

## FUNCTIONAL ASPECTS OF PRODUCTIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL INDICATORS FOR ADULT MATURITY IN AFRICA

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### ABSTRACT

Developing societies, especially those of Africa, supported by development agencies are charged with preparing their youth for the next generation of adulthood. This trend is particular in Africa whose youth constitute more than 70% of its total population; and its future hope. With this, youth service providers in the continent are challenged to improve the delivery of services, youth participation, and involvement in the development project of themselves and their societies. Through such improvements, youth may receive skills that enable them effectively function and also become more psychologically prepared to embrace their futures. In support, youth agencies could also develop programs that reduce youth risk factors while simultaneously providing activities that promote the character, values, capacities, skills and employability of youth. When they begin to overcome risk factors and nurture protective and productive skills, capacities and interpersonal understanding, they gradually gain not only economic, social, and moral aptitudes but also become psychologically mature for adulthood. This article focuses on functional aspects of productive youth development and psychological indicators for adult maturity in Africa. A key argument is that a more skilled, functional and productive youth is more psychologically matured (and prepared) for adulthood than the less skilled and less productive youth. Attention is focused on a network of useful capacities, skills, competencies, beliefs, values, norms, and practices as productive elements that African youth nurture for adult participation. Meanwhile psychological indicators ensue from the productive skills and include among others, physical and emotional maturity, empathy, interpersonal understanding, and other developmental markers that keep the youth psychologically competent and ready for adulthood. The literature also insinuates that role transition markers, though less articulated in industrialized societies, are still very important for adult maturity in African societies. However, between these maturity indicators, there is observed evidence that the markers of adulthood are more complex, diverse and nonlinear today than they have been at any time period; and full adult status is given by an individual's ability to manage shifts and challenges standing on the road to adulthood.

**Keywords:** Functional aspects, Productive youth development, psychological indicators, Adult maturity.