

# Youth unemployment in Nigeria: A time for creative intervention

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**Abstract:** Youths represent a very important stakeholder in any society. The solutions to adult problems tomorrow depend on how children grow today. Unemployment in Nigeria is a time bomb waiting to explode if effective interventions are not put in place to mitigate the unsavoury impact of high youth unemployment. This paper establishes a link between entrepreneurship and youth unemployment if adequate attention is focused on the creation of enabling socio-economic and political environment that can galvanize a culture where the youths think of job creation away from the mindset of job seekers. This paper proposes a vigorous reorientation to embrace a tested culture of honesty, creativity, hard work as well as nobility of character and for the youths to shun the easy-way-out of life.

**Keywords:** Youth, unemployment, creativity, entrepreneurship, get-rich-quick syndrome.

## INTRODUCTION

Records from the National Population Commission (2001) indicate that youths under the age of 30 constitute over half of the approximately 150 million Nigerians. According to Doreo Partners (2013) unemployment rate in Nigeria is growing at the rate of 16% per year with the youth impacted the most and accounting for three times the general unemployment. Nigeria's spiralling youth unemployment can be said to have significantly contributed to the dramatic rise in social unrest and crime such as Niger Delta militancy, Boko Haram and the Jos crisis. One implication of the above is that in another one to-two decades most of the youths of today will be parents in their mid-life years, and with little or no adequate skills in a fast emerging competitive global economy, it is doubtful how they can propel the needed wheel of development.

Woolfolk (1998) argued that the youthful years mark the critical stage of human development when they are amenable to training in entrepreneurship as opposed to self-destructive behaviours. Have Nigerian policy makers been able to see through the connection between entrepreneurship and unemployment? Have they been able to conceive and formulate effective policies aimed at frontally addressing unemployment among the youths? It is believed that while entrepreneurship may not be the absolute panacea to youth unemployment, an enabling environment that nurtures entrepreneurship is capable of reducing youth unemployment by half.

## Purpose

This paper seeks to establish the relationship between creative entrepreneurial programs and youth unemployment. Specifically, it:

Assesses the prevailing rate of unemployment among Nigeria youths.

Determine the geographical pattern of unemployment.

Assess past government efforts at reducing youth unemployment.

Propose creative strategies that can promote job creation aimed at reducing youth unemployment.

## Methodology

Data for this paper were derived from secondary sources including previous research and analysis by scholars, government documents, newspapers/magazines as well as journal articles that are related to the subject. This study analyzed the present status, problems and prospects of entrepreneurship as part of the roadmap to wealth creation and reduction of unemployment among Nigerian youths. Why have Nigerian policy makers failed to see the connection between entrepreneurship and youth unemployment? Can Nigeria actualize its vision of being among the top 20 economies by the 2020 as envisaged in its vision 20:2020 document? As indicated earlier, Nigerian policy makers have not given entrepreneurship its deserved attention. This paper posits that entrepreneurship is the veritable roadmap to reducing unemployment among Nigerian youths.

## What is Entrepreneurship

A definition of entrepreneurship has been debated among scholars, researchers, and even policy makers since the concept was first established in the early 1970s. Sternfioff and Burgers (1993) view entrepreneurship as the ability to develop a new venture or apply a new approach to an old business. According to Gana (2001), entrepreneurship is the ability to develop a new venture or apply a new approach to an old business. He views entrepreneurship as the ability to seek investment opportunities and persisting to exploit that opportunity. On the other hand, Anayakoha (2006) sees the entrepreneur as one who chooses or assumes risks, identifies business opportunity, gathers resources, initiates action and establishes an organization or enterprise to meet such demand or market opportunity.

Allawadi (2010) made a distinction between enterprise and entrepreneur. He describes the carrying out of new combinations as “enterprise” and the individual whose function it is to carry them out as “entrepreneur”. He further tied entrepreneurship to the creation of five basic new combinations of introduction of a new product, a new method of production, opening a new market, conquest of new source of supply and creating a new organization. Stevenson (2002) defines entrepreneurship as the pursuit of opportunity through innovative leverage of resources that for the most part are not controlled internally. Though the idea that entrepreneurs are innovators is largely acceptable it may be difficult to apply the same theory to less developed countries (LDCs). Allawadi (2010) argued that LDCs rarely produce brand new products; rather they imitate products and production processes that have been invented elsewhere in developed countries. He refers to this practice as “creative imitation”.

Frequently, entrepreneurship is thought to apply only to the management of small businesses such as roadside furniture makers, cobbler, tyre vulcanizers, hairdressers and so on, but recent giants like Dell computers and Microsoft have shown how a small business that started small can grow into a conglomerate if given an enabling environment. Drucker (1998) proposes that entrepreneurship is a practice. What this means is that entrepreneurship is not a state of being nor is it characterised by making plans that are not acted upon. One argument may be that entrepreneurship begins with action which involve the creation of new organization which may or may not be self-sustaining nor earn significant revenue. Regardless of the outcomes, when an individual creates a new organization, he has entered the entrepreneurship paradigm.

Some individuals apply the concept of entrepreneurship to the creation of any new business, while others focus on intentions believing that entrepreneurs merely seek to create wealth. This is different from starting a business as a means of working for “yourself” rather than working for others. Others tend to confuse managing a small business with entrepreneurship. But Stevenson and Grousbeck (1999) argued that not all small business managers are entrepreneurs because they don’t innovate. On the other hand, Stoner et al (2000) note that the function that is specific to entrepreneurs is the ability to take the factors of production – land, labour and capital and use them to produce new goods and services. However, they argue that entrepreneurs perceive opportunities that other business executive do not see or care about. Creativity and entrepreneurship promote the birth of new firms which is critical to economic development efforts. Therefore, a definition which seem to fully capture the true meaning of entrepreneurship is the one provided by Stevenson and Gumperts (2002) as a process in which individuals pursue opportunities fulfilling needs and wants through innovation together with the attendant risks. Based on the above definitions, it can be concluded that entrepreneurship is the process of carefully determining and analyzing unmet needs through creatively satisfying those needs by bearing the related risks. By combining the above thoughts, it can be argued that entrepreneurs are risk bearers, coordinators, organizers, gap-fillers, leaders and innovators.

## Basic Types of Entrepreneurship

There are essentially two types of entrepreneurship:

### **Opportunity-Based Entrepreneurship**

This type occurs when an entrepreneur perceives a business opportunity and chooses to pursue it. Ernst and Young (2009) in a survey found that majority of entrepreneurs said they saw economic slow down as the perfect time to pursue new market opportunities. In addition, economists, academics and industry leaders agree that recession tend to favour the naturally innovative temperament of entrepreneurs

### **Necessity-Based Entrepreneurship**

This occurs when an entrepreneur is left with no other viable option to earn a living. It is borne, not as a choice but compulsion which makes him or her choose entrepreneurship as a career. An example is the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-1970 when the economic embargo introduced by Federal Government forced the secessionist Biafra to develop fuel oil from coconut and palm oil.

### **Unemployment Defined**

Unemployment or joblessness, as defined by the International Labour Organization (1982) occurs when people are without jobs and they have actively sought work within the past five weeks. The unemployment rate is a measure of the prevalence of unemployment and it is calculated as a percentage by dividing the number of unemployed individuals by all individuals currently in the labour force. The Newsweek (2011) reported that more than 200 million people globally are out of work, a record high, as almost two-thirds of advanced economies and half of developing countries are experiencing a slowdown in employment growth.

Dependence on jobs to make money to buy food and shelter was the beginning of unemployment. Because it has not always been acknowledged or measured systematically, there are limited historical records on unemployment. Recognition of unemployment occurred slowly as economies across the world industrialized and bureaucratized. The recognition of the concept of "unemployment" is best exemplified through the well documented historical records in England. For example, in 16<sup>th</sup> century England no distinction was made between vagrants and the jobless as they were simply categorised as "sturdy beggars", to be punished and moved on (Business Week, 2011). An individual who cannot either join an enterprise or create a job is unemployed. As individual farmers, merchants, and artisans organize themselves into large enterprises, those who cannot join or compete favourably become unemployed. As population was rising, those unable to find work had a choice: starve or break the law.

### **Brief Examination of Youth Unemployment in Nigeria**

Youth unemployment across the world has reached a new high and is likely to climb further. The youth population in sub-Saharan Africa was estimated at 138 million people in 2002-2003, with 28.9 million or 21% of them unemployed (ILO, 2004b). There are notable differences in youth unemployment with regard to gender. The unemployment rate for young women in sub-Saharan Africa is 18.4%, lower than the rate for young men (23.1%) even though young women's participation rate is lower.

Youth unemployment in Africa also has a geographical dimension. It is generally higher in the urban areas than in rural areas. Several factors account for higher youth unemployment rate in Africa, most notably low economic growth, low economic activity and low investment. These related factors contribute to low job creation and because of sustained (increase in some cases) population growth the small labour market is unable to absorb the resulting army of job seekers.

Youth unemployment has been increasing because most graduates lack relevant marketable skills. The Federal government recently acknowledged that about 80 percent of Nigeria's youth are unemployed while 10 percent are underemployed (Daily Trust, 2008). According to the National Bureau of statistics (2010) the national unemployment rates for Nigeria between 2000 and 2009 showed that unemployed persons constituted 31.1%, 13.6% in 2001, 12.6% in 2002, 13.4% in 2004, 13.7% in 2006, 14.9% in 2008, and 19.7% in 2009. With respect to age group, education and sex NBS (2010) data showed that persons aged between 15 and 24 years had 41.6% unemployed. For persons between 25 and 44 years, 17% were unemployed. For persons with primary education 14.8% were unemployed while those with post secondary education had 21.3% unemployed. As regards sex, data showed that males constituted 17.% of the unemployed while females constituted 23.3%. The unemployment rate in Nigeria is presented in Table 1. Based on the figures in the table, Nigeria had a population of 164.38 million in 2011. Out of this figure the labour force stood at 67.25

Table1. Growing Unemployment In Nigeria

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total population	140.11	144.02	149.56	154.34	159.28	164.38
Economically Active	70.92	81.44	84.05	86.74	88.52	92.38
Labour Force	57.45	59.29	61.19	63.14	65.17	67.25
Employed	50.38	51.76	52.07	50.7	51.22	51.18
Unemployed	7.07	7.53	9.12	12.44	13.95	16.07

**Source:** Omoh, G. (2012) "Unemployment, A Ticking Time Bomb", Vanguard, Vol. 25, No. 61557, p. 19.

**Table 2.** Unemployment Rate By States (%0 March 2009)

Bayelsa	38.3	Borno	27.7	Imo	20.8	Enugu	14.9	Edo	12.2
Katsina	37.3	Kano	27.6	Ekiti	20.6	Ondo	14.9	Ebonyi	12
Bauchi	37.2	Yobe	27.3	Niger	19.7	Oyo	14.9	Kebbi	12
Akwa-Ibom	34.1	Taraba	26.8	Lagos	19.5	Abia	14.5	Niger	11.9
Gombe	32.1	Jigawa	26.5	Kogi	19	Cross River	14.3	Kaduna	11.6
Adamawa	29.4	Sokoto	22.4	Delta	18.4	Zamfara	13.3	Kwara	11
Rivers	27.9	FCT (Abuja)	21.5	Anambra	16.8	Osun	12.6	Ogun	8.5
								Plateau	7.1

Source: National Bureau of Statistics Labour Force Survey, 2009.

**Table 3.** Nigerian Unemployment Rates by Age Group and Sex (March 2009).

Age Group	Unemployment Rate
15-24	41.6
25-44	17
45-59	11.5
60-64	16.7
<b>Gender Analysis</b>	
Male	17
Female	23.3

Source: Ruhl, O (2011) Nigeria's Youth: Turning Challenges into Opportunity.

million out of which 51.18 million were employed and 16.07 million unemployed.

Unemployment has become a major problem for most countries across the world. In the USA for instance unemployment had increased from 5 percent in 2007 to 9 percent in 2011. That of Spain has risen from 8.6 percent to 21.52 percent as a result of the debt crisis in Europe; UK, from 5.3 to 8.1 percent while that of Greece rose from 8.07 to 18.4 percent during the same period (Vanguard, 2012). The average unemployment rate within the African continent is generally high. South Africa, Africa's largest economy have 25 percent unemployment rate, Botswana at 17.5 percent, Angola at 25 percent and Kenya at 11.7 percent (Allawadi, 2010). It must be noted that the population of these countries is lower than Nigeria's. An unemployment ratio of 23.9 percent of the total population will mean that over 38 million Nigerians are unemployed. Of the workforce, it means that 16 million are unemployed.

A number of states which recorded high composite unemployment rates, that is, above the national average of 19.7 percent include Bayelsa (38.4%), Katsina (37.3%), Bauchi (37.2%) Akwa-Ibom (34.1%), Gombe (32.1%) Adamawa (29.4%), Borno (27.7%), Kano (27.6%), Yobe (27.3%), Taraba (26.8%), Jigawa (26.5%), Imo (20.8%), FCT (21.5%), while Plateau recorded the lowest figure of 7.1% (see Table 2).

Table 2. shows that unemployment rate is higher in the densely populated states like Bayelsa and Bauchi states where there are fewer urban cities. This is because there will be more applicant chasing the few available jobs. Table 3.

shows that the age group 15-24 years had the highest rate of 41.6% whereas the age group 45-59 years had only 11.5%. Gender wise, unemployment rate is higher for females than their male counterparts. Females face particularly strong challenges in entering the labour force due to early motherhood and lack of education. One reason for this is the belief by many youths that the prospects of getting lucrative jobs are higher in the urban cities. Many of these youths lack vocational education and technical skills which make them casualties in an increasingly competitive economy.

The National Bureau of Statistics (2010) report show that approximately 112.5 million (68%) out of 164 million Nigerians live in relative poverty conditions. Significantly, the North-West and North-East geopolitical zones recorded the highest poverty rates of 77.7% and 76.3% respectively. The National Bureau of Statistics survey also revealed that more women are entering the labour market to pursue their careers. Due to improvement in female education, women are not only getting married later but also, are increasingly becoming more insistent on financial independence.

The banking sub-sector, due to the ongoing reforms and consolidation has sent several young men and women into the labour market. Therefore, instead of the sector generating employment, it is shrinking. The manufacturing sector has not fared any better. For example, the number of persons in paid employment at the end of 2010 in the cement manufacturing sub-sector stood at 3,318 compared to 4,142 in 2009, a decline of 19.9%. The National Bureau of Statistics (2000) survey of wholesale and retail trade activities showed that there were 92,287 workers in paid employment in the sub-sector in 2010, as against 78,049 in 2009. The overall implication of this is that the economy is not growing fast enough to absorb existing job seekers that join the labour market annually.

A national survey jointly sponsored by the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the Education Trust Fund (ETF) in 2004 sought to determine the labour market needs. The study revealed that 44 percent of the 20 organizations rated Nigerian science graduates as average in competence, 56 percent rated them as average in innovation, 50 percent rated them average in rational judgement, 63 percent as average in leadership skills and 44 percent as average in creativity. On the needed skills like literacy, oral communication, information technology, entrepreneurship, analytical, problem-solving, and decision making, 60 percent rated them as poor. By any standard, the above statistics reflect a poor assessment of Nigerian university graduates and further buttress the fact that many of them were unemployable.

As should be expected, the lack of employment potential make crime a more attractive option for some Nigerian university graduates. It is common to find some graduates still roaming the streets, five years after graduation in search of jobs that are not there or for which they are not qualified. It is therefore, no coincidence that crimes such as kidnapping which is now a new and attractive industry is thriving especially in the south-Eastern part of Nigeria. Other crimes include armed robbery, car snatching, oil pipeline vandalization, oil bunkering, prostitution and so on. A survey by the National Bureau of Statistics (2011) indicate that between 2006 and 2011, there were 1.8 million new entrants into the active labour market per year. The result of the survey also shows that persons aged 0-14 years constituted 39.6%; those aged 15-64 who are the economically active population constituted 56.3%, while those aged 65 and above constituted 4.2%. High competition for economic resources and services, over dependence on a single natural resource (oil) and the neglect of other crucial sectors of the economy also contribute to youth unemployment in Nigeria.

### **Factors Which Promote Unemployment**

Unemployment in Nigeria has been hindered by five major factors: structural, cultural, lack of political will, skewed budgetary allocation and poorly coordinated intervention programmes.

#### **Structural Factors**

Structural inhibitors in the growth of unemployment has its origin in the Nigerian education policies since independence in 1960. Between then and now Nigeria has introduced and implemented not less than three different educational policies. These are the 7:5:2:3; the 6:3:3:4, and now the 9:3:3:4 (elementary, secondary and university). There is now a clamour for the re-introduction of Higher School Certificate (HSC) program which was a two-year post-secondary programme that prepared students for university education. This reaction followed the very poor performance of secondary school leavers (87% failure rate) in the West African Examination Council (WAEC) in 2010. One of the major problems of past education policies stems from the fact that new policies are not allowed to run their full course before they are changed. What this means is that some of the past policies may not have been well conceived before implementation.

#### **Cultural Factors and Get rich Quick Syndrome**

Culturally, many youths and their parents believe that the only sure route to success is pursuing career in the elitist professions such as medicine, law and engineering regardless of whether they have the aptitude, interest or resources.

This mindset is fuelled further by loss of the age old value system which tied dignity of labour to wealth. People still perceive artisans and craftsmen as social outcasts who should remain permanently at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder. Society now seen to worship wealth (regardless of the source) and churches and communities reward some of these questionable acquisitions with Kinghood and chieftaincy titles respectively. A visit to a typical auto-mechanic garage in Nigeria will show that unlike what used to be the practice whereby a master auto-mechanic had 3 to 7 apprentices under his tutelage, one will be lucky to find one or two learning the trade. Others will opt out after 3 to 6 months to start riding motorcycle taxi, (Okada) to start making money, while the few who remain do not stay long enough to acquire the skills to be proficient in the trade. Some of the Nigeria legislators encourage this behaviour by donating motorcycles to youths in their constituencies under the nebulous name of "Youth empowerment". It is doubtful if Nigeria will still have artisans and technicians in another 20 to 30 years.

### **Lack of Political Will**

The neglect of vocational/technical education has been robbing the nation of the potential contributions of its graduates to national growth and economic development. The inability of policy makers to make rational and informed decisions continue to affect the rate of progress of the Nigerian Nation. As Dike (2006a) has noted, the underdevelopment status of Nigeria could be linked to the neglect of its educational institutions. Although science and technology has been a part of Nigeria's National Policy on Primary education (NPE) since 1981 (Moja, 2000), like every other public policy, implementation have always been the major problem. Consequently, the society lacks competent artisans such as bricklayers, carpenters, printers, auto mechanics, laboratory and pharmacy technicians and so on.

### **Skewed Budgetary Allocations**

After China and India, Nigeria is the fastest growing economy in the world with a growth rate of 7.2% (Yusuf, 2012). This figure is expected to increase to double digit growth typical of the Asian tiger economies. This growth rate is being achieved despite the energy challenges, financial crisis and global economic meltdown.

Although Nigeria's economy is projected to continue growing, poverty is likely to get worse as the gap between the rich and the poor continue to widen. One reason may be attributed to the perennial defective leadership, corruption and poorly articulated policy implementations. For example, the Federal Government's share of distributable revenue is 54%, states 25% and local government 19%. Out of the share accruing to the Federal Government, only about 20-30% go to capital expenditure, while the rest go to recurrent and overhead. On the other hand, states like Lagos allocate between 40-45% to capital expenditure annually. It can be argued that there is an inverse relationship between income and capital expansion. Therefore, by committing more resources to infrastructure you indirectly impact on incremental incomes of the citizenry.

### **Poorly Coordinated Intervention Programmes**

As nations advance into the 21<sup>st</sup> century governments are shrinking and shedding the toga of major employer of labour. However, the rate of reduction vary from country to country but dictated by what is perceived as political and social consequences. This partly explains why in most developing countries the government is the major employer of labour. The NEEDS document (2004) states that "Human development will definitely be grossly undermined and impaired without employment". Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010) argued that the problems of mass unemployment, low productivity high inflation and poverty will depend on how speedily it is able to develop the millions of its labour force into a knowledgeable and skilled people needed for the required change.

Skills acquisition as a veritable vehicle to promote employment generation has been a part of the policy thrust of past Nigerian governments. However, most intervention programmes have been poorly coordinated and in some cases either overlap or contradict one another. Beginning with the Directorate of Food Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Family Support Programme (FSP) and now the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategies (NEEDS), SEEDS and even the establishment of People Bank of Nigeria (PBN) are some of the intervention programmes that were intended to promote employment generation. Most of the past intervention programmes were implemented as ad-hoc, poorly coordinated and marred by corruption and inefficiency. Consequently, rather than reduce unemployment, the reverse seem to be the case.

The Nigerian Living Standard Survey (NLSS, 2006) estimated the poverty level at 54%, implying that approximately 75 million Nigerians were unemployed. This figure is expected to be higher when lay-offs and outright closures due to

**Table 4.** Enrolment in Secondary and Vocational/Technical Institutions (1991-2001).

Year	Number of Technical Colleges	Student Enrolment	Number of Secondary schools	Student Enrolment
1991	208	46,083	3,854	1,653,891
1992	202	40,878	5,840	1,814,000
1993	190	72,136	5,948	1,865,189
1994	300	72,136	6,092	2,794,498
1995	240	76,434	5,991	2,934,349
1996	252	89,536	5,859	2,941,781
1997	261	1,179	6,001	2,941,781
1998	261	1,426	5,860	2,901,993
1999	261	1,425	6,008	3,123,277
2000	261	1,835	6,009	3,600,204
2001	261	1,835	5,959	4,032,083

Source: Federal Office of Statistics (2001) social Statistics in Nigeria

the global economic meltdown since 2008 are considered. Government effort at promoting skill acquisition through the establishment of vocational training institutions have also not yielded the desired result, even though Osunde and Omoruyi (2004) note that more vocational skills training are being established. Although more vocational training institutions are being established the youths are not motivated to take advantage of opportunities associated with vocational education due to some of the above reasons. The student enrolment pattern in vocational and secondary schools is presented in Table 4. Table 4 shows that although the number of technical/vocational colleges have increased since 1991, the number of students enrolled has been declining since 1997, while enrolment in secondary schools have been increasing during the same period. One explanation for this is negative perception on many youths and even their parents towards vocational education. For example, it is common to find many Nigerian legislators donate motorcycles and pepper grinding machines to youths in their constituencies under the name of “youth empowerment”.

### What Can Be Done

Societies try a number of different measures to get as many people as possible into work and some societies have experienced close to full employment for extended periods particularly during the post-world War II economic expansion. For example, the United Kingdom in the 1950s and 1960s averaged 1.6% unemployment (Sloman, 2004).

This paper has tried to establish that youth unemployment is a growing challenge for all in Nigeria today. Policies to tackle youth unemployment have tended to focus on how youth are different from other workers. They are less skilled, less experienced and have very limited business contacts. Thus skills training and vocational education constitute the majority of interventions to date. However, many of these training programs have had disappointing outcomes. Youth unemployment in Nigeria is a multi-dimensional problem that needs to be addressed on macro basis.

Youth unemployment in Nigeria is more of a demand side problem. There are not enough jobs to go round. Increase in the demand for labour will move the economy along the demand curve, thereby increasing wages and employment. The demand for labour in an economy is derived from the demand for goods and services. If the demand for goods and services in the economy increases, the demand for labour will increase. This may be described as classical unemployment. Youth unemployment can be reduced if the following interventions are creatively implemented.

### Value Re-orientation

Any meaningful effort aimed at addressing the problem of youth unemployment in Nigeria must have value re-orientation as its foundation. Any discerning observer would have noticed that the core values such as honesty, dignity in labour and hard work have long evaporated from the radar of the Nigeria culture. It is very common to find government officials flaunting their ill-gotten wealth thereby making them the envy of the youths. The youths want to make quick and easy money and generally want to live on the fast lane. Increasingly, youths are being dis-oriented by

the get rich-quick syndrome of politics and engendered corruption in the last two decades. Many of them are beginning to share the view that hard work does not pay in Nigeria. Some of them even believe that the N18,000 minimum wage cannot sustain them. Therefore, they keep hoping that one day they will “make it big” like the politicians and other corrupt government officials. Such a situation can be described as voluntary unemployment.

Another big challenge to the youths is the need to change their mindset from that of job seekers to job creators; from writing good bios to writing great business plans. It also means transitioning from being provincial to thinking regionally and even globally, from waiting for change to becoming the drivers of change. Effort should be made to promote nobility of character and eschew ignoble wealth acquired by dishonest means.

### **Aggressive Emphasis on Entrepreneurial Education**

Entrepreneurial education may provide the needed bolt for a sustained drive towards reducing youth unemployment. To this end educational curricula from elementary to tertiary levels should be modified to include entrepreneurship and should be reviewed periodically, say every six years to accommodate changes that may result from global demands. At the very least one course on entrepreneurship should be made compulsory irrespective of the programme of study. Skills training must be incorporated in all aspects of education so that the products will be equipped for employment or at least be creative in the area of job creation.

Skills mismatch is another problem which an enriched school curriculum can address because many youths fail to acquire the skills that are demanded by the labour market. Skills mismatch are exacerbated both by rapidly changing skills needs, and by the reluctance or inability to update university curricula (Boateng, 2002). One approach to tackling the problem of a skill mismatch is to combine formal education with work-based training. This combination can either be sequential, where training follows the completion of school, or it can be undertaken concurrently (Ruhl, 2011).

### **Link Agriculture with Processing**

Nigeria with its vast arable land mass can be an investor’s haven in agriculture and allied businesses. A link needs to be established between agriculture and other non-farm activities such as processing, the creation of markets, and the need for credit. Agriculture accounts for the bulk of GDP in Nigeria and employs a higher absolute number than any other sector (Ruhl, 2011). However, its full potential is rarely exploited. Lack of supporting infrastructure makes production and transportation of agricultural goods to market unviable. The high amount of underutilized land, and the scope for technological development suggests a strong potential for employment creation.

### **Establish A Conducive Investment Climate.**

Nigeria has one of the highest percentage of the informal sector of 65% which is growing and pushing the economy backwards (Balogun, 2010). Ruhl (2011’) argued that the private sector can create productive and sustainable new job opportunities. Any government that is interested in creating large number of jobs must first create the right investment climate. This is one area the federal and state governments do not appear to have done much. Business growth and job creation could be severally constrained by poor infrastructure and limited access to finance and other business services. The burdens of a weak investment climate including access to infrastructure, land, finance and so on fall more heavily on young investors as well as young job seekers. Also, the burden of maintaining electricity generators where power is unreliable has made the difference between competing effectively in international markets and closure.

### **Target Youth Intensive Sectors**

Youth intensive sectors have potential for addressing youth unemployment. Those sectors include information, communication and technology (ICT), entertainment, and hospitality. For example, starting from a very small base a little more than 10 years ago, India has managed to develop its IT and IT-enabled services into a \$100 billion per year industry that continues to growth at 30% per annum (Ruhl, 2011). They mainly employ school leavers. Call centres are being established in places like South Africa, Egypt, Ghana and Nigeria eventhough on small scale. In Nigeria, the epileptic services of providers affect the motivation of those already in the business while discouraging potential entrepreneurs.

Music and films presently are heavily dominated by youth cohorts both on the production and consumption sides. This is an area that has not been seen traditionally as a growth industry by government officials. According to Ruhl



(2011), Hollywood represents the second largest component of American exports. Nigeria could begin to emulate this success, especially Nollywood which has been adjudged as one of the most prolific in the world producing no less than 40 movies per week. The value of the Nigerian film industry is estimated to be \$250million per annum (Ruhl, 2011). The music industry is estimated to be of similar size. Employment in the entertainment industry is estimated at 500,000 formally and a much larger number informally. It is believed that growth in the industry could be much faster if the loss to piracy can be effectively addressed.

Changes in demographics especially as more women are entering the workforce are driving a tremendous growth in the fast food industry in Africa. Fast foods are becoming a lifestyle choice with burgeoning road side food stalls (bukkas) and other eateries. They are typically staffed by young women. The hospitality industry is therefore one that could potentially absorb large numbers of lower skilled Nigerian youths. The catering subsector of the hospitality industry will continue to grow since it is not too sensitive to economic pressures.

### **State Governments should Develop Its own Innovative Strategies to Promote Entrepreneurial Activities in Its Area.**

Although many law makers and top government officials realise the potential of new enterprises in promoting employment growth, a centralized administration of entrepreneurial activities have tended to impede their effectiveness. Governments should discontinue entrepreneurial policies that seem to suggest a one-size-fits-all approach. For example, school curricula are the same across the country even though there is a marked difference in academic achievement and orientation between the North and South and West of Nigeria. Due to this socio-cultural diversity inherent in developing countries like Nigeria, entrepreneurial policies that are unique and indigenous to the respective states should be vigorously pursued.

### **Conclusion**

From all indications, youth unemployment is a menace in Nigeria which requires a holistic attention. Repositioning youths for the eradication of unemployment require that we transform them into confident, aggressive and purposeful individuals. Products of entrepreneurial education should be equipped with scientific, technical and factual base with good background information and research skills. All must have a high level of creativity and innovation and the ability to think about the future.

Government must play its constitutional role by creating enabling socio-economic and political environment including the provision of infrastructure to make the industrial climate investment friendly. The government must also have the political will to fight the scourge of corruption which is discouraging foreign direct investment (FDI) because of the added cost to doing business in Nigeria.

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