

REPOSITIONING THE NIGERIAN YOUTHS FOR SELF EMPLOYMENT: A PROGNOSIS

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Abstract

This paper is a broad overview of youth unemployment in Nigeria and how to reposition them for self-employment. In discussing the sub-topics therein, Nigeria peculiarities were taken into consideration. The discourse captured salient areas like youth unemployment, youth education, business idea generation; alternatives to government paid jobs among others were exhaustively discussed. The paper argues that a critical evaluation of Nigerian educational system is needed to ensure that graduates do not rely on while collar jobs or only jobs provided by Government. The type of education being proposed is that which will be able to inculcate in the youths the skills needed to be self reliant; education that will instill into the minds of its graduates the ability to forecast the business World and be able to discern what the need of the society would be and work towards it. The discourse also suggested the formulation and implementation of public policy that would anchor on effective electricity generation. Hitherto, instability in the business sector is engendered by epileptic electricity supply. Stability in electricity generation would readily create enabling environment needed for business to thrive in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Youth, career development, unemployment, self employment.*

Introduction

Nigeria is home to 160 million citizens making it the most populous nation in Africa. Nigeria is also the 7th most populous nation in the world, along with being the most populous black nation in the world (Iluyomade, 2011). In spite of having fabulous economic potentials, ebbing human resources and a territory riveted with natural resources, Nigeria has not fared so well, economically. Over the years, the socio-economic prospects of her citizens have dwindled and unemployment rate is always on the rise, even as the earnings and income generated from oil continued to sky-rocket (Iluyomade, 2011). Nigeria is a large net importer of gasoline and other petroleum products, its unemployment rate continue to be on the increase and also inflation runs at roughly 10% per annum, despite the fact that she is the world's 14th largest producer of (index mundi, with 10th largest proven reserves) crude oil and possesses the world's 8th largest proven natural gas reserves.

Conversely, one of the greatest challenges facing the Nigeria economy is unemployment which has maintained a rising trend over the years. Official figures from the Bureau of Statistics puts the figure of unemployed at 19.70 per cent, about 30 million, but this figure still did not include about 40 million other Nigerian youths captured in World Bank statistics in 2009 (Njoku and Okezie, 2011). Viewing this from the perspective of the recent events in the Middle East, where unemployment and poverty, among others, played a key role in the uprising, one can rightly conclude that Nigeria's unemployment poses a threat to its development, security and peaceful co-existence, being that Nigeria is made up of diverse entities from different cultural and religious backgrounds most of whom have shown differences

in political, cultural and religious understanding emanating from concerns of abuse of power, resource allocation, nepotism, negligence and corruption among others (Njoku and Okezie, 2011).

Every year, over 300,000 graduates are churned out from the tertiary institutions nationwide (Osolor, 2012). This number grows yearly and translates into more and more unemployed people littering the streets of Nigerian cities. Unemployment is a societal problem in any nation. Unemployment seems to account for most of the social crimes perpetrated by graduates in the Nigerian society today. The accelerating level of prostitution, armed robbery, oil bunkering, internet rats, drug addiction, trafficking, rape, kidnapping and all facets of violence can be largely attributed to the incidence of unemployment. An examination of most of the apprehended criminals seems to signify that a large number of Nigerian graduates that engage in criminal activities are those without gainful employment. Some of these criminals are people who have the potentials for gainful employment but have been deprived such opportunity.

Central to the attainment of employment generation in any economy is the availability of finance; more generally, cheap finance. Nnanna (2004) argued that bank credit is important for a smooth take-off of business enterprises and also ensures its efficient performance thereafter, even as Nzotta (2004) reiterated that finance influences, positively, the level of economic activity in a region. Finance is capable of influencing what is to be produced, for whom to be produced and how it will be produced including the prices of the produced goods and services are to be dispensed to final consumers. Thus, adequate availability of finance is the hub of employment generation in both small and large economies. Finance thus ensures that economic ills enshrined in unemployment are checked and controlled.

Several factors may be blamed for the prevalence of youth unemployment in Nigeria. There is a high population growth rate—3.5 percent per annum—which accompanies an already large national population of over 167 million people. In addition, deficient school curricula and poor teacher training have contributed to the failure of educational institutions to provide students the appropriate skills to make them employable. Since schools in rural areas are generally more deficient in infrastructure, teaching facilities and teacher quality than schools in urban areas, this may help account for the high growth in rural unemployed youth.

In addition to these supply factors, there is a lack of vibrant industries to absorb competent graduates. This obstacle was in part caused by an infrastructural deficit and a debilitating structural adjustment program (SAP) implemented by Nigeria in the 1980s, which led to the closure of many industries and from which the country is yet to fully recover. It is also well-known that the youth unemployment situation has been aggravated by flawed and inconsistent public policies on employment. Another reason might be that policymakers have had to confront inadequate information and data that can form the basis of effective planning. As reported in other studies (Asaju et al., 2014 and Iwayemi, (2014), employment data are very hard to obtain, even from statutory institutions and agencies established for gathering socio-economic data. Where unemployment registers exist at all, they are limited to urban areas, and, in fact, not all those searching for employment attempt to register. In the absence of such data, policymakers tend to rely on cross-sectional household surveys, which are often inconsistent and full of

errors. This lack of data makes it difficult for policymakers to understand the nature of the employment challenge and make informed decisions on how to support young people in the labor market. The scarcity of data on informal employment and entrepreneurship in particular is a major obstacle, given the importance of this sector for youth employment. However, with the transition to civilian rule in 1999, successive civilian administration have tried to refocus unemployment programs, discontinuing many of the old programs, restructuring some of them and creating new ones. It should be noted that as a federation, public policy on employment has been addressed at the three levels of government—federal, state and local—and that this new emphasis on unemployment has made youths the primary constituency of concern. Consequently, certain institutional arrangements and agencies have been established to promote employment among youth. Three of the current and most prominent programs include the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), the Youth Enterprise With Innovation in Nigeria (YOU-WIN) and the Osun State Youth Employment Scheme (O'YES), among others.

Youth Development and Empowerment

The youths are the future tomorrow and therefore any government that neglects the youths is a bad government. Youth development should be pursued vigorously using the following components. Youth empowerment and employment is the right of the masses and not privilege.

Components of Youth Development and Empowerment

- (1) Youth employment –employment opportunities should be provided by the ruling elites to gainfully employ and empower the youths who incidentally are the future leaders. Where there is insufficient paid employment, the ruling petit-bourgeoisies should create enabling environment to sustain entrepreneurship and operation of small scale ventures.
- (2) Youth education and training – education is power, it is one of the major indicators of measuring development. Therefore youth training programs including vocational training through talent/skill assessment inventory.
- (3) Entrepreneurship skill acquisition should be inculcated in the educational curriculum to cut across all specter of educational system in order to position the youths in act of management, analysis and effective operation of business.
- (4) Research, evaluation and publication of such researches, especially those that relate to skill acquisition would foster youth development.
- (5) Liaising with state youth departments and international organizations
- (6) national Youth Award scheme
- (7) International youth exchange program
- (8) Youth holiday program
- (9) National youth camps and
- (10) Coordinating activities of national voluntary youth organizations.
- (11) Youth mobilization – Political and social mobilization agencies should be set up and their services should be complemented by non-governmental organizations. They will handle youth mobilization , business and political education. Funds should be made available for effective running of such outfits.
- (12) Establishment of coordinating bodies to monitor and evaluate government programs and policies as they relate to the youth.

What do we do when there is no paid employment?

First and foremost we should think enterprise. Entrepreneurship is a career and not an event, like any other career, it has a process (Okezie, 2007).

Entrepreneurial process

- Develop an enterprise mindset - survey the business environment
- Generate business ideas
- Identify the idea that gives you a business opportunity
- Create a vision of the business you plan to start
- Ask for business development and support services help
- Prepare your business plan
- Handle legal/regulatory issues
- Source fund and assemble other resources
- Start up

Business Idea Generation

Many people march past business opportunities daily and ignore them, Reasons being that they lack the knowledge and enterprise mindset. You can generate wonderful business ideas in the following ways:

- Innovation
- Keying into the fast growing industry
- Identifying service gaps
- Taking advantage of government policies
- Identifying possible needs of a business cluster
- Playing with possibilities
- Creative thinking – thinking out of the box
- Identifying product/service needs of women
- Identifying product/service needs of youths
- Identifying product/service needs of children
- Acquired skills
- Studying the problems of the economy to find marketable solution.

Typical examples of some business ideas that were formulated and executed by some people and they are living big today are:

- (1) Computer ‘maka ndi afia’
- (2) The Ore Express toilet facilities
- (3) The palm kernel oil extraction cluster equipment fabricator
- (4) The Aba Garment Makers cluster accessories suppliers
- (5) The Abakaliki Rice millers de-storing machine service provider
- (6) Book keeping services for micro, small and medium scale enterprises

Environmental Scanning

- Business operating environment is risky, harsh and unpredictable; you need therefore to scan the environment before packaging your business plan.
- - Critical questions you need to address are:
 - (a) How promising is the industry I am going into?
 - (b) What is the level of competition there?
 - (c) Who are my competitors?
 - (d) What opportunities do I have in the market place?
 - (e) Are there possible threats to the planed business?
 - (f) What are the key success factors in this type of business?
 - (g) What is the state of infrastructure in your planned location?
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Other self-motivated alternatives towards youth empowerment are presented as follows:

- (a) Youths should embark on bank savings no matter how little.
 - (b) Youths should form “isusu” group contribution which could be done on monthly basis. 10,15 , 30, 35 or more people can come together and form one. Funds generated from such contribution should be lodged in the bank en-bloc or put into productive investment or loaned out on interest basis.
 - (c) Youths should engage in trades, stead farm, poultry or other micro businesses to enable them generate capital for large scale business.
 - (d) Youths should also form cooperative combines. It could be agricultural, production or trade based.
 - (e) Youths should also avail themselves of agricultural loans. Such loans should be judiciously utilized for fruitful ventures towards capital mobilization.
 - (f) Spare time should be used to learn soap and detergent making, meat pie making etc.
 - (g) Establishment of home stead fish production
 - (h) Establishment of low acreage vegetable production farm for easy management.
- (i) Plantain chips, pea nut, cashew nut processing/

Creating an enabling environment for youth survival

For the youths to develop as responsible citizens patriotic and forward looking argues Uzodinma (2005), certain conditions or requirements must be in place. Good education is the sum total of such requirements, good or sound education is the development of the whole man or woman, body, psyche, mind and spirit. Any educational policy that neglects any one of these constituents of the human personality is doomed to failure and as such would produce human beings who would be anything but what man was meant to be:

- (a) The body is developed through physical education, health-care, good food and water, cleanliness, good housing and ventilation etc.
- (b) The psychic life is developed through good social interaction in the family, in the school or age-grade, in the religious gathering, in the wider society. The emotions are controlled and channeled along the avenues approved by culture and custom.
- (c) The mind is trained through formal and informal education. The arts and science disputation and argumentation, more elaborate training in scientific and other research programs – all these help the mind grow and expand.
- (d) Spiritual training is more complex and very often neglected. That man is a spiritual being is evident in his ability to conceive of and possess abstract ideas or concepts like beauty, infinity, patriotism, originality etc. Such ideas are in-tangible, non-material, and abstract. They are as such spiritual. They exist beyond the ability of sense perception. That faculty or power in us, which produces and harbors or keeps such abstract concepts or ideas, must have the part of that which is perceived and harbored. An Igbo adage has it that '*agwo adi amu ife di nkeke*' (the snake's offspring cannot be short). A spiritual or abstract concept in man's mind is proof that man is spiritual at the core of his being. This aspect of man's nature is very often neglected in educational policies and the so-called educated man ends up parading himself as a glorified animal. He or she does not aspire for happiness above what the senses can enjoy. Outside eating, drinking, sleeping and mating, like any other beast or bird, there is nothing higher to aim at.

Youth Unemployment in Nigeria

There was a time in Nigeria when higher education certificates such as B.Sc, M.Sc., HND or even NCE were regarded or nick-named "meal ticket". Then, holders of such certificates were highly honored and respected. Reason being that they have jumped over poverty line. Their certificates give them automatic access to near riches or say wealth. Then too, only a few were holders of such degrees, yet there were many juicy jobs waiting at the door steps of a graduate. The academic world was good.

The economy was flourishing to the advantage of this class of citizens. A lot of laurels were knocking at their doors including good residential areas such as G.R.As in most of the big cities. In fact any degree holder in any discipline was regarded as a rich man or woman. Educational planners and managers had no stones to grind as to innovations and planning for future eventual changes.

Today things have changed. "Poverty" – a 'dreaded monster' now knocks at the door of graduates of higher institutions as well as others. Poverty may be defined as "the state of being poor or without competent subsistence, need, penury. (Webster International Dictionary 1999 Edition). . So what has to be done is to reposition our educational system to alleviate Poverty. It then means our educational system is no longer able to assist in alleviating poverty that is, providing its graduates with the necessary tools to sustain themselves. Therefore we could make bold to say that poverty among youths is occasioned by unemployment.

There is no gainsaying that Nigerian society is facing all forms of social disorder arising from youth unemployment Chukwuemeka,(2009). Everyday, there are reports of robbery burglary, car snatching, forgery, impersonation, rape, kidnapping and other vices. There is a general belief that most of the acts are carried out by unemployed youths and youths that are not stable in their employment. In most of our streets and public places, the unemployed youths wonder about. This is mostly because they find themselves without any means of livelihood. In the circumstances, the alternative is to device some means to survive. The problem of youth unemployment in Nigeria argue Chukwuemeka and Onudugo (2009) is a herculean task. According to Ude (2010) the quest for white collar jobs has also led to unemployment. Owing to societal expectations, many jobs are looked down upon. Imagine a situation where undergraduates in the various facets of education would vow never to hold a piece of chalk, or

browse through files in the bureaucracy. When youths are unemployed the tendency deviant behaviors are high. Kingsley (2004) is of the view that unemployed graduates sometimes indulge in drug abuse because they want to be far removed from society. They want to visit fantasy land where there is no gnashing of teeth. It could still force a graduate to contemplate suicide and actually go ahead to commit it. The basic problem is how to create or provide adequate employment opportunities that will create employment for the millions of unemployed youths, so as to fend for them-selves, and ensure that the youths accept to adjust with the available employment opportunities instead of pressing on or desiring a particular type of employment.

Table 1: unemployment Rate in Nigeria.

State	Rate	State	Rate	State	Rate
Abia	14.5	Ekiti	20.6	Nasarawa	10.1
Adamawa	29.4	Enugu	14.9	Niger	11.9
Akwaibom	34.1	Gombe	32.1	Ogun	8.5
Anambra	16.8	Imo	20.8	Ondo	14.9
Bauchi	37.2	Jigawa	26.5	Osun	12.6
Bayelsa	38.4	Kaduna	11.6	Oyo	14.9
Benue	8.5	Kano	27.6	Plateau	7.1
Borno	27.7	Katsina	37.3	Rivers	27.9
Cross River	14.3	Kebbi	12.0	Sokoto	22.4
Delta	18.4	Kogi	19.0	Taraba	26.8
Ebonyi	12.0	Kwara	11.0	Yobe	27.3
Edo	12.2	Lagos	19.5	Zamfara	13.3

Source: National Bureau for Statistics, 2010

The average rate of unemployment worldwide is 14.2% while Nigeria’s rate of unemployment is 19.7%. The country as a whole is above the world average and some states are actually above the National average. According to the above, fifteen (15) States, fall within that category. In table 2 below, the growth of unemployment by states in Nigeria is shown in which Abia, Adamawa, Bauchi, Delta, Kebbi and Zamfara are among the states with the highest level of unemployment in Nigeria.

Table 2: Unemployment rates by states in Nigeria 2002- 2011

State	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Abia	14.8	11.4	9.7	7.9	13.5	10.9	14.5	14.5	15.5	11.2
Adamawa	12.9	11.9	16.7	21.4	17.9	11.9	29.4	29.4	31.4	18.4
A/Ibom	12.3	14.4	14.4	14.4	15.3	13.5	34.1	34.1	36.1	18.4
Anambra	6.6	9.1	9.5	9.8	10.8	11.1	16.8	16.8	17.8	12.2
Bauchi	10.4	20.5	25.1	29.7	23.9	7.3	37.2	37.2	39.2	41.4
Bayelsa	3.5	7.1	14.0	20.9	16.0	6.9	38.4	38.4	40.4	23.9
Benue	8.2	4.8	11.7	18.6	10.8	67.4	8.5	8.5	9.5	14.2
Borno	6.4	0.8	3.6	6.3	5.8	7.8	27.7	27.7	29.7	29.1
C/River	7.9	12.0	11.5	11.1	16.9	11.8	14.3	14.3	15.3	18.2
Delta	14.9	17.1	10.8	4.5	13.8	18.9	18.4	18.4	20.8	27.2
Ebonyi	2.8	16.7	11.8	7.0	10.9	11.5	12.0	12.0	13.0	23.1
Edo	4.8	3.1	6.5	9.9	8.6	5.1	12.2	12.2	13.2	35.2
Ekiti	17.5	8.2	7.9	7.5	8.7	15.6	20.6	20.6	22.6	12.1
Enugu	15.2	16.5	21.6	27.4	20.0	11.5	14.9	14.9	15.9	25.2
Gombe	13.4	7.6	15.2	22.8	15.6	10.5	14.9	32.1	34.1	38.7
Imo	19.9	22.1	19.3	16.5	21.5	7.6	20.8	20.8	22.8	35.9
Jigawa	6.1	20.5	19.8	19.1	21.6	17.4	26.5	26.5	28.5	35.9
Kaduna	8.4	19.6	15.9	12.1	14.1	5.9	11.6	11.6	12.6	30.3
Kano	12.8	25.9	22.5	19.1	19.4	12.7	27.6	27.6	29.6	21.3
Katsina	10.4	20.3	22.1	23.8	19.3	5.8	37.3	37.3	39.3	28.1
Kebbi	12.3	19.8	19.9	19.9	15.2	11.8	12.0	12.0	13.0	25.3

Kogi	19.9	14.9	11.8	8.7	12.5	16.5	19.0	19.0	21.0	14.4
Kwara	8.8	5.4	4.2	2.9	7.5	16.4	11.0	11.0	12.0	7.1
Lagos	8.0	25.6	16.1	6.5	15.5	10.2	19.5	19.5	20.5	8.3
Nasarawa	1.6	5.1	6.9	8.7	8.1	7.6	10.1	10.1	11.1	36.5
Niger	6.3	6.7	3.5	0.2	3.6	17.0	11.9	11.9	12.9	39.4
Ogun	9.2	1.3	1.9	2.5	2.3	3.9	8.5	8.5	9.5	22.9
Ondo	16.8	7.3	6.8	6.2	6.7	5.8	14.9	14.9	16.9	12.5
Osun	1.0	0.4	1.2	1.9	2.7	6.3	12.6	12.6	13.6	3.0
Oyo	7.0	0.8	3.1	5.3	4.3	6.5	14.9	14.9	15.9	8.9
Plaeau	11.8	0.4	1.6	2.8	2.9	8.7	7.1	7.1	8.1	25.3
Rivers	6.6	15.3	11.2	7.0	25.0	4.7	27.9	27.9	29.9	25.5
Sokoto	4.1	4.9	4.5	4.1	6.4	12.1	22.4	22.4	24.4	17.9
Taraba	16.8	23.8	13.6	3.4	14.0	5.9	26.8	26.8	28.8	12.7
Yobe	15.0	12.1	10.7	8.0	13.6	19.9	27.3	27.3	29.3	35.6
Zamfara	46.4	17.5	61.3	51.1	50.8	12.8	13.3	13.3	14.3	42.6
Fct	14.4	5.3	5.9	6.5	16.4	16.4	21.5	21.5	23.5	21.1
Nigeria	12.6	14.8	13.4	11.9	13.7	14.6	19.7	19.7	21.5	23.9

Source: NBS (2010); CBN Annual Report and Statement of Account

How to curb youth unemployment

- (a) Ability of the Government to implement effective monetary and fiscal policies and at the same time formulates and executes a policy of self-employment by creating entrepreneurial-friendly environment.
- (b) Creating a stable political and economic system that could attract investment both domestic and foreign.
- © The Government should provide financial assistance for self-employment through a properly articulated micro-credit scheme that would enable enterprising youths obtain soft loans for establishment of micro businesses.
- (d) Electricity generation should be stabilized. It follows that when formulating power/energy policies, all the stake holders ought to come together to ensure that areas of problems are addressed and those involved in the implementation need to have the technical know how required. The Obasanjo's led administration invested whooping sums of money in the energy sector, and yet no improvement is recorded in the sector. The 1700 MHW currently generated as against 50,000MHW recommended minimum MHW argues Soludo (2006) calls for serious rethinking by the Federal Government of Nigeria.
- (e) Youths should pursue employment where they have the flair, skill or calling
- (f) A change and a critical evaluation of our educational system are indeed needed. education that will make its graduates not to rely on white collar jobs or on only work provided by Government of the day. Education that will be able to inculcate in its graduates the skills needed to be self reliant, Education that will instill into the minds of its graduates the ability to forecast the business world and be able to discern what the need of the society would be and work towards it, education that offers its owners self confidence, self ego and other qualities.

Conclusion

The challenges facing Nigerian youths are too many and inexhaustible. Nigeria is the Giant of Africa. As the Giant of Africa she has sunk so much money for the survival of African nation-states. But yet the rate of unemployment, youth neglect, social vices, poverty appears to be toping that of other African states. Therefore the solution to these problems is for us to imbibe psychological re-orientation which would mean building a stable state that will be devoid of corruption and bad leadership.

Refereces

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