and civil rights of all people in the country. For development to take place, a society needs the input of each and everyone. Youngsters, adults and the elderly have to work hand in hand to make development and progress happen. The different institutions of the state should cooperate for the benefit of the population. The public and private sectors together with the civil society have an immense responsibility towards the state. The latter can only prosper when different stakeholders join hands and work responsibly. Good governance and transparency at all levels should prevail.

VII. Youth Culture and Development

Since its inception, UNESCO has stressed upon culture which impacts on development. Even the 1998 Intergovernmental Conference on cultural policy for development, held in Stockholm, rightly concluded that 'any policy for development must be profoundly sensitive to culture itself'. This shows that youth culture should be given its due and recognition by societies as it has its contribution in development process. Young people are an important asset that should be exploited judiciously for development and its sustainability given the fragility and uncertainty of economic turbulence in this global world. No responsible society can ignore the potential of its younger population. Cultural values, beliefs and behaviour of youth have an impact on development.

Societies all over the world have always used adolescents and teenagers to gain statuses locally, regionally and internationally in many areas, more particularly in the domain of sports. Young people sacrifice their precious moments of youth to train for hours in order to be able to participate in sports and athletic activities with a view to bring back honour, medals and statuses for their countries. Once they win international games or break world records in athletics, leaders of their society start to claim paternity of the success of the participants. The latter are often welcomed as heroes. Mass media are used to show celebrations and political leaders are found surrounding them, but more for their own marketing. After the event participants are often forgotten and rarely are they given any kind of support, financial or logistic, from state authorities. Most societal institutions use youngsters for their vested interest.

Regarding education, adolescents and youngsters are made to compete to achieve the best results. Capitalist societies often sell the dream of

meritocracy to youth. Many time young people are frustrated when they do not get jobs that they deserve and most of the time state authorities do not give them any feedback on why they have not been recruited. The lack of transparency in job allocation often discourages youngsters to perform well. Underemployment impacts negatively on efficiency and productivity which indirectly affects development. Youngsters feel alienated and they sometimes turn towards groups which encourage and validate deviant behaviour to blow out frustrations.

VIII. Concluding Remarks and A Proposed Youth Culture Development Model

Youth culture is a marker of identity for adolescents and teenagers all over the world. Although values, belief systems, norms and mores of youngsters differ from those of the mainstream culture, positive contribution made by their way of living cannot be underestimated in society. The state has to review its mode of operation and make provision to take on board the attitudes, thoughts, behaviour and action of youngsters in the development process. The youth culture developmental model is an 'all inclusive' alternative model of development for societies to sustain and consolidate development in this fragile and uncertain global world. With a small population, Mauritius stands to gain by influencing its National Youth Policy along the lines of a more well-thought-through model.Development in this global world has to be youth centered. Youth Culture Development Model (YCDM) requires the state to become 'all inclusive' in its pursuit for development. The term 'all inclusive' means accepting the youth culture as a way of living and seeking the collaboration of Youth and supporting them by inculcating appropriate behaviour required by the society for development purpose. Societal institutions have to review their modes of operation vis-a-vis youngsters. All the agents of socialization have to work in collaboration in order to achieve success. States have to develop policies to accommodate youth culture. Societal stakeholders, Government, private sector and the civil society, need to join hands to take on board all youngsters for the benefit of the society.

The agents of socialization have a primordial role to play for the success of YCDM. Families, schools, peer groups, mass media and religion can help much to understand youth culture and position it for the well being of the society. The Family as an important agent of socialization has to give space for youth to become creative and develop an identity. Parenting has to be reviewed. With information and technological advancement, parents are more than ever called to become a partner and develop friendly relationship with their children. The latter have a broad mind and should not be underestimated by parents. The state should use the mass media more precisely television to impart adult

3

education. Religious and community institutions can also help parents to learn how to cope with youngsters as social control no more lies with parents in this virtual world. Informed parents understand that culture is dynamic and their offspring youth culture and their way of behaviour are not permanent.

References Références Referencias

1. Brake. M (1980) The Sociology of Youth Culture and Youth Subcultures: Sex, Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll, Routledge and Paul ltd, London.
2. Brake. M (1985) Comparative Youth Culture: The Sociology of Youth Cultures and Youth Subcultures in America, Britain, and Canada , Routledge and Paul ltd, London.
3. Clarke et al. (1976) "Subcultures, Cultures and Class: A Theoretical Overview", pp. 9-74, in Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain, edited by S. Hall and T. Jefferson, London, Hutchison.
4. Christopher Jencks (1993) "Introduction to Culture and Identity", available at http://www.sojisubthai fans.com/39-part-one-introduction-to-culture-and-identity.html
5. David Lewis (2005) "Culture and Development: A Critical Introduction", Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, Vol. 11, 2005
6. Department of Youth and Culture, Available at www.gov.ai/documents/CulturePolicyPressRelease.pdf. Retrieved on 01.08.2010
7. Haralambos and Holborn (2000) Sociology : Themes and Perspectives, Harper Collins, London.
8. Is There Really a Relationship Between Culture and Development?Available at www.krepublishers.com/.../Anth-06-1-037-043-2004-Mbakogu.pdf. Retrieved on 01.08.2010
9. Ministry of Economic Development, Productivity and Regional Development (2006) "Into the 3rd Millennium 2000, National Strategy for sustainable Development 1999-2005", Government Printing, Mauritius.
10. Macionis, J.J. (2002) Society The Basics, 6th edn, Prentice Hall, New Jersey.
11. Mannick, A.R. (1979) Mauritius: The Development of a Plural Society, Russell Press Ltd, Nottingham, U.K.
12. Ministry of Youth & Sports - The Ministry of Youth and Sports. Available at www.mauritiusdelight.com/ministry-youth-sports.htm. Retrieved on 30.06.10
13. Ministry Of Youth and Sports (2009) National Youth Policy 2010-2014, Youth on the Move, Mauritius Government Printing.
14. Government of Mauritius (1997) Vision 2020, The National Long-Term Perspective: Study volume 1. Ministry of Economic Development, Productivity and Regional Development, Port-Louis, Mauritius.
15. World Development Report (1991), "The Challenge of Development", Vol. 1, World Bank, Washington D.C.
16. Youth at the United Nations available at www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/qanda.htm retrieved on 30.07.2010