

CORPORATE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME [CAP]: SOLUTION TO YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY ERADICATION

Olugbenga Babajide SOYEMI¹ and Jumoke SOYEMI²

¹ Department of Civil Engineering, The Federal Polytechnic Ilaro. Nigeria

² Department of Computer Science, The Federal Polytechnic Ilaro. Nigeria

¹jidesoyemi@federalpolyilaro.edu.ng, ²jumokesoyemi@federalpolyilaro.edu.ng

Abstract

The unemployment rate in Nigeria is put at 23.1% by the National Bureau of Statistics with the nation having 82.9 million (40.1%) of her citizenries living below the poverty line of N 137, 430 per year. The young people (aged 15-35 years) are worst hit with an unemployment/underemployment rate of 55.4%. To create a basis for this work, interviews were conducted, and a questionnaire administered among 612 people, aged 15-34 years across three states in southwest Nigeria. Youth without skill and with informal skill accounted for 68.12% of the respondents, while unemployment and underemployment accounted for 62.6%. To mitigate youth unemployment and lack of skills, the paper proposes a Corporate Apprenticeship Program model. The proposed model has two entry points, one for a person with at least secondary education and the other for persons without secondary education. The apprenticeship's scheme will combine paid work with controlled on-the-job training and classroom-based associated technical instruction (provided by an institution) at the firm's premises. This will lead to either the trainee working for the firm after completing the program or setting up their businesses.

Keywords: Unemployment, Underemployment, Apprenticeship, Corporate Apprenticeship Program

1 INTRODUCTION

The population of young people (aged 15-35 years) in Nigeria is put at 55 million by 2019 projections of Nigeria Population Commission. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2020), the national unemployment rates for the year 2020 is 23.1%, underemployment is 20.31% while youth unemployment/underemployment is 55.4%. incidentally, this has been high in the last four years rising above 40%, there is a marginal drop of 3.28% between 2018 and 2019. In late 2018, the World Bank reported that Nigeria is the Poverty Capital of the World with 87% living in the north. Unemployment and underemployment are closely linked to poverty and the rise in the rate of crimes and criminality. Figures 1 and 2 show the unemployment and underemployment rates in Nigeria from 2014 to 2018 (NBS, 2018)

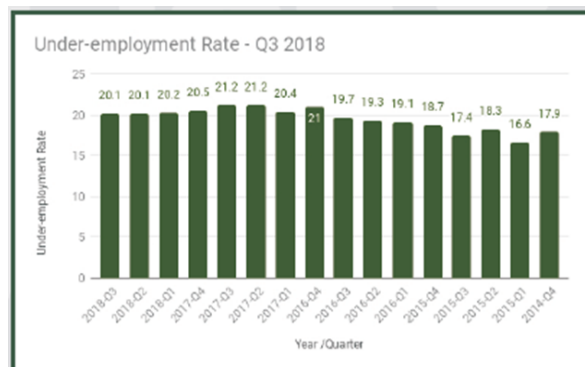


Figure 1: Unemployment Rate in Nigeria 2014-2018 (NBS, 2018)

Figure 2: Underemployment Rate in Nigeria 2014-2018 (NBS, 2018)

Explicitly, as regards the unemployed and underemployed within the age group, the available data gotten from the publications of the National Bureau of Statistics NBS (2018:1) showed that as at October 2019 in Nigeria, for young persons between ages 15 - 24 years and 25 – 34 years, the unemployment/underemployment rate was 58.6% and 45.1%. Persons with Post-Secondary school certificate or Graduates are mostly hit by unemployment recording 29.8%

under educational grouping during the reference period. The youth population in Nigeria ages 15-34 have a combined unemployment and underemployment rate of 55.4% or 24.5 million (13.1 million unemployed and another 11.3 million underemployed). These are a major stakeholder in the project Nigeria and not only the future of Nigeria, but also a very valuable contributor in nation-building.

It is worth noting, that unemployment and underemployment are a global challenge. Young people are mostly affected by this global challenge, be it in Europe (Dietrich, 2012), America (Pastore, 2018), Africa (Page, 2019), or Australia (Sutcliffe & Dhakal, 2018), nevertheless, national experiences vary in different aspects. This challenge includes the difficulty of entering the labour market, underemployed, and not securing permanent employment. The exception is in Asia, where many youths are engaged in self-employment (McKay et al, 2018).

Within the last two decades, there have been economic crises that have made the labour markets progressively portrayed a growing level of structural unemployment, underemployment, and wage polarization (Lehmann, 2000). This has contributed in no small means to youth unemployment as companies are folding up or down-sizing. The financial crises have a greater impact on the youth unemployment rate than the impact as a result of changes in the GDP; and the consequence on the youth unemployment rate is greater than the consequence on overall unemployment (Choudhry *et al.*, 2012).

Nigeria is one of the most swiftly growing economies in Sub-Saharan Africa, yet, Nigeria is struggling to turn the effects of its swift growth into accelerated poverty reduction (World Bank, 2016). One of the major products of poverty is unemployment. With 82.9 million people living below the poverty line of N 137, 430 per year in Nigeria, so also is a large number of unemployed and underemployed persons (NBS, 2020). There is a correlation between poverty and unemployment, and they are both indicators of contemporary societal problems. The close connection between poverty and unemployment has a great effect on the Nigerian youth. Consequently, the effect is notably worrisome in recent times, as it is escalating the rate of youth unemployment which has assumed a disturbing climax (Oduwale, 2015).

The educational achievement also has its part in youth unemployment, particularly those who go for post-secondary school education. It prevented early-stage unemployment. On the other hand, those with lesser education qualification faced early-stage unemployment. This correlates with, among other things, jobs mismatch, doing whatever you find to survive. At the time, both groups may not have acquired skills relevant to the workplace. And as such, the aptitudes possessed by young people may be different from what the companies require from them.

The need for homegrown development to resolve youth unemployment cannot be overemphasized as the growing mass of young and vibrant people is failing to find work in the manufacturing and service sectors. Likewise, the rapidly growing urban labour force arising from rural-urban migration is not helping matters in urban areas. Most of the affected youth are without commensurable skills. In urban places now, certain skills (bricklaying, carpentry, plumbing, and so on) are being filled by youths from neighbouring countries like the Benin Republic, Togo, and Ghana (Idio et al, 2016). However, job-specific capabilities can be developed over a period of time, sometimes many years, and used only in certain jobs depending on the actual details of the job (Pastore, 2018). The other aspect is that when youth

find it difficult to get employment, as they get old, they lose the experience on the job that is commensurate with their age (Gregg, 2001), thus becoming “unemployable”.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) on the United Nations tagged Vision 2030 and the domestication of the Integrated Sustainable Development Goals (iSDG)-Nigeria model was developed to reduce poverty to the barest minimum and increase the standard of living within the country. Goal No. 8 – “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all” is most relevant to this paper. How do we promote, sustain, include economic growth, and provide full and productive employment for all?

One major way to look at is the apprenticeship program. Apprenticeship is a lifelong endeavour. Simply put, apprenticeship is a process through which a more experienced individual helps a less experienced one, providing support, help, and models, so the less experienced individual gains new knowledge, abilities, and skills (Dennen & Burner, 2008; Soyemi & Soyemi, 2019). Ever before education became a course of study in the universities, indeed before tertiary institutions ever existed, people were learning from more experienced ones through the apprenticeship program. Likewise, competency-based instruction (learning from an experienced one) has been evolving worldwide, and this has been extended to engineering education and other courses. (Blandin, 2012).

2 RELATED STUDIES

Youth unemployment is a global phenomenon. It transcends boundaries and nations. The following works give insight into the challenges arising from it, the consequences, and what other countries or people did to reduce the hyper-hydrate monster called ‘youth unemployment’.

Fougère, Kramarz & Pouget (2009) examined the effect of unemployment on the property and violent crimes in France in the first widespread study of the country covering a period of ten years (1990 to 2000). Data of crimes were collated within the 95 regions of France metropolitan as reported by the Interior Ministry. In the same vein, measures were developed to determine the rate of unemployment from the Labour Survey of France. The classic Becker model was deployed to find the correlation between the increase in the rate of unemployment and the rise in crimes in France. Their findings show that there is a positive correlation between crime and unemployment and the increases in crime are motivated by increases in youth unemployment. They also discovered that the effect of unemployment is the main cause of drug offenses, burglaries, and thefts. To battle crime to a minimum level, they suggested that all strategies designed to combat youth unemployment should be engaged.

Okafor (2011) understudied the consequences of youth unemployment on the stability of democracy in Nigeria. He stressed that the stability of democracy depends largely on the youth as they represent the future of the nation and thus, they are major stakeholders. The strength of democracy lies in participation by the people who found solace in the teaming unemployed youth. He noted that youth unemployment is prevalent in Nigeria which has far-reaching consequences on the stability of democracy. His research work revealed the root causes of youth unemployment in Nigeria affixing it on neo-liberalism created by economic and social dislocations. He further argues that several anti-social activities within the political parties such as fighting, militancy, thuggery, restiveness, and other social misdemeanor requires idle people which are evident amid the unemployed which portrays tangible threats

to the stability of the democratic structure in Nigeria. He concluded his work calling on all stakeholders to must come together to fight the scourge of youth unemployment.

Alfonsi et al (2017) in a massive project that spans over four years on tackling youth unemployment in a low-income country, Uganda investigated 1700 workers and 1500 firms to compare the effect of engaging the workers on either vocational training (VT) or firm-based training (FT) for half-a-year in a typical setting where youth unemployment is prevalent and rises to 60%. It was discovered after three years of training of FT and VT that they (i) enjoy appreciable enormous and comparable upticks in sector-specific skills, (ii) meaningfully enhanced their expertise and (iii) had enhancements in their market value. They also discovered after the training that FT gains appear rapidly however reduces after some time, while VT gains develop gradually yet are durable, leading VT-trained workers engagement and earning profiles to transcend above that of FT-trained workers. They concluded that tackling youth unemployment by engaging them in vocational training before entering the labour market will be more lasting and reduces drastically youth unemployment and challenges associated with it.

Bagchi & Paul (2018) brought out one of the most significant negative impact of youth unemployment, involvement in the act of terrorism in the MENAP (Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, and Pakistan). Their paper expands on the existing exploration of researches that underlying drivers of psychological warfare by considering youth joblessness as a proportion of monetary hardship. Specifically, they investigated terrorism in Middle Eastern and North African (MENAP) nations and highlights terrorism occurrence check information between 1998 and 2012 utilizing negative binomial regression models. In their exogenous model, they found out that while youth unemployment leads to increase internal terrorism but has a little significant impact on transnational terrorism. They based their exertion for the endogeneity by using expenditure on the military, mortality rate of under-five, and foreign direct investment (FDI) as yardsticks. They discovered many factors that lead to domestic and transnational terrorism but anchored its spread on youth unemployment. Their paper clearly shows the evil that came out of youth unemployment.

In the research work of Awogbenle & Iwuamadi (2010) on exploring entrepreneurship development programme as an intervention tool in addressing youth unemployment, discovered that both educated and uneducated skilled young people are finding it difficult to secure paid jobs in many developing nations. To boost the creation of jobs and employment among youngsters, entrepreneurship is progressively acknowledged as a significant method to generate employment and improve the financial autonomy of young people. Invariably, they revealed that despite the free trade (neo-liberalism) which is supposed to enhance human capital, unemployment persists. The paper examined the limitations that hinder youngsters from looking for non-existing works and the crucial need to re-orientate them on the need to be self-employed and create jobs for others through vocational and entrepreneurial training as an immediate interference mechanism. Besides, they argue that encouraging youth entrepreneurship will generate employment opportunities, bring those marginalized back into the mainstream of the economy, address challenges arising from unemployment, development of new skills, innovations, and the emergence of new economic openings.

Hecker & Kuehn (2019) in their research on 'Apprenticeship and the Justice System: Adapting a Proven Training Model to Serve People in Prison', recognizes that many researched works have been carried out on the possibilities of an ex-inmate gaining employment after imprisonment and that the inability to secure jobs has led to the tendency to

return to crime. A few prison facilities have internal teaching and vocational skill programs under apprenticeship programs to give the inmates aptitudes or skills they can use at work, both during their imprisonment and after their release. These apprenticeships programs are offered as instruction and training alternative, furnishing individuals in jail with a significant working experience that is possibly important after their release. The research further recommended the need for an increase in apprentice-able vocations, raising wages, lessening problematic exchanges, guaranteeing that apprenticeships in jail are suitable to the workplace needs, and connecting the ex-inmates with business owners after re-emergence in the society. However, the model in the study only caters for inmates excluding those outside the prison system.

Dennen & Burner (2008) in their classical book chapter contribution to the need to incorporate the cognitive apprenticeship model into the educational system. Cognitive apprenticeship is a procedure by which students progressively study under an experienced individual by a method of subjective and metacognitive skills and procedures. They explored the rudiments of cognitive apprenticeship, the definitions, and a historical context. They established that at all levels that the cognitive apprenticeship programs have been practiced, positive outcomes have been the results. From pragmatic studies, they have affirmed from theories that the cognitive apprenticeship model is an exact depiction of how learning takes place and that the instructional techniques that have been gotten from these observations of everyday life are embedded informal learning settings with a positive outcome. They concluded the chapter with a clarion call for a progressively orderly and incorporated program of studies moving in the direction of the advancement of core values to help instructional plan, educating, and learning-dependent on the cognitive apprenticeship model.

Looking at all the reviewed studies, and taking into consideration their strength and limits, the peculiarity of the Nigeria nation and the thirst of the teeming youth, this study proposed a cognitive apprenticeship program operated by all companies with a staff strength of at least 10 people and with the aim of the apprentice acquiring at least a skill for a long life work experience. With this method adopted, every unemployed youth will find a place to learn at the feet of a more experienced person.

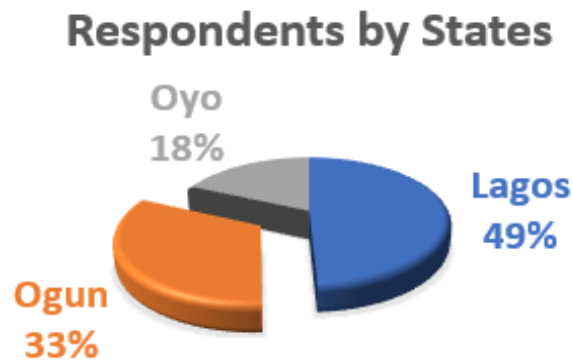
3. Methods

The method used in this study is a combination of interviews and administration of a questionnaire to determine the skill level of the youth aged 15 – 34 years. 612 young people responded to the questionnaire and participated across three states [Lagos, Ogun, and Oyo] in the research.

Table 1: Number of Respondent by State

State	No of Respondent	% Respondent
Lagos	301	49
Ogun	200	33
Oyo	111	18
Total	612	100

49% of the respondents are from Lagos State, 33% from Ogun State, and 18% from Oyo State. The survey is not gender or age group based, it only focused on youth with or without formal education. The respondents were selected randomly.



A structured model is proposed for the Corporate Apprenticeship Program with a legal framework that will compel every youth to acquire at least one skill and for companies and entrepreneurs to train and employ or empower the participants. The targets are Secondary School leavers who could not secure admissions into higher education and at most HND/BSc holders. And every company/firm will collaborate with a nearby polytechnic or university for enhancement in the training they give to the apprentices.

4.0 Results and Analysis

The respondents are made up of 44 (7.2%) illiterates (never went to school), 78 (12.75%) primary school certificate holders, 100 (16.34%) with Secondary School Certificate (SSCE), 148 (24.18%) have National Diploma (ND) or National Certificate in Education (NCE), 222 (36.27%) with Higher National Diploma or First Degree and 20 (3.27%) with Masters or Ph.D. as shown in Figure 5. Table 2 gives explicit details about the total number of the respondents, their educational qualifications, and their level of skills acquired.

Table 2: Skills Level of Youth

Academic Qualification	Without Any Skill	Informal Skill	At Least One Skill	Two or More Skills	Total
Never went to School	12	15	17		44
Pry School Certificate	10	22	42	14	78
SSCE	35	18	45	2	100
ND/NCE	101	11	28	8	148
HND/BSc	172	5	35	10	222
MSc/PhD	10	6	4	-	20
Total	340	77	171	34	612

One of the factors that this research work tends to look at is the level of skills acquired by the youth. Table 2 gives an insight into the skill level of the respondents. Youth without skill and with informal skill accounted for 68.12% of the respondents. This figure is alarming as it is an indication that if they don't have a formal job, they will be unemployed.

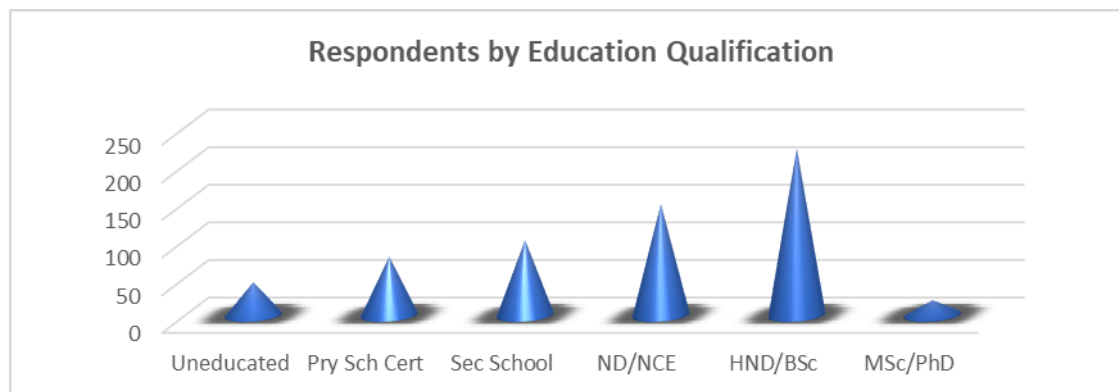


Figure 5: Respondents by Educational Qualification

Considering those with post-secondary school qualifications, the acquisition of skills is very low. This can be traced to their attending tertiary institutions. Interestingly, entrepreneurial education is being taught in most tertiary institutions but not all the students pay good attention to the instructions as many said, they just want to pass. Also, most of the respondents said they were unable to set up the trade or business after learning them through entrepreneurial education in school. Table 3 and Figure 6 show the relevant skills acquired by these set of respondents.

Table 3: Relevant Skills Acquired

	School-based entrepreneurship education	Personal Arrangement	Total
ND/NCE	25	11	36
HND/BSc	22	24	48
MSc/PhD	2	2	4
Total	49	37	88

Most of those in this group (76.84%) feel that because they are still studying or continuing in studies, they do not consider the acquisition of skills necessary during studies. Those who venture to acquire any skill at all said their search for jobs exposed them to the reality that certificates alone cannot help them in the labour market.

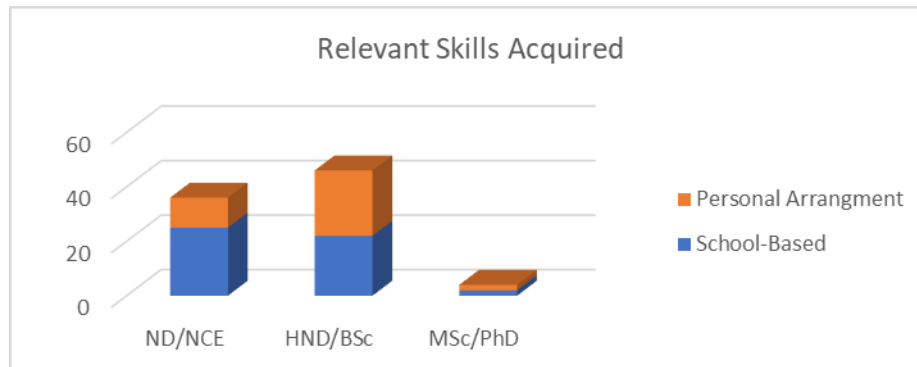


Figure 6: Relevant Skills Acquired at Post-Secondary School levels

The research also looked at the unemployment rate among the respondents. Table 4 shows the employment status of the respondents. 37.4% are employed, 32.8% underemployed and 29.8% are unemployed. This put the total of unemployed and underemployed at 62.6%. Some of those underemployed are graduates working as teachers in private schools or doing other menial jobs to survive.

Table 4: Employment Status

Academic Qualification	Employed	Underemployed	Unemployed	Total
Never been to School	24	8	12	44
Pry School Certificate	62	6	10	78
WASC/SSCE	35	20	45	100
ND/NCE	35	21	92	148
HND/BSc	55	144	23	222
MSc/PhD	18	2	0	20
Total	229	201	182	612

Critically looking at Table 4, one can see that respondents with HND or BSc who are most hit by unemployment and underemployment (75.2%) out of 222 respondents. Which means, if they have acquired any functional skill at all, they will have move out of the labour market.

5. Conclusion

Anything that can be done to reduce youth unemployment and underemployment should be encouraged. The CAP Model, when adopted, will reduce the trend. One other thing to work out is acceptability by the people and this can be fostered by government continuous promotion of skill acquisition and supporting those setting up their firms. Invariably, this will lead to many Small and Medium Scale Enterprises springing up, many more people will be employed and gradually, we would have a productivity-driven economy

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