

Addaiyan Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

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(An international Publisher of Research & Academic Resources)

Journal Homepage: <https://aipublisher.org/projects/ajahss/>

ISSN: 2581-8783 (Online)

DOI: 10.36099/ajahss.3.11.4

GRADUATE UNEMPLOYMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING IN NIGERIA.**AKOR, Abbah Innocent¹, LIVALA, Sunsuwa Dauda², RUMJI, Esther³, ZAKARI, Badamasi⁴**¹(PhD) Science Education Dept. Faculty of Education,
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Article History

Received: 29.10.2021

Accepted: 03.11.2021

Published: 12.11.2021



Abstract: The paper investigates the problem of graduate unemployment and its underlying effects on the Nigerian economy vis-à-vis the role of educational planners. It emphasizes that graduate unemployment represents colossal waste in human capital development. The paper outlined some causes of graduate unemployment to include incongruity between the number of graduates and the existing job opportunities, obsolete curriculum, vocational and technical education not inbred in the university, and a poor foundation for entrepreneurship. The paper outlined some consequences of unemployment and presents entrepreneurship education as a panacea to unemployment. The paper noted some strategies required by educational planners to cater for those in the labour market. Some employable skills required at the labour market were also revealed. The paper recommends a commitment to intellectual and attitudinal empowerment through educational planning to engender tenacious self-

reliance and egalitarian society in the long run. It also recommends developing a more practical-based programme and prioritizing curriculum reform amongst others to enhance job creation that will promote graduate employability at the Labour market.

Keywords: *Unemployment, Labour market, Entrepreneurship Education, Educational planners*

INTRODUCTION

The educational sector in Nigeria has received massive investment without bearing in mind the absorption capacity of the labour market, thus leading to a wide gap between the supply of educated labour force and demand in the labour market. The present output from the school system entering the labour market is cumulatively on the increase and it is becoming apparent that the number of job seekers in Nigeria is disturbingly enormous.

Sadly, most employers are getting worried over the competency of the graduates that do apply for very limited job vacancies. They want the graduate recruits to be professionally competent in their chosen fields but most of these graduates lack complementary life skills such as problem-solving, reflective and critical thinking interpersonal and teaming skills, effective communication skills, organizing skills, leadership skills, and integrity. Anho (2011) reveals some areas of the incompetence of tertiary education graduates that can impede their employability as follows: Lack of necessary skills required on the job, poor command of English language, inability to operate the equipment they are to work with. Most of them are not good in Numeracy or Computation skills, organizational skills, and interpersonal skills. The problem is that these skills are rarely taught in schools and these are the gaps that are missing in a graduates' ability to be gainfully employed even when the jobs are there.

The massive production of graduates without conscious attempt to provide them with gainful employment has posed a great threat to national development except with the intervention of educational planners who are saddled with responsibilities of designing learning programmes, and ensure even distribution of scarce resources in order to avoid imbalances and enormous wastes. Gbadamosi (2005) sees educational planners as those who set out in advance, strategies, policies, procedures, programmes, and standards through which an educational objective can be achieved. The role of educational planners in helping those in the labour market cannot be underestimated. According to Okeke, (2008) Educational planners play vital roles in planning, management, and administration of education through the process of using formal and informal education to make it relevant, life-long, and functional by advocating skills acquisition programme (Entrepreneurship education) in order to address the challenges of unemployment and diverse issues encountered by our teaming youth in the labour market. Unemployment has been viewed as the major economic virus militating against the economy and well-being of many countries in recent times. Ajufo (2013) supports this by stating that the unavailability of job opportunities among youth, especially graduates, has been identified as one of the major factors responsible for youth restiveness and other social vices including prostitution, armed robbery, destitution, and political thuggery which has posed a great challenge to the existence of individuals in most developing nations. It is against this background that we consider Educational planners as the right personnel with the right approach in equipping or helping those in the labour market.

THE CONCEPT OF LABOUR MARKET AND UNEMPLOYMENT

The labour market is the environment in which workers compete for jobs and employers compete for which workers to be selected. The Business dictionary defines the labour market as the nominal market in which workers find paying work, employers find willing workers, and wages rates are determined. It is viewed as the place where workers and employees interact with one another- where employers compete to hire the best worker while workers compete for the best satisfying job.

Unemployment refers to a situation where people who are capable of working and who are qualified by skills, age, law, custom, and other factors to work but cannot find jobs. Ekanem (2012) defines it as a situation when people are able to work and would willingly accept the prevailing wage paid to someone with skills but either cannot find or have not yet secured suitable employment. Unemployment can be

classified into voluntary and involuntary unemployment (Ekpenyong, 2005). Voluntary unemployment includes classical, frictional, and structural unemployment.

Unemployment is a major economic virus militating against the economy and well-being of many countries in recent times. This has resulted in increasing agitation from citizens, therefore, increasing insecurity in such countries. Ajufo (2013) supports this by stating that the unavailability of job opportunities among youth, especially graduates has been identified as one of the major factors responsible for youth restiveness and other social vices including prostitution, armed robbery, destitution, and political thuggery. Armed robbery and stealing are some of the most glaring manifestations of unemployment and poverty in Nigeria and other developing and underdeveloped nations today.

CAUSES OF GRADUATE UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA

1. **Absence of science, vocational and technical education in most schools:** Graduates of art courses like History Archaeology, Igbo Language, Yoruba, Hausa, Music, French, Philosophy, Religion find it difficult to secure employment. This has given rise to a mismatch between the number of graduates turned out and the existing job opportunities
2. **Scarcity of skilled labourer:** Another reason for unemployment among Nigerian graduates is largely tied to the scarcity of skilled labour. This fact is supported by Eze (1983) who attributes this to the fault of the country's educational system which does not emphasize vocational and technical skills. This is why mechanics, electricians, masons, stenographers, welders, etc are in short supply.
3. **Poor Salaries and Incentives:** The Nigerian Government is also to blame because of the salaries and incentives offered to those with vocational and technical education. There are no special incentives provided for those with such skills over others who do not possess such skills. This set of graduates do not also rise as fast as those with no skills in the civil service; so in the public service, skilled workers tend to lag more behind in terms of promotion opportunities than those without special skills. For instance in the Ministry of Works and Housing; plumbers, electricians, fitters, and overseers tend to stagnate in terms of promotion and earnings as compared with general clerical officers or executive officers. It is necessary to point out that even at the higher level in the public service, graduates of Arts and Social sciences who are employed as administrative officers within a short time rise to higher positions and earn more than engineers, architects, and graduate teachers.
4. **Lack of uniformity in employment in the country:** There is the high spread of unemployment amongst the products of our educational system throughout the country. The Southern parts of the country have a higher concentration of educational institutions. There is a high level of unemployment in these parts and such a situation does not exist in the Northern States because School leavers are not so many. Employers of labour in Nigeria tend to be tied to ethnic and state considerations and sentiments which tend to militate against employment based on merit and the need of the employers. This has discouraged most applicants in some states of the country from seeking employment outside their home states.
5. Other causes of unemployment of graduates include an Obsolete curriculum, poor foundation for trades and investments among others.

CONSEQUENCES OF UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG GRADUATES

The number of educated young people without jobs has continued to grow and this condition is likely to *grow* worse in the near future and cause serious challenges in the country. Adejmolola, and Olufunmilayo (2009) highlight some consequences of unemployment as follows:

1. Unemployment reduces the standard of living and the potential savings of family members. And for the nation, heavy expenditures of scarce public resources (as well as private funds) have been devoted to the education of these young people. When development is urgently being sought, unemployment means a tragic waste of human resources.
2. Unemployment heightens inequalities in income among citizens within the country by pressing down the wages and earnings of the self-employed. The situation also leads ‘The rich get richer, while the poor get poorer.’
3. Rural-Urban migration: An exodus of educated youth from rural areas can lower farm production and retard agricultural modernization, and since cities and towns cannot absorb them into meaningful employment, education merely converts the underemployment of the countryside to the open unemployment of the cities.
4. Unemployment stretches the consequence of insecurity, increase in juvenile delinquency and crime, physical ill-health, mental disturbance, and resort to drugs. Large numbers of unemployed youth present a distinct threat to national stability and thus risk the success of programmes for national economic development.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION: A PANACEA TO UNEMPLOYMENT

Schumpeter (1994) defines entrepreneurship as the ability to perceive and undertake business opportunities, taking advantage of scarce resource utilization. In the simplest form, entrepreneurship is the willingness and the ability to seek out investment opportunities and to run an enterprise for profit. In this later sense, entrepreneurship takes a premium over the capital.

Entrepreneurship education is a form of education that seeks to prepare people to initiate creativity and changes in production and contribute to sustainable communities and national development security. It is also viewed as formalized and institutionalized medium of instruction to individuals or people within any given society to enable them to acquire useful skills and knowledge that will enable them to be useful to themselves and contribute to the peaceful existence and development of their immediate society, and the world at large. It is also helping in the application of the skills and attitudes that can take many forms during an individual’s career, creating a range of long-term benefits to society and the economy. It is associated with various activities which involve skill acquisition innovation, creativity, risk-taking, initiative, visionary, focus, determination, team spirit, resourcefulness, financial control, self-confidence, versatility, knowledge, dynamic thinking, which lead to self-reliance and productivity (Anho,2011). Functional education is the only means through which people can develop their skills, capacities, or potentialities. Entrepreneurship education is an investment that enriches the lives of the citizens and has a very high long rate of returns to the national economy. Education, therefore, serves as a means of

behaviour modification, by individuals and society; it serves as a means of meeting the needs of individuals and society.

RELEVANCE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION TO THE YOUTH IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Entrepreneurship education has been used by many nations as a means of enhancing poverty eradication, self-reliance, and national development. Quality Entrepreneurship Education plays a vital role in the social, political, and economic development of any Nation. Entrepreneurship education is helpful in developing attitudes, behaviors, and capacities at the individual level. It helps to reduce the high rate of unemployment and poverty in both urban and rural areas of Nigeria, Africa, and the world at large by equipping the recipients with the knowledge and skills for setting up and running small-scale businesses. Entrepreneurship education has the capability of providing jobs for millions of people in factories, agriculture enterprises, other service industries, and small-scale businesses. It is also a key to individual, state, national, continental, and world economy by generating wealth through the creation of jobs, thereby helping to meet up with the ever-changing social political, and economic demands of modern society such as unemployment underemployment, crises, war, and poverty among others. According to Agi and Yellowe (2013) entrepreneurial education is capable of building good human and personal relations thereby addressing personal and social challenges. It is vital to the prosperity of any enterprise because it is an efficient, capable, trustworthy tool to national development. According to Fadipe, (2011) the aim of entrepreneurship education is to produce individuals who are self-employed and employers of labour. It is also helpful in maximizing resource utilization which leads to the creation of empowerment, reduction of unemployment, and eradication of poverty. Entrepreneurship education is a lifelong learning process which cuts across all levels of education including adult and non-formal education.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

Entrepreneurial education aids in the acquisition of team-building skills critical for both small and large-scale businesses. According to Anho (2013) some business opportunities which can be explored by youth at the labour market include:

1. Agricultural crop production.
2. Animal husbandry
3. Barbing,
4. Beauty care.
5. Clothes dye and tie.
6. Driving career (cars, keke & okada).
7. Iron and steel production.
8. Money collection (daily/monthly -Asusu).
9. Poultry.
10. Fish farming

11. Soap and detergent production.
12. Sewing and fashion design.
13. Petty trading,
14. Car wash.
15. Interior decoration/ Events management
16. Waste Management Technology.
17. Information Management Technology.
18. Building and Carpentry work.
19. Electrical installation and electronics work etc.

STRATEGIES REQUIRED BY EDUCATIONAL PLANNERS IN CURBING UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG GRADUATES.

In order to be gainfully engaged any of the above-mentioned business opportunities or more, Akiri, (2011) suggests that educational planners should design the modalities for public awareness, seminars, workshops on the importance of entrepreneurship education through various media: Radio, Television, Newspapers, etc. to enable unemployed youth to embrace entrepreneurship education.

1. **Advocacy for entrepreneurship:** Educational planners should play key roles in collaborating with school heads, parents, and other relevant stakeholders in promoting advocacy for entrepreneurship education at all levels of education. This will help graduates to identify and evaluate various business opportunities and strategies to increase their productivity. This will also encourage those in the labour market to develop business plans or ideas and to also assemble all resources both human and material resources for optimum productivity. This awareness will also go a long way in drastically reducing unemployment across education levels and age groups in society.
2. **Curriculum design:** Another strategy required by educational planners is to ensure that entrepreneurship education is not only enshrined in the school curriculum at all levels but should be more of practical skills acquisition than mere theory. In other words, they should advocate that the tertiary education curriculum becomes more creative and knowledge-based, Instructional and Computer Technology (ICT) compliant, to take care of today and future of the nation's manpower needs so that Nigeria can move from hopelessness to hope.
3. **Industrial expansion:** Another strategy required by educational planners to curb unemployment is to encourage the establishment of more industries across the country. This high industrial expansion can accommodate a large number of employees, and as well make adequate plans for the manpower needs of the country.
4. **Enrolment of more science students than arts:** Enrolment of more science students than arts in our institutions will go a long way in discouraging the overproduction of graduates in art courses. This, on the other hand, will encourage the high production of graduates from the professional, sciences and technologically oriented courses as they will have less problems in securing jobs.
5. **Encourage unemployed graduates to be creative:** This will help those who are not employed to be able to think, initiate and organize other factors of production into productive and profitable ventures where they can become entrepreneurs instead of waiting to be employed by the government.

6. **Support youth who possess entrepreneurship traits:** Educational planners can identify unemployed youth who possess entrepreneurship traits in order to motivate and develop them for launching and managing their own small-scale business enterprises.
7. **Planning of limited resources:** Educational planners can play a vital role in ensuring adequate planning of limited resources in order help to direct and co-ordinate the actions of employees in order to achieve maximum effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity.
8. **Training of potential entrepreneurs:** Educational planners can encourage the training of potential entrepreneurs to establish a small business that will increase their supply of goods and services and bring about an improved standard of living of the people.
9. **Exposing the unemployed youth to loan facilities:** Educational planners can expose them to opportunities where they source loans from commercial banks, micro-finance banks, Cooperative Micro-credit Schemes, Agricultural loan schemes, etc. to enable them to start their businesses without financial constraints.

SOME EMPLOYABLE SKILLS REQUIRED AT THE LABOUR MARKET

Employability skills are those skills necessary for getting, keeping, and being successful in a job. They are also the skills and attitudes that enable employees to get along with their colleagues, to make critical decisions, solve problems, develop respect, and ultimately become strong ambassadors for the organization. These skills (soft) are usually lacking in many graduates in Nigeria. In the time of high unemployment, as in the nation presently, employers have more choice of applicants and will often favour those with well –rounded employability skills. According to Agu and Chiaha(2013), Such skills include the following.

1. **Interpersonal skills:** used to interact with people, participate effectively as members of a team, negotiate, satisfy customers, make decisions, manage time and work effectively with colleagues
2. **Communication Skills:** Verbally and in Writing. Writing clearly and succinctly demonstrates good vocabulary, and listening actively.
3. **Critical thinking Skills:-** The ability to solve problems and make decisions is a huge asset to employers. This also includes innovations and inventions and the capacity to effectively plan and organize creative thinking which is more likely to devise new ways of doing things that add value to the work environment.
4. **Personal Development:-** Having the right attitude towards work and the organization you work for. Employers look for people who are open to learning and embrace change. Such a person will be more successful than the person who is afraid of learning and resistant to changes in the organization.
5. **Self-management skills:** This refers to self-motivation, self-confidence, self-control-skills that are used to manage personal feelings and how people react to challenges and problems both at work and in their private lives.
6. **Presentation Skill:-** This skill is needed for presenting information systematically, clearly, and effectively in the work place. This includes business plans, reports, minutes etc.
7. **Leadership Skill: -** This is the ability to influence others towards the achievement of a goal.

8. **Numeracy:** - Involves understanding of numerical data, statistics and graphs. It is also a part of making decisions and reasoning.
9. **Computer and IT Skills:** - Acquiring basic Information Technology skills and being familiar with the computer open a wide range of employment opportunities and increase marketability in work places(www.skillsyouneed.com).

In order to actualize the above mentioned strategies through the support of the educational planners, Agi and Yellowe (2013) postulate some required attribute as follows:

1. **Self-regulatory skills**– This is to be self-disciplined in appearance, time-keeping and self-management and not to fall cheap in the name of seeking for job.
2. **Flexibility and adaptability skills**– Educational planners should create an atmosphere where the graduates are equipped with the skills of timely response to changes, trying new things and being able to influence change.
3. **Willing to learn skills:** –This refers to the desire to learn, and to keep learning new things and new ways of doing things.
4. **Self-assurance:**– Educational planners should put in place the modalities that will equip graduates with skills of being confident and self-directed.
5. **Commercial awareness**– Teaching them the skills of appreciating the various business environments and what they will always need to do to survive or thrive in such environment and to be customer focused.

Ajufo, (2013) reveals other skills that graduates are required to possess include: Time keeping and personal organization, Team working, collaboration and cooperation, Business etiquette skills, Apart from certificate qualification, graduate are to possess some personal attributes such as good work-ethics and the willingness to learn, good personal presentation, reliability, honesty and integrity

CONCLUSION

The high rate of unemployment incidence captured in Nigeria is greatly revealed in the percentage of those willing and able to work but cannot find employment. Unemployment is seen as the key endemic militating against the economic and well-being of many countries. It is considered as a major factor responsible for youth restiveness and other social vices.

The intervention of educational planners toward curbing this problem cannot be underestimated since they are saddled with the responsibility of planning, management, and administration of education through the process of using formal, informal education and skills acquisition programme (Entrepreneurship education). Entrepreneurship education is therefore viewed as the best approach in catering for the unemployed graduates in the labour market.

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