

ISBN: 97836284-1-0

LEADING ISSUES IN GENERAL STUDIES:

HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Edited by:

Professor R.O. Lasisi

Dr. J.O. Fayeye

FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST SELF RELIANCE AND EMPLOYMENT GENERATION BY NIGERIAN YOUTH

O. A. Fawole

Department of Sociology, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

This chapter identifies the main factors militating against self reliance and employment generation by the youth. To achieve this aim, the paper presents the following: a background to the Nigerian situation; a glimpse at the work force statistics in Nigeria, the major militating factors against youth self reliance and employment generation; the challenges of youth unemployment and low employment generation and the best practices that work so far in Nigeria. The chapter concludes with policy options intended to enhance skill acquisition and self reliance by the youth

1 BACKGROUND TO THE NIGERIAN SITUATION:

The following details laid out by imdiversity.com (2008) are noteworthy.

- (a) Nigeria is Africa's most populous country and the ninth most populous country in the world with an estimated population of 140 million. One in every two Africans is a Nigerian. The country has been undergoing explosive population growth and has one of the highest fertility growth rates in the world. By UN's estimate, Nigeria would be one of the countries responsible for most of the world's total population increase by 2050.
- (b) Nigeria has one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Petroleum and oil resources play a larger role in the Nigerian economy. The country is the sixth largest producer of petroleum in the world; it is the eighth largest exporter and has the tenth largest proven reserves. While the revenue made from oil provides the largest source of income for Nigeria, the country has become overly dependent on its oil sector, whereas other areas of the economy such as agriculture, solid minerals and manufacturing are in decline.
- (c) Nigeria possesses a stark dichotomy of wealth and poverty. In spite of the country's vast oil wealth, the majority of Nigerians are poor with 71% of the population living on less than one dollar a day and 92% on less than two dollars a day. Although the country is rich in mineral resources, its economy cannot yet meet the basic needs of its people.
- (d) The 2007 UN Human Development Index (HDI) ranks Nigerian 158 out of 177 countries-this is a significant decrease in the human development rank of 151 in 2004. Nigeria remains one of the world's poorest countries with the largest population of the poor in Africa. Life expectancy too, remains low and is estimated to have decreased from 47 years in 1990 to 44 years in 2005. Nigeria's educational system is also in a state of neglect due to

decaying institutional infrastructures, 66% of the population is literate, and at 75%, the rate for men is higher than that of women which is 57%.

- (e) As a part of Nigeria's plan for overcoming poverty and generate national wealth and employment, the Federal Government developed the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) in 2004. NEEDS has four elements: re-orientating values, reducing poverty, creating wealth and generating employment.

2 A GLIMPSE AT THE WORKFORCE STATISTICS IN NIGERIA

The total workforce in Nigeria is 52, 510, 219 people. This is the population between the age of 20 and 59 years. The government (Federal, State and Local) employs 2, 475, 800 workers. This is about 5% of the working population and represents only 8% of the employment in the country. The rest of the employment (92%) is provided through the private sector. Figures from National Bureau of Statistics show that between 1999 and 2005, a total of 28,421,008 people were employed in the private industry and service sectors. (IMDiversity, 2008).

3 MAJOR FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST SELF RELIANCE AND EMPLOYMENT GENERATION BY YOUTH

Several factors have been attributed to the problems of self reliance and employment generation by the youth in Nigeria. A few of these factors are identified and discussed in this section.

(i) Shrinking job market

Youth unemployment is high because of the shrinking labor market or 'demand' for the services of the youth. There has been decrease in full-time jobs availability for teenagers and young adults. This has pushed many youths into casual position and, as a result, some have failed to learn additional skills and gain adequate experiences, which have further limited their likelihood of finding future part-time employment.

(ii) Decrease in enhanced apprenticeship opportunities

A decrease in employment generation for young people is also apparent in low enhanced apprenticeship opportunity in metals, electrical and electronics, etc. The absence of such opportunities resulted in low training rate and fewer additional job opportunities.

(iii) Poor health of national economy

The demand for labour is derived from the demand for the final product. When economy is not growing, output demand falls and with it, the demand for labour. The employment prospects of young people are often diminished when an economy is contracting. Young people often have no job histories, no job-specific skills, and very low employment related social capital to enhance their attractiveness to employers.

(iv) Population growth

The average annual growth rate of the African population is about 3% (UNDP, 2000). The proportion of young people has been growing at a rate faster than the rate of population growth, resulting in an increase in the size of the working

age population. As a consequence, the number of new entrants into the labour market has been increasing. But this increase is accompanied by declining economic activity of young people resulting from the discouraging effects of depressed economy, distorted view of the future and the scourge of HIV/AIDS among others.

(v) *Poor educational content*

The educational sector has failed to provide skilled manpower, generate new ideas, and incubate the new technologies that the economy requires. Curriculum and educational contents are still devoid of skills and applications that could promote self reliance and employment generation.

(vi) *Poverty and low socio-economic rates*

Poverty inhibits initiatives and personal potential of the youth. Skill acquisition is costly and is far beyond the youth from parents with low socio-economic status. Employment generation and poverty are negatively related, when the former increases, the latter decreases.

(vii) *Poor financial base and low investment capital*

Youths who have skills lack adequate financial base to establish even small scale enterprises. The demand for collaterals by banks and other financial institutions reduces the fortune and capacity of the youth to generate employment

(viii) *Poor planning and statistical documentation*

With a fast growing population of the youth are the grim realities of poor planning and documentation. The distribution of Nigerian youth by educational qualification and employability status is not easy to come by. Most efforts of government to reduce poverty through employment generation are not properly documented to show scope and coverage and need for appropriate intervention.

(ix) *Over-investment on capital intensive industries*

The bulk of government investments are directed at capital intensive technology which displaced many youth without opportunity for re-training and re-engagement. The dividends from capital intensive platforms cannot absorb the gloat in the labor market.

(x) *Failure of the agriculture and rural-urban drifts*

Nigeria is blessed with arable and fertile land which can be utilized for large scale agricultural production. The resources that are derivable from land are sufficient to absorb the teeming unemployed youth. However, failure in the agricultural sector has turned many rural youth to urban destitutes and migrants lacking in skills sustenance.

(xi) *Sustainability issues in skill-enhancement programmes*

Government programmes on the National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS) was floated to equip youth with requisite skills and to generate employment. The programme has not been able to significantly impact on the pool of youth in the labour market. The speed at which unemployment is generated among educated youths is faster than what NOAS or the National Directorate of Employment can cope with. Sustainability has not been secured through the phenomenon of each trained or empowered youth training or empowering another.

(xii) *Lack of entrepreneurship skills*

Youths are more inclined to job seeking than job creating. This results from

poor educational qualification and lack of requisite occupational skills among others. Youths often fail to allow the necessity of unemployment to fan out or elicit their potential for creativity. The absence of entrepreneurial skills in the youth results in their failure to generate employment.

(xiii) Low risk taking potentials.

Employment generation requires a lot of speculation, planning, and efforts. The courage to take risks has resulted in inventions and discoveries which positively change the fortunes of man. Both skills acquisition and employment generation require measures of risks which many youths have not been able to undertake.

(xiv) Failure to follow through skill-enhancement training.

Many of the Nigerian youth are too much in a haste to break-through without going through necessary training, skills building and enhancement. The training and induction time is considered to be too long for many youth to endure and go through. Even when resources are available, improper training often jeopardizes successful prospective job creation.

(xv) Undue preference for paid employment.

The Nigerian society in general, and the youth in particular, often prefer paid jobs to self employment. With this mind-set, skills enhancement programmes are considered as stop-gaps, stepping stones, or launching pads to government paid employment.

(xvi) Failure to take advantage of linkages in production

Many processing and manufacturing concerns produce forward and backward linkages from which youth could benefit. Production or supply of input and utilization of output could offer youth this rare opportunity.

4 CHALLENGES OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT, LOW EMPLOYMENT GENERATION AND LACK OF SKILLS.

Sequel to lack of requisite skills and obvious poor capacity of the youth to generate employment, the following challenges identified by ECA (2002) should be taken seriously.

(a) The challenge of educational reform

Since the education sector is increasingly being called upon to produce the skilled manpower, generate new ideas, and incubate new technologies that the economy requires, there is a need for education sector reform. It is obvious that the ability of the sector to respond to these needs is limited. There is still a mismatch between the skills produced by the sector and the skills needed by the labour market. Reforming education sector to make it more responsive to changing skills required by the labour market is of compelling importance.

(b) The challenge of promoting economic growth

Eliminating poverty is the moral debt the government owes to the people. The introduction of poverty reduction strategy offers a significant opportunity to deepen the focus on broad-based participatory growth strategy for poverty reduction. One of the strategies for poverty reduction is employment. Attention should be paid to problem of job creation in general and youth employment in particular. The challenge, therefore, lies in designing mechanisms for promoting sustained

economic growth through employment promotion strategies.

(c) *The challenge of promoting female employment.*

Young women bear a disproportionate burden of underemployment. Young women tend to have lower labour force participation rate. Factors such as the cultural and other biases against the training of girls, labour market discrimination etc. may account for the high rate of female unemployment. There is the challenge of improving the employment prospects of young women.

(d) *The challenge of rural youth unemployment.*

Estimates have it that over 70% of Nigerians live in rural areas. This implies that the majority of Nigerian youths live in the rural areas and depend on rain-fed agriculture for livelihood. A large number migrate to the cities in search of jobs, swelling the number of unemployed youths in urban areas. There is the need to design and devise innovative policies to keep the young on the land in rural areas as part of a comprehensive strategy to combat youth unemployment.

5 BEST PRACTICES THAT WORK IN EMPLOYMENT GENERATION AND SELF RELIANCE

In Nigeria, the most innovative of the programmes on employment generation is the National Open Apprenticeship Schemes (NOAS) introduced by the Federal Government in 1987. The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) oversees the programme. The NOAS provides vocational education and training to unemployed youth in over 100 occupations. It utilizes production facilities such as workshops and technical instructors of private industries, government institutions, and by way of sub-contracting arrangement, wayside craftsmen and tradesmen (informal sector operators).

Unemployed youth and school leavers are trained for a period of six months to three years under reputable master craftsmen. They also teach management, business and administrative skills to reinforce their understanding of the trade in which they are involved and to understand practical training received. Since inception, over 600,000 unemployed youth have been trained in over 80 different trades. More than 400,000 of these started their own micro-enterprises. Nearly 50,000 youth are currently undergoing training.

An offshoot of NOAS is the School-On-Wheels (SOW) programme which is essentially a mobile training for school leavers and other unskilled persons in rural areas. The programme is of three months duration, after which the graduates are absorbed into NOAS. Over 21,000 youth have benefited from the programme since its launching in 1990. Another related scheme is the Waste to Wealth (WTW) scheme under which youth are trained in techniques of converting waste materials into useful objects. At least 8,000 people have been trained under this scheme since its inception in 1990.

In order to prevent NOAS graduates from falling back into unemployment, NDE launched a resettlement programme in 1991. Under the project, NOAS graduates are provided with equipment to start their own businesses. Close to 6,000 graduates of NOAS benefited from this scheme (ECA, 2002).

CONCLUSION AND POLICY OPTIONS

The following are policy options that can enhance skill acquisition, self-reliance and employment generation by the youth.

- (i) Education must be reformed to make it more responsive to labour market. This entails:
 - Introduction of more vocational schools and vocational counselling.
 - Improvement of labour information provided by schools
 - Strengthening the involvement of other stake-holders, especially the employers in designing the context of vocational education.
 - Teaching relevant courses in schools which will reduce school-to-work transition period.
- (ii) Promotion of entrepreneurship among the youth should focus on:
 - Motivating the youth to move to self-employment, become job-creators instead of job-seekers.
 - Youth development, economic empowerment, and employment creation.
 - Promotion of business role models and mentoring programme.
 - Business competition for youth
 - Developing an enterprise culture
 - Provision of credit and subsidies
 - Creation of business projects generated by young people
 - Involving the private sector as an active partner in promoting youth entrepreneurship
- (iii) Government can also directly create employment for youth through:
 - Creation for short-term jobs to reduce long-term unemployment.
 - Provide youth with job-specific skills through on-the-job training.
 - Involving the private sector in the creation and maintenance of jobs.
- (iv) There should be a sound micro-economic management. This should address the slow rate of aggregate (economic) growth. When aggregate growth rate is accelerated, employment rate will occur, youth unemployment will fall and skill acquisition will be enhanced.

REFERENCES

Economic Community of Africa (ECA, 2000): *Youth and Employment in Africa*
ECA Regional Paper, Alexandria Egypt.

Imdiversity. Com (2008)

Unicef/Nig, (2007): *The Nigerian Situation*, Nesbitt.