

Youth Exclusion and Empowerment in the Contemporary Global Order

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Youth Exclusion and Empowerment in the Contemporary Global Order

Contexts of Economy, Education and Governance

EDITED BY

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

This book is dedicated to Mrs Oluwafunmilola Esther Akanle for the unwavering love, hope, support, commitment, understanding, motivation and creation of conducive environments for growth and development at all times. Thank you very much, dear.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AU	African Union
CHED	Commission on Higher Education
CSO	Civil society organization
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FMF	Fees Must Fall (#FMF)
FTLRP	Fast-track Land Reform Programme
ICT	Information and communications technologies
ILO	International Labour Organization
MOOCs	Massive open online courses
MYD	Ministry of Youth Development
NDP	National Development Plan
NEET	Not in education, employment or training
NYP	National Youth Policy
NYC	National Youth Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
RMF	Rhodes Must Fall (#RMF)
SARS	Special Anti-Robbery Squad (Nigeria)
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRC	Student representative council
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
SU	Stellenbosch University
TMT	Temporal motivational theory
UCT	University of Cape Town
UFH	University of Fort Hare
UKZN	University of Kwazulu Natal
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNFPA	United Nations Population Funds
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
Wits	University of Witwatersrand
YDI	Youth Development Index

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Introduction

Oláyínká Àkànlé

This book – Youth Exclusion and Empowerment in the Contemporary Global Order – contributes to knowledge on the existentialities of youths within current global arrangements and practically engages issues around realities of youth exclusion, the complex consequences of the exclusion and pathways out of the exclusion for sustainable development. The approach of the book is theoretical, practical, pragmatic and policy focussed. This book addresses issues around youths from a global perspective. Issues addressed in this book are central to existential exclusion of the youths from the main frame of the current global order, with inherent implications for empowerment and development. Research, experiences and observation over two decades have demonstrated and proven how youths, as a category, struggle to survive and be relevant within the current global systemic and institutional arrangements. Youths in the contemporary world appear trapped, strategically excluded and helplessly frustrated by the main and supposedly supportive institutional frameworks of society. This current situation relative to youths across the world is a major existential and generational quagmire. Yet, there are not enough works on existential realities of the youth. There is dearth of knowledge in this area of youths and social as well as institutional exclusion around the world. Intellectual works are particularly lacking in discussion of relevant and specific existential issues that confront the youths, how the issues affect the youths, and their bearing on exclusion and pathways out of these issues. This book fills important gaps in these areas. Issues engaged in this book are addressed from realistic and intellectual perspectives. This book provides original materials, literature and data that were hitherto unavailable. This book is cutting edge and innovative in its major contribution to knowledge.

This book is about the lives and experiences of young people from many countries and from a decidedly global perspective. This book is based on not less than 20 years of research, experience and observation about how youths attempt to survive within current institutions and situations in which they find themselves. The authors, using diverse methods and methodologies that include collecting primary data, original insights, lived experiences and secondary data, present evidence about how young people appear trapped, strategically excluded and helplessly frustrated. The major existential and generational problems that exist

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across the globe are gargantuan and young people are becoming concerned, seeking empowerment and social activism. Many types and layers of data are used in this book to fill the gaps in research and to address policy and practice issues on youth-hood. This book has a wide reach, with chapters relating to youth research across the world.

Issues, consequences, ramifications and pathways out of the development quagmire are engaged in this very relevant book. The range and scope of experiences of youths in multiple contexts and across multiple countries in the Global South and North, as addressed in this book, provide original and ground-breaking insight. The use of inter- and multidisciplinary methods and theories from a range of scholars across disciplines and contexts produces a unique combination. Contributions of scholars from many different, but relevant, disciplines and contexts make the book very useful for many different people and areas of study and use. It is strategically relevant to pure and applied sociology, child and youth studies, development studies, studies in inequality, psychology, education, leadership and Areas Studies, among others. The applicability and relevance of this book are boundless. Issues and approaches adopted in the book give it broad and cross-cutting elements necessary across different but related disciplines, perspectives and methodologies for sustainable understanding and suitable problem-solving.

Chapters in this book address issues of operationalization, education, economy, unemployment, political economy, governance, protests, deprivation, consumption and crime, among others. The motivation for the book is based on the conviction that inclusion is the only way of achieving justice and sustainable development across generations. The approach to writing this book and the process of writing it were detailed, lengthy and painstaking, based on huge discipline, sacrifices, focus and determination to contribute to sustainable global development, intergenerational justice through inclusion and strategic engagements for social order.

All authors who contributed to this book are acknowledged and appreciated for their commitment and strong work ethics. Without the contributors, it would have been impossible to bring this book to fruition.

I am certain this book will be of immense benefit to every reader and user. The only appeal that must be made is that every reader and user of this book should read the book as a whole. It should be treated as a tool-kit and an operating manual to drive sustainable inclusion of youth for the benefit of all. This book is therefore not mere academic and scholarly material but a policy and practice manual. Every user and reader should kindly put knowledge gained from reading this book into practice to drive change and inclusion progressively. This is the only way to proceed especially if sustainable development will ultimately be achieved.

Chapter One

Neoliberalism and the New Paradigm in Higher Education: Youth in the Global Context

Obinna Chukwu

Introduction

This chapter focusses on the neoliberal transformation of higher education in the global context. It highlights how this phenomenon has affected young researchers and students engaged in university campuses across the globe. It highlights the predominance of changing pedagogical practices, the morphing of the university into a pure commodity, the nature of satellite learning and the changing nature of the university experience for young people. This chapter thus advances understanding of the process, and one can observe the nature of changes occurring across the globe within academia.

It is argued that a global system underlines one of the most critical sectors all over the Western world, and this has led to a situation of unprecedented change. This situation is referred to as the growth of “private initiative” (Huber and Solt, 2004). All across the globe, ideals have been reinforced on academic research, teaching, the nature of management, the goal of publications and the general discourse on the role of academia as a result of neoliberal regimes and their pro-market policies (Haque, 1999; Klein, 2007). The influence of this system is what the chapter will now seek to elucidate below, by using various scholarly opinions existing within the literature.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The methodology of this chapter is centred on secondary literature and used a wide range of sources. A large critical literature has developed on the university as a commodity. This school of thought argues that the university is increasingly being portrayed solely as a vehicle for gaining economic advantage.

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This commodification of higher education has been principally explored by [Giroux \(2014\)](#). Their work takes an all-encompassing view of the phenomenon, and one could characterize their work as a leftist call to action rather than an objective account of commodification's impact on the individuals that populate the institutions. Nevertheless, it does capture the broad discussions that articulate the impact of neoliberalism on higher education in the western hemisphere. It is further proclaimed that this new world of higher education is dominated by the benefits of the product of higher education rather than the intrinsic worth of the pursuit of knowledge that governed earlier generations ([Kandiko, 2010](#)). This chapter uses a wide variety of sources similar to these highlighted above to analyze and disaggregate understanding of this phenomenon's impact on youth in academia today.

The Issues

A further analysis of the phenomenon highlighted above is found in the collaborative work of a group of scholars based at the University of Leuven in Belgium. They discuss the impact of this on the well-being of individuals within this system. They argue that students who place a strong emphasis on these goals of higher education tend to gravitate towards low self-esteem, lower psychological well-being, depression and anxiety, and have more conflicting dispositions towards the wider society. They also argue that higher education has been reconceptualized by certain elements in power and any thought of pulling back, to what used to be the norm would be seen as a step back for the advancement of higher education ([Vansteenkiste et al., 2004](#), p. 246). In addition, researchers at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Higher Education Research Institute, working with the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), have done a substantial longitudinal analysis of the evolution of educational motivation over the past 40 years in American universities. They offer a bird's eye view of the neoliberal transformation, though their study offers this information dispassionately and does not seek to equate the information it provides with the rise in neoliberal dominance ([Saunders, 2007](#)). Another area covered by researchers is racial and minority group access to higher education in the age of neoliberalism. [Benjamin Baez and Gerson Sanchez \(2017\)](#) offer a new perspective on the issue of affirmative action within this environment of marketization. The authors reflect on the evolution of neoliberal education, particularly in light of the *Fisher v. University of Texas ruling of the Supreme Court of the United States of America* in 2016. They contend that:

Affirmative action was “saved” by neoliberal rationalities, framing the issue in terms of outcomes. That is, affirmative action, historically and ostensibly addressing racial injustice, now appears to justify practices furthering global competition, and thus it offers a good example for understanding the contradictory ways that neoliberal projects seek to shape the conduct of both institutions of higher education and their individuals. ([Baez and Sanchez, 2017](#), pp.40–53)

However, scholars such as [Michèle Lamont and Joseph Guay \(2014\)](#) disagree with the above statement. They argue that positioning of the university as a commodity is a threat to civil rights in the United States. They opine that

as these policies influence our worldviews, market principles may serve to justify racial antipathy and cause us to turn a blind eye to structural restraints that often marginalize vulnerable minority communities.

Lamont and Guay further maintain that

it is thus prudent that while we commemorate the legislation that has opened the door politically for millions of minorities here in the United States, we also contemplate the role that our economic beliefs can have in hampering that political progress in the days to come. ([Lamont and Guay, 2014](#), pp. 2–6)

This is an issue that touches on social mobility, especially within heavily income-stratified societies, and this disproportionately affects young people. Additionally, a British government White Paper set forth its policy for exploring this issue. It set the government target of increasing the number of ethnic minorities in higher education by more than 20% in 2020, noting that students within this demographic are less likely to explore the current financing options. However, the chapter also highlights the point that British universities are eager to retain a certain level of fiscal buoyancy and hence they will focus their efforts on attracting more students eager to embrace the current student finance model ([BIS, 2015](#)).

In Australia, it was argued in an extensive study that neoliberal transformation is pursued by certain organizations and key policy-makers to produce a new calibre of citizens. These citizens would be more robust and able to tackle the competitive economic landscape in the only core country to avoid the 2008 financial crisis. Hence, policy-makers are keen to sustain the neoliberal approach to higher education. This is also evident in Malaysia. [Weisbrot \(2007\)](#) opines that public universities previously dominated simply because the ruling regime viewed access to higher education as “a means of restructuring Malaysian society and eliminating the identification of ethnic community with economic functions”. However, dwindling resources and the impact of the 1997 Asian financial crisis led to the introduction of market forces – a situation he characterizes as financially driven reform ([Weisbrot, 2007](#), pp. 105–118) which is spearheaded by elites and political decision-makers in the Malaysian political hierarchy. These attitudes have come to define the agendas of core countries for quite some time, and another set of researchers who have furthered academic discourse on this emergent agenda within higher education include Les [Levidow \(2005\)](#) at the Open University and Michael [Apple \(2004\)](#) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Levidow’s work takes a more anthropological stance as it focusses on the role of the university in today’s rapidly changing world. He touches on how students came to be purveyors as well as victims of the neoliberal movement within education. However, he

does not touch on what this means for the young people of today who exist within this neoliberal structure. Like most works on neoliberalism one comes across, we are still left wanting with regard to the ongoing impact of such transformations (Levidow, 2005, pp. 156–163).

On the other hand, Apple (2004) takes us through his views on the subject in very clear terms, pointing out how the classroom is being transformed from a haven of critical thought and sound debate to a more cautious back and forth of regurgitation on both sides. Apple (2004, pp. 179–195) further looks at the concept of drive. What drives a young individual to seek the four walls of a university to spend his formative years? For Apple, this is chiefly down to the realities of the economy, either brought on by the conditions of the parents or the conditions of the students themselves. He asserts that one only has to look at recent surveys to understand why individuals choose certain colleges, and for him the answer remains clear: neoliberal hegemony has “saturated our consciousness, so that the educational, economic and social world we see and interact with, and the common sense interpretations we put on it, becomes the only world”. Hence he argues that competition has evolved as the dominant characteristic within higher education today. Vincent Tinto (1993) takes the discourse on motivation a step further, arguing that motivation plays a fundamental role in the intensity that students bring to their respective institutions. If, for example, a student makes their choice based on league tables and gets on a course they want but not the university they want, this would definitely affect the intensity with which they engage with the institutions. This is because they would link the purchased education to their self-worth, potential human capital and future social status, which arguably could decide their salary scales, and even the choice of a future spouse. Their works are a disparaging observation on the evolution of the cost-benefit approach increasingly applied to many aspects of the university.

The role of philanthropic efforts within university education now plays a very pivotal role. The debates on these feature stakeholders as diverse as recipients of scholarships, academics, governing boards of charities, partnerships, departments of universities, politicians, businessmen and families of all strata and income levels. Despite this, there isn't an extensive academic consensus on this. The literature is dominated by studies commissioned by charities and trusts. Notwithstanding, independent scholars have added to the body of knowledge in this critical area. Frederick M. Hess and Jeffrey R. Henig (2015) report, *The New Education Philanthropy: Politics, Policy, and Reform*, focus on large organizations such as the Gates Foundation and the Walton Trust. They draw on the divergence from the old notions surrounding giving that now underpins the goals and values of philanthropic action. One can argue that the goal is to seek out the best students and remove all financial inhibitions that could render their time at university unpalatable. For certain leftist scholars, this increasing reliance on external private funding by modern universities jeopardizes sustained government funding. It also threatens academic independence, because of the clauses attached to certain university grants. However, for those who side with this it is maintained that “the ambitions of universities to create new knowledge and skills for a better future exceed the ability of governments to pay for them” (Gasman

et al., 2007, pp. 69–73). It is contended that such alternative and complementary funding is not just important but ultimately necessary, though the caveat is ensuring that such crucial sources of funding do not distort universities' missions and practices is characterized as lip service by voices who argue against it. The charge, whether this change is okay or not, is dependent on the lens of the analysis.

There is a long history of many universities sustained and even kick-started by wealthy individuals. The major European universities in the middle ages, such as the universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Bologna and Malta, relied heavily on fundraising from wealthy individuals. Indeed, as far back as 1643, Harvard University in the United States had a major fundraising campaign. This occurred at a time when such fundraising was mainly to fund wars, circumnavigation and imperial expansion. This infusion of private funds within university education is exemplified by how many major institutions are littered with their eponymous benefactors, ranging from Stanford to Carnegie and Rockefeller. Hence one can easily see that this practice is quite ubiquitous. However, the current neoliberal age has led to dissenting opinions on this practice. Nevertheless, it was observed by Clark Kerr of the University of California, Berkeley that:

Of all the institutions that were established in the western world five centuries ago, only 85 persist today. This tiny group includes the Catholic Church, the parliaments of the Isle of Man, Iceland and Great Britain, several Swiss cantons and, most strikingly, 70 universities. Philanthropy has supported the longevity of universities and if they are to continue their role at the forefront of social, technological and economic transformations, as epitomized by the Fourth Industrial Revolution, philanthropy will become more significant than ever. (WEF, 2018, pp. 1–3)

A study conducted in 2012 for the National Bureau of Economic Research shows that philanthropic efforts and donations in the United States “contributed more than \$4 billion annually to operations, endowment and buildings devoted to scientific, engineering and medical research”. This has added to the debate on teaching, governance and student experience that proliferates the literature on neoliberal influences in universities. The factors governing these donations vary among core countries and are dependent on different national trends and issues. It is argued that sociodemographic factors are now a stronger indicator of giving than ever before. An instance was the recent donation by the billionaire Robert Smith to Morehouse College for the eradication of student debt, amounting to \$34 million dollars (Blackbaud, 2018, pp. 4–9). This contrasts with major factors in the past, such as personal disposable income, which has remained stable in the United States at 2.1% of disposable personal income since 2014 (List and Peysakhovich, 2011, pp. 166–169).

Technological innovation has also pushed giving in a totally new direction. Mobile platforms, social media penetration and crowdfunding platforms have increased the propensity to channel funds towards university education. It is very intriguing that online giving is now 8% of all donations to universities, a

significant amount. In addition, from 2016 to 2017, total online giving increased by 12% (Blackbaud, 2018, pp. 2–4). It is important to highlight that philanthropic funding is of great importance to academic and innovative enhancement: in areas where government may be reluctant, individuals step in and support speculative advanced research and this has led to incredulous results. Nevertheless, one could also appreciate the other side of the argument and the rationale for government to still play an active role in financial sustenance of universities, to keep the young people who inhabit them afloat. The majority of funding is directed at buildings, auditoriums and lecture centres, which are critical for enhancing the student experience, but for the young people, the students themselves, they see their prospects after university dwindling despite this injection of capital. Hence this influence upon the university experience is worthy of exploration by scholars seeking to highlight the impact of neoliberal transformation.

One can also argue that another effect of marketization of higher education is a gradual leaning towards the hierarchical placing of different courses, causing further distress to young people. Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) receive more attention from management, along with a host of courses, such as finance and business, that are marketed towards international students to maintain and increase profitability. One can argue that such “academic consumerism” is restructuring the perception of value accorded to different degrees. A question that could be posed is: “To what extent does this degree attract students?” It is argued that such transformations are rapidly changing the relationship between universities and stakeholders in the wider society (Vaira, 2004, pp. 483–504). It is further argued that this stratification occurs within departments as well, as certain courses are treated with more priority because of their weight on the university bottom-line. This then leads to much more fragmentation among staff and this could lead to surprising results as evidenced in the work of Menzies and Newson (2008, pp. 508–519). They contend that neoliberalism leads to clustering of academics, who are similar in style and substance. For them it is evident in many departments across the Western world. They state that

one repercussion of neoliberalism in higher education is that large proportions of certain contingent faculty cadre are females. This may lead to a situation where female students follow female faculty, who are increasingly located in fields not favoured by the market.

This includes but is not limited to courses such as education and nursing. However, one could argue that universities also pursue diversity within departments to further appeal to the sensibilities of incoming students, in a bid to drive up revenue maximization.

For Slaughter and Leslie (1997), such concentration is inimical to the flow of interdisciplinary ideas that foregrounds ground-breaking research. However, they maintain that the attitude of students towards this clustering is largely unexplored. Another issue explored by scholars is the adoption of business world practices to define the academic corridors. In today’s terms, they argue, universities have