

The Development of Youth Centres in Kenya

by

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Alongside the problem of unemployed youth of working age² many developing countries in Africa are faced with the difficulty of usefully occupying children and young people who have ceased formal schooling but are still below the age of employment, and in this way of keeping vagrancy and juvenile delinquency in check. In Kenya this problem is being tackled through youth centres controlled and assisted by a national association, but enjoying a large measure of financial and material support from local communities. The following article describes how these centres are established, as well as their organisation and methods and the population for which they cater.

IN 1962 the population of Kenya was between seven and eight million persons. It was estimated that up to 60 per cent. of these were under 21 years of age, and the population was believed to be increasing at the rate of $2\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. per annum. The need to educate, train and occupy young people, great in any country, is no less vital in Kenya.

There is constant development in the country's educational services. Each year more children go to school and more children stay longer at school. Nevertheless, Kenya has an immediate problem in providing further training or useful occupation for a large number of youths who have had no more than four years' formal education, and it faces a similar problem in the future with regard to youngsters who leave school after seven years' formal education and who are still too young to enter the employment market. Moreover, there is still a significant number of children with no schooling at all. As an example, the Ministry of Education in

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² Cf. "Youth Employment and Vocational Training Schemes in Developing Countries", in *International Labour Review*, Vol. LXXXVI, No. 3, Sep. 1962, and "Unemployed Youth: an African Symposium", *ibid.*, Vol. LXXXVII, No. 3, Mar. 1963.

February 1962 reported a primary school enrolment of 653,000 children aged 7-10 years, and estimated that 119,000 children in this age-group were not at school. In the intermediate range (11-14 years) 228,000 children were at school and about 438,000 were not. Of the estimated 600,000 children in the age-group 15-18 years only a small percentage were in secondary schools.

Turning to employment, the number of wage earners in Kenya is obtained through an annual enumeration of employees and stood at 589,300 persons in 1961. Political uncertainty and the droughts and floods of 1961 have tended to cause a decline in this figure. Statistics of wage earners take little account of the African Land Units, where some 75 per cent. of the population live, and where the pattern of economy is one of subsistence farming. These areas are characterised by widespread and chronic underemployment, offset to some extent by traditional habits of responsibility towards the extended family group, which, in most cases, guarantees bare subsistence to those who have no land of their own. It is apparent that employment opportunities are few and far between for all save the more highly qualified and those who own land, although it is expected that more intensified farming and land consolidation will result in growing demands for agricultural labour.

As in many African countries, there has been a marked drift to the towns, and, particularly, to the city of Nairobi. There is a steady growth in the fully urbanised population. Increasing numbers of children are born in towns, or come to them at an early age, and these grow to maturity in isolation from traditional tribal customs, which, in any case, are becoming weaker year by year.

Arising from the Mau Mau Emergency with its widespread social effects in the Kikuyu tribal areas, juvenile vagrancy has become a major problem in recent years. In the period January to September 1962, for instance, police figures show that 1,133 vagrant children were dealt with in the Nairobi area alone. Many of these were very young and had left home owing to dissatisfaction with local conditions; they had travelled considerable distances to reach the city, where they were faced with no alternative save to live on their wits and gravitate towards crime.

Delinquency grows worse with each passing year. The Probation Service Annual Report for 1961 states that—

The number of juveniles who came into conflict with the law shows no sign of any decrease. Unemployment, which has grown considerably worse during the year, is one of the many causes of the upsurge in crime and there is certainly no room for optimism that this particular misfortune is likely to grow less. . . . Attention has also been drawn in the past to the lack of parental control and interest, which probably does more than anything else to create juvenile offenders. . . .

The Approved Schools and Juvenile Remand Homes Report, 1961, states :

The position with regard to juvenile delinquency shows an increase in the problem. . . . The type of person now being received in the Approved Schools is showing a disquieting change. Boys nowadays reject the opportunity of free education and living almost completely, and are only anxious to escape and enjoy complete freedom of action. Their attitude to the staff is one of truculence and opposition. . . .

This, then, is the background against which the youth centres of Kenya must operate.

AIMS AND OBJECTS OF THE CENTRES

The centres set out to provide full daily occupational training to youngsters who are unable to enter or proceed within the country's normal school system. By keeping the children usefully engaged they militate against vagrancy and delinquency. In order to reach the most deprived elements of the population, the fees are kept to a minimum, being usually 5s. to 15s. a year, as opposed to the 45s. to 60s. charged by the schools, and there is normally a generous measure of full remission of even these low fees.

In rural centres considerable emphasis is placed on instruction in agriculture and animal husbandry, and on the teaching of crafts, such as carpentry, tanning and simple building, which have a real value in the agricultural economy. In urban centres trades such as motor mechanics find a place. Educationally, the centres give classes in literacy for those children who have never been to school, and further the knowledge of those who have by the teaching of such subjects as English and mathematics.

It must be emphasised that the centres do not seek to replace proper schools in any way, and that the element of academic tuition is introduced because it is necessary for balanced training. Equally, although pupils from some youth centres become qualified under the trade tests set by the Kenya Labour Department in the same way as do pupils from the Government Trade and Technical Schools, this is incidental to the main aims, which are—

- (1) To produce individuals who have a sense of responsibility and of service to their fellows ; who understand the workings of the Government of their country and can play their part as citizens and as voters ; and who have a command of manual skills sufficient to enable them to participate constructively in the development of the economy and the raising of the standard of living, particularly in rural areas.

- (2) To bring a measure of interest, stability and discipline into the lives of the children of the poorest sections of the community.

In addition to academic instruction and the teaching of crafts, all youth centres provide character training based on ideals of service to the community, and enrich their programmes as far as possible with the introduction of sports and cultural activities.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CENTRES

The first centres, then known as youth clubs, were started on an experimental basis in the Nyeri District of the Central Province during the early part of 1957. Development has been continuous ever since, and there are now 166 youth centres, catering for between 12,000 and 14,000 children, in most of the heavily populated areas of Kenya. This is not a large number when compared with the size of the problem ; but, when it is considered that this expansion has taken place in the face of acute financial stringency, it constitutes a remarkable achievement.

In August 1957 the Kenya Government appointed its first Colony Youth Organiser and instructed him to concentrate on the Kikuyu areas in the first instance. After touring the Central Province and studying the situation, he recommended that a system of youth centres should be established—of the same general type as the experimental ones in the Nyeri District, namely institutions with buildings, land and staff, capable of giving full daily supervision and instruction to large numbers of young people. The Government accepted the plan in principle, but was in no position to provide the relatively massive finance required. In consequence, it was decided that a voluntary association should be formed to encourage the formation and financing of youth centres on a local basis. The association would be supported by the Government through the provision of the Colony Youth Organiser as its Chief Executive Officer, and by such grants as could be made from time to time.

A constitution was prepared, being drawn up in such a way as to allow of considerable flexibility and easy amendment in the light of experience, and the Kenya Association of Youth Centres was registered under the Societies Ordinance and commenced to function in 1958, with the Commissioner for Community Development as the first chairman of its Council. The presidency of the Association was accepted by His Excellency the Governor.

Under the constitution, a supervisory officer had to be appointed in each district or township where youth centres were to be started, and the Government agreed that community development officers should be directed to undertake these positions in the Central Province Districts. This precedent was followed in other provinces in later years, and the main weight of on-the-ground

supervision is still borne by government officers in the rural districts. In townships the responsibility is usually taken by the social welfare officer employed by the local council.

The first step in the scheme was to explain it to the general population, and this was done through chiefs and headmen, and by large open-air *barazas* (meetings). This had to be done with the greatest care, with the object of bringing the people to the pitch of enthusiasm where they would voluntarily provide the plots of land on which the centres would stand, provide the materials and labour for the buildings, and subscribe towards the initial equipment. The first centres were the most difficult to provide: once these were functioning, it became a comparatively simple task to stimulate interest in a new area by inviting the community to send a party of prominent citizens to see the scheme for themselves. Inter-district rivalry played its part, and the scheme gathered momentum with astonishing speed. Naturally there were considerable variations according to the area—its density of population, degree of wealth and quality of leadership. Most Central Province youth centres ended up with 5 acres of land, for instance; but some had more than 10 acres, and some had a plot barely large enough for the buildings. Premises varied in quality from mud walls and a corrugated iron roof to fine edifices in stone.

Staffing

As the buildings started to rise, and money began to come in through local subscription, supervisory officers approached the District Councils for grants with which to pay staff. At that time the financial position of the African District Councils was not good, and the calls on their funds were many—for health services, schools, roads, etc. Nevertheless, all made grants according to their means, and these were sufficient to provide a skeleton staff of from two to five at each centre. The relative means of each district led to a wide variation in the number and quality of staff—differences which exist to this day.

Generally speaking each district preferred to choose local men as youth centre leaders, and selection was carried out by supervisory officers. Their task was no easy one, as the level of the salaries that could be offered meant that the centres were unable to attract men with a background of secondary education or teaching experience, although the leaders would be expected to administer money and property, guide the lives of large numbers of children, and supervise a complex programme of instruction. Usually the choice fell upon men in their middle twenties, with eight years of formal education behind them, who showed signs of

natural leadership. In 1958 the first training course was held by the Chief Executive Officer—the first of a series which is now an annual event. The pattern of these courses has not changed much during the years: they are short (usually of one or two months' duration) and cater for about twenty-five men. An attempt is made to impress the leaders with a sense of the responsibility of their task, and to give them a clear conception of basic aims. They receive concentrated instruction in simple accounting, store-keeping, programme preparation and teaching techniques. They hold group discussions on such subjects as internal discipline in a centre, methods of fund-raising, etc., and visit an efficient youth centre for a period of practical study. Finally, they receive talks by Magistrates, District Officers and the representatives of various child welfare organisations, so that they gain an impression of how their work relates to national efforts at solving juvenile problems.

No attempt has yet been made to centralise the training of technical instructors, although a need for this exists and is being investigated at present. The salaries offered to these instructors are usually insufficient to obtain the services of well-qualified men, and most centres have taken on local village craftsmen, who either work for a fixed wage, or take a percentage of the profits on the sale of articles made by their pupils. With regard to the very important fields of agriculture and animal husbandry, periodic instruction is given by the Government District Agricultural and Veterinary Officers, who welcome the opportunity of explaining modern methods of farming to a controlled group, especially when theory can be matched with practice on the centre's small-holding, which may develop into a model for the neighbourhood.

Female staff to instruct the girls in domestic science classes is easily found, as the *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* (Women's Progress Movement) has strong branches in most parts of Kenya, and can recommend women who have undergone domestic science training at either local or national level.

Equipment

As has been mentioned, the basic equipment for the centres was usually provided by subscription from the local people; and this was reinforced by several most generous grants from the Dulverton Trust, an English foundation specialising in social welfare projects. Considerable assistance has come in recent months from the United Nations Children's Fund, which has provided about half the youth centres in Kenya with sets of good quality tools. Gifts have also been received from local business firms, particularly the Kenya Shell and B.P. Oil Companies. A typical centre will have a reason-

able number of tools for the boys' trades, a sewing machine and other domestic science equipment for the girls, and a fair library of textbooks for the classrooms—many being of American origin, as the association has received some 30,000 books from the Government of the United States and from private groups within that country. Furnishings do not match equipment in most cases, and the general poverty of the centres is reflected in a lack of adequate desks, forms and workbenches.

From the foregoing some idea will have been gained as to how the centres are financed. To summarise :

(1) Land and buildings are the responsibility of the local community. Most rural centres have small farms which serve a joint role in providing instruction of a practical nature, and in bringing in some funds from the sale of produce. Buildings vary greatly in quality, and only the minority are constructed in permanent materials.

(2) Equipment is provided by the local community, with very substantial assistance from the United Nations Children's Fund, the Dulverton Trust, and other bodies. Such assistance is distributed through the Kenya Association of Youth Centres.

(3) Staff is the responsibility of the local authority. The annual salary bill throughout Kenya totals about £40,000, of which £5,195 comes in grants from the Central Government. In past years assistance has also been received in this sphere from the Dulverton Trust, and has been of the utmost value in encouraging local authorities to make greater efforts, and in averting the occasional crisis arising from the failure of local funds.

THE PUPILS

The constitution of the Association lays down that pupils may be of either sex and of any race (although, in the nature of things, the enrolment is almost entirely African), and of any age between seven and 20 years.

The average age of pupils varies significantly from district to district, according to special factors including the coverage by normal schools. Over the whole country the average age is 14 years ; but in some districts the membership is confined to youths in their middle and late teens, while in others the centres are filled with very young children.

To comply with the law, youth centres are registered with the Ministry of Education as "day continuation schools" and the Chief Executive Officer of the Association is recognised as a

“manager of schools” by the Ministry. An agreement between the Ministry and the Association defines the categories of children to be served by youth centres as follows :

(1) Children who have exhausted the facilities provided by the present primary/intermediate school system and are therefore excluded from gaining any further education by that system, e.g.—

(a) children who fail to gain admission to a Standard V in districts where “Seven Years of Education for All” has not yet been introduced ; and

(b) children who have left school after completing seven or eight years’ education and have not been successful in obtaining further training.

(2) Children who are genuinely unable to pay the school fees. It has been agreed that the Kenya Association of Youth Centres will be responsible for setting up committees to review such cases.

(3) Children who for some reason or other failed to commence primary school at the correct age and are now too old for admission into Standard I. In most districts this will be nine years plus.

(4) Children who have been expelled from school for misbehaviour, or who have lost their places as the result of wilful truancy, or who, for reasons of delinquency, should not be allowed to mix with other children at the primary/intermediate level.

It will be seen that the categories are wide, allowing each district considerable discretion as to the age and type of pupil to be admitted.

It has been stated earlier that the policy of the Association is to reach the most needy children in the community. In a youth centre facing incessant and serious financial difficulties there is a temptation to admit children who can pay the low fees, rather than those who can afford to pay nothing at all. Equally, with the poor staff/pupil ratio, it is by no means easy for the overworked instructors to find the time actively to seek out the needy and distressed. In spite of this, however, almost all centres make a remarkable effort to keep the spirit of the Association’s motto “Service and High Endeavour”. Many, not content with serving children who are merely poor, admit an additional percentage of crippled children or blind children.

Entry is normally by application from a parent, and the usual procedure is for the parent to be shown round the centre while receiving a careful explanation of the difference between a youth centre and a school. In particular, it is important that the parent should understand that the child will neither be able to sit for a

recognised academic examination from the centre, nor be able to transfer back into the normal schooling system at a later date. If the child is of school entry age, and the parent pleads poverty as the reason for his seeking a place in a youth centre rather than in a school, then the family is asked to submit to a means assessment carried out by a small committee usually composed of local elders. If, in the opinion of this committee, the parent can afford to send the child to school, he will not be permitted to place him in a youth centre. Over the course of the years parents, and the local population in general, are coming to understand what the true function of a youth centre is, and there is diminishing confusion of its work with that of a school.

A special case exists in the city of Nairobi, where the first urban centre was founded in 1959 under private sponsorship. This centre serves boys only, and specialises in youngsters who have been the victims of extreme poverty and destitution, or who have become out-of-control, vagrant and delinquent. In addition to some 300 dayboys, the centre is exceptional in that it can take 200 boarders: these are children whose homes are totally smashed, or who have become delinquent to the degree where intensive supervision is necessary, at any rate in the early stages of their training.

Entry to this centre is still by parental application for the most part, and parents are encouraged to refer their children when trouble starts so that corrective action can begin as early as possible. However, the centre will also take in boys who are referred by various officials and voluntary organisations, or who are committed by a Court.

The centre has enjoyed remarkable success. It is widely known in Kenya, and its rehabilitative methods are attracting a great deal of international interest—particularly from other African countries that are starting to experience serious juvenile problems in their urban areas.

As the centre is the only one of its kind at the moment, it receives cases from many parts of Kenya, and even, occasionally, from Tanganyika and Uganda. In addition, it has to cater for a small number of boys from racial communities other than African. Many districts both rural and urban, however, are becoming increasingly anxious to incorporate residential facilities at selected youth centres, and in time it is hoped that orphans and the milder cases of disturbed and troublesome children will be cared for in their own areas of origin. It is also hoped that Nairobi will soon be able to embark upon experimenting with a similar centre for difficult girls, who present a problem that is much smaller numerically but probably harder to deal with effectively.

Throughout Kenya's youth centres as a whole the ratio of membership between the sexes is approximately 60 per cent. boys and 40 per cent. girls.

ORGANISATION AND METHODS

The Kenya Association of Youth Centres is governed by a Council consisting of a Chairman, a Deputy Chairman, a Chief Executive Officer, a Secretary, a Treasurer and 15 members. The Chief Executive Officer and the Secretary are nominated by the Government (at present both posts are held by the Colony Youth Organiser). All other officers and members are elected annually at a meeting of supervisory officers and district representatives. They are normally prominent persons who are willing and able to further the work of the Association—for example, six of the present persons are members of the legislature. The full Council meets approximately every three months, and between meetings the work of the Association is carried out by the Chief Executive Officer, assisted by a small Executive Committee.

As was mentioned earlier, a supervisory officer must be appointed before a youth centre may be started in any district or township, and this is done by written warrant from the Council. Once such an officer is appointed, he must approve the registration of any new centre in his area before a certificate of registration is issued by the Council, and all applications for warrants in respect of assistant supervisory officers, youth centre leaders and youth centre instructors must be submitted through him.

At youth centre level, it is obligatory for an advisory committee to be formed with a membership of parents and responsible local persons. The youth centre leader is expected to consult this committee on matters concerning policy and the expenditure of centre funds, and the supervisory officer acts as referee in the event that any disagreement arises. Some centres also have a committee composed of senior pupils, which assists the staff in planning programmes.

The content of instruction is probably most easily explained by an actual example. The Fort Hall District of the Central Province presents a good picture of a reasonably advanced rural youth centre scheme. There are 17 youth centres, with a total enrolment of 2,000 pupils served by 17 youth centre leaders, 27 trade instructors, 18 literacy teachers and 17 domestic science instructresses. All 17 of the centres offer instruction in carpentry and domestic science, three have their own tanneries, seven have shoe-making courses, two have blacksmithing courses, and one has a typing course. All the centres have farm holdings of various sizes, con-

taining between them 6,437 coffee trees (of which 1,562 were bearing coffee in 1962, the remainder being young trees) ; 300 pyrethrum plants ; 30,000 pineapple plants ; 323 banana trees and a considerable acreage of maize, beans, potatoes, cabbages, tomatoes, spinach, peas, etc. All these crops are planted and tended by the pupils as part of their training. They are also used to bring in much-needed income, and to supplement the food of those pupils whose homes cannot fully maintain them.

Each centre starts its day at 8 a.m. with an assembly, when pupils parade and are inspected for cleanliness. Classes start at 8.30 a.m. and continue until noon. They resume again at 2 p.m., and the day ends with a final assembly at 4.30 p.m.

A typical centre divides its pupils into two streams. On a Monday morning one stream goes to the workshops, and the other attends classes in reading and writing, English, arithmetic and civics. The two streams exchange their programmes in the afternoon. Tuesdays are divided between the workshops and agricultural training, both practical and theoretical.

On Wednesday both streams engage in extra-curricular activities. These include bush-clearing, the construction of minor roads, voluntary service to elderly and infirm persons (mending their homes, bringing them the week's stock of firewood, etc.), and similar community projects.

On Thursday there is a general meeting of all staff and pupils to evaluate Wednesday's activities. The rest of the day is divided between the classrooms and the workshops.

On Friday a period is given up to an outside lecturer, who may speak on anything from the work of the International Red Cross to the running of a co-operative society. The rest of the day is divided between agricultural instruction and the workshops.

Saturdays are used for sports and games, outings, etc.

In a centre with younger members, more emphasis is placed on the classroom at the expense of the workshop ; but other aspects of the programme remain much the same. Girls follow the same programme as boys, except that domestic science instruction is substituted for workshop training. Most centres cater for boys and girls together : only in a few areas does this present difficulty owing to tribal prejudices against mixing the sexes.

To build up morale, the principals of youth centres are encouraged to make their centres smart with flower gardens, ornamental gates, a flag staff and the judicious use of whitewash. There is usually a standard uniform for pupils to wear, although this is never rigorously enforced as many children are too poor to afford it. Internal discipline is modelled on that of a school, and once a child has been placed at the centre by his parents attendance thereafter is com-

pulsory. Exceptions are made in the planting seasons if the children are needed at home to work on their relatives' plots.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS

These have their roots in the all-pervading lack of adequate finance.

There is no difficulty in finding good staff for the centres, but very great difficulty in holding them once they have been found. The lowest grade of qualified teacher in a normal school may expect to receive a wage of some 250s. a month. The leader of a youth centre has to contend with a heavy teaching programme, made complicated by the differing educational backgrounds and ages of his pupils, and in addition he must shoulder considerable administrative responsibility. Yet he receives a lower wage than a school-teacher—in some districts amounting to only 100s. a month. It is not surprising, therefore, that there is a high turnover in staff, which unsettles all parts of the centre's programme.

As has been mentioned, the instructors are usually local village craftsmen who are expected to make up a part of their wages from the sale of finished articles from their workshops. A centre seldom has much money to lay out on raw materials, so a very careful estimate of the likely market is essential before, say, a piece of furniture is made. Unless this is done, and unless wastage during training is kept to a minimum, it is all too easy to make a loss instead of a profit. Resignations from disgruntled instructors were common in the early days, and although most centres have now acquired business sense by painful experience the position is still not a satisfactory one. The buying power of the local community is often limited, and the Association is unable to afford a central marketing organisation designed to bring the centres into contact with distant consumers, and particularly with the tourist. The best that can be done is for the Association to run stalls at agricultural and industrial shows in an endeavour to bring youth centre products to the notice of a wider public.

From experience over nearly six years there can be no doubt that adequate recurrent finance for staff is the vital point for consideration when founding a youth centre. There is little difficulty in obtaining land, buildings, equipment, and a modicum of raw materials. There is no shortage of keen pupils anxious to enrol. The provision of salaries, however, is a burden too heavy for the resources of most local communities; yet without good staff the project will never achieve real success, and may even come to disaster.

Furthermore, lack of staff prevents any sort of follow-up on ex-pupils, and no statistics exist to help with an evaluation of the

effect of the youth centre programme. Pupils remain in the centres until such time as they feel they have assimilated all the instruction available, and then strike out for themselves. Except in cases where they remain in the vicinity, or when they call back on visits to the centre, the staff have no knowledge of what has become of them.

ACHIEVEMENTS

The best testimony to the value of the work of Kenya's youth centres lies in the way the scheme has expanded in spite of incessant difficulties of finance; and in the way in which the centres, once established, have withstood the most drastic crises.

An excellent example is provided by the Machakos District of the Southern Province. The district has 19 youth centres with an average of some 50 pupils apiece, and has always enjoyed a reputation for a very high standard of workshop instruction. In 1960 the district suffered a prolonged drought, which was followed in 1961 by devastating floods and widespread famine. Attendance of the pupils became erratic, as many of them had to assist in repairing the damage to their homes and family farms and to take part in the search for food. The population was reduced to such poverty that there was a sharp decline in the payment of rates to the local authority, which verged on bankruptcy. As a part of a stringent economy campaign the Machakos African District Council was forced to cut its community development staff from 20 to four and to withdraw all funds for youth centres. The situation was explained to the local communities, each of which was given the choice of closing its youth centre or of shouldering the burden itself.

In every case the people decided in favour of keeping their youth centre open, and volunteers were found to take on the duties previously performed by the youth centre leader. The trade instructors agreed to remain at their posts provided they could be given a bare pittance for subsistence. The Kenya Association of Youth Centres, from its Dulverton Trust Grants, paid these instructors the tiny sum of 25s. a month throughout 1962. Not a single centre was closed down: on the contrary, the pupils contributed very materially to relief operations in the district. Each centre became a food kitchen for the distressed, and pupils worked long hours over and above their normal programme by cooking and distributing famine relief maize. Not content with that, the girls cut up the cloth containers in which the maize arrived and sewed them into clothing for free distribution. One of the youth centres was awarded the Association's Voluntary Service Cup for the year 1962 in recognition of its work with the relief operations, allied to an

astonishing effort on behalf of a polio-stricken girl: the pupils carried her daily between her home and the centre, a considerable distance, and eventually raised the money to get her to Nairobi for proper medical treatment.

By the beginning of 1963 the Machakos African District Council had started its financial recovery and was able to take on the payment of youth centre staff once more ; and at the time of writing there are plans for increasing the youth centre coverage in the district.

To sum up, the Kenya Association of Youth Centres can make no claim to high standards of academic and vocational training, or to the successful placement of large numbers of youths in gainful employment. The most that can be said is that a youth centre pupil improves in general knowledge and manual dexterity as a result of his enrolment. On the other hand his childhood is made more stable, happier and more useful ; and the increasing support from parents and the general population is indicative of the high value placed on the character training imparted by the centres, and the benefit of their services to the community at large.
