

Business Education as a Recipe for Tackling Unemployment and Growing the Nigerian Economy

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Abstract

Unemployment is an indicator of economic stagnation or retrogression hence it is pertinent that every economy that desires to grow must fight against the menace of unemployment. This is because unemployment leaves severe consequences on the economy in particular, and society at large. Nigeria as a developing country has continued to struggle with this menace called unemployment. Successive governments had devised and implemented measures for tackling the menace, yet it still remains with us. Several programmes have been initiated with different strategies adopted, but none has adequately and effectively dealt with the menace, and this does not portend well for a developing economy like Nigeria. It is therefore in trying to find solutions to the problem of unemployment in Nigeria that this theoretical study is carried out, with the aim of projecting Business Education as a veritable tool for tackling unemployment for the growth of the Nigerian economy. The study, having reviewed other literatures, concluded that unemployment has a negative and inverse relationship with economic growth; that entrepreneurship education is a panacea to it; and that Business Education is the vehicle that drives entrepreneurship education. Thus, it recommended amongst others that Business Education should be adopted, employed and embraced by the Nigerian populace and her government in order to tackle unemployment and grow her economy.

Keywords: Unemployment, Economy, Education

Introduction

Nigeria as a developing country has continued to struggle with growing her economy. Successive governments had developed and implemented certain measures geared towards economic growth but yet, she is yet to attain stability in her economy. With her population on the increase, coupled with increasing unemployment, inflation and cost of living, it leaves one wondering whether Nigeria will be economically stable any moment soon. Although Nigeria as a country has an adequate population and resources to measure up with top economies of the world, yet it is still struggling with growing her economy in the face of increasing unemployment in the country. The rate of unemployment in Nigeria has continued to rise with its rippling effects on the economy. Unemployment is a menace that has devastating consequences on a population. In the Nigerian case, unemployment has led to insecurities, criminalities, fraudulent activities and other

social vices. By implication therefore, as the population of Nigeria increases with the independent population not being absorbed economically, they tend to channel their energies into illicit economic activities which are detrimental to the growth of the economy. This however can be cushioned with an investment in the human capital of the country through Business Education. It is therefore based on this backdrop that this theoretical study is carried out with the view of promoting Business Education as a veritable tool that can be used in tackling unemployment in Nigeria, which by so doing will grow the Nigerian economy.

Concept of Economic Growth

Growth is a process and it refers to incremental changes that are based on measurable dimensions. By implication therefore, the level of growth is determined by the measurement of certain indices of the growth process which are also observable. Hence, growth can be said to be both observable and measurable. By this, it means that growth can be defined as a process of incremental change that is observed and measured with certain indices. It therefore means that growth is generally a quantitative increase in a thing.

The growth of an economy is a function of different elements within the economic space. It is a social construct that is empirically observable and measurable. It is measured by empirically observing the growth of different economic units of the economy. It therefore holds an important stake in the society as it affects the poverty rate and living standard of the populace. A growth in the economy of a country will by implication result to reduction in poverty and increase in the standard of living of the population of the country. By this, economic growth brings about economic and social stability in the society. It will translate into reduction of crime rate and other social vices, as well as provision of social welfare.

Based on the foregoing, economic growth has been defined in terms of welfare and productivity. In terms of welfare, it is defined as the contribution of economic activities to the achievement of a higher level of human welfare, as measured in Per Capita Income of a country. It can therefore be simply put as a realised increase in the economic welfare of the population of a country. Hence, it is measured by the changes in the economic welfare of the people. In terms of productivity, it is defined as the increase in the amount of goods and services produced by a country for over a period of time, as measured in her Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It was based on this that Roser (2021) defined economic growth as an increase in the quality and quantity of economic goods and services being produced by a country. Similarly, Potters (2021) defined it as an increase in the production of economic goods and services in a particular period of time as compared to the previous period. Deductively therefore, the above definitions imply that economic growth has to do with increase in the production of economic goods and services over a period of time as compared to previous periods. They also imply that it is not all goods and services that are being considered but rather economic goods and services and, this leaves one wondering what really is an economic goods and service. It was in answering this that Roser (2021) posited that economic goods and services are those goods and services that can be

produced and are scarce in relation to the demand for them. Also, still from his position, they are those goods and services that can be delegated to someone else, as well as are being produced or provided by people to each other in order to solve a certain problem the other is faced with. Hence, an increase in the production/provision of these goods and services over a period of time as compared to past periods is what informs economic growth.

Nevertheless, whether defined in terms of welfare or productivity, economic growth is expected to, as much as it increases in productivity, reflect the increase in the lives of the population. It therefore means that economic growth is all encompassing, as it entails increase in production of economic goods and services of a country and the welfare of her citizens, and indeed population. Hence economic growth is a necessity for the sustenance and viability of a country, including Nigeria. Thus, countries are expected to strive towards growing their economy, which has actually continued to pose a challenge especially for developing countries, of which Nigeria is one. However, amongst several other measures, this few can be adopted to generate as well as facilitate economic growth of a country viz. increasing physical capital goods, improving technology, growing the labour force, and increasing the human capital. A critical look at these measures mentioned, reveals the place of education in the growth of an economy. The suggested improvement in technology will only be effective when persons who have the right and adequate knowledge, attitude and skill control the technology. The same thing applies to growing the labour force, increasing the physical capital goods, as well as the human capital. Hence, by extension, it implies that education is a prerequisite for any economy to grow. However, notwithstanding the role of education in the growth of an economy, economic growth is affected by unemployment, inflation, poverty, brain drain, educational setbacks, social evils, low standard of living and unfavourable government policies. Amongst all, unemployment seems to be the most conspicuous, because it is seen in virtually all the others. It is usually unemployment or underemployment that propels brain drain. It is also unemployment that brings about poverty. Unemployment also lowers the standard of living. It also breeds perpetuation of social evils. The effect of inflation is felt most in a state of unemployment. Hence, if unemployment is tackled, virtually all others will be dealt with, and the economy will grow. Thus, this theoretical study is focused on tackling unemployment with Business Education for the growth of the Nigerian economy.

Unemployment and the Growth of an Economy

Unemployment has been identified as an indicator of the performance of an economy. It leaves severe consequences on the economy and, these consequences affect the growth of the economy. To this end, Akeju and Olanipekun (2015) asserted that it is a widely accepted view in economics that the growth of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of an economy increases employment and reduces unemployment. This assertion shows a strong relationship between employment and economic growth. As a matter of fact, the three key elements of an economy are productivity, income distribution and employment. Thus Pineda (2018) revealed that the prevalence of joblessness is one of the indicators of the performance of an economy.

Unemployment therefore is a situation in which people who are able and willing to work are actively looking for a job, but have none or are unable to secure any. Its rate is a measure of the percentage of these unemployed individuals in the labour force of a country. Fajana (2000) in Nwankwo and Ifejiofor (2014) defined it as a situation where people who are willing and capable of working are unable to find suitable paid employment. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Nnabuihe (2013) gave its own definition of unemployment as “the proportion of the labour force which was available for work but did not work for at least one hour in the week preceding the survey period” (p. 3), while the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) still in Nnabuihe (2013) (pp. 3-4) defined theirs as “the proportion of the labour force which was available for work but did not work for at least 37 hours in the week preceding the survey period”. That notwithstanding, a recurring element in all these definitions is that this set of persons is able, willing and available for work, but cannot find any to work. This situation is a global issue that has raised global concerns and questions over the years. It is a global concern because its consequences in one way or the other affect the global economy. In the case of Nigeria, it had generated concerns to economists and policy makers since the early 1980s (Akeju & Olanipekun, 2015). It was based on this that, Lipsey (1963) in Nnabuihe (2013) posited that unemployment generates economic wastes and brings about human sufferings. This, Nwankwo and Ifejiofor (2014) expanded by stating that the consequences of unemployment in Nigeria subsist as: making the labour force unproductive, increasing crime and violence, increasing drug addiction, lowering the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), affecting the psychology and health of the people, creating political instability as well as social insecurities. They claim that the causes of unemployment in Nigeria include: poor educational planning, neglect of the agricultural sector, adoption of untimely economic policy measures, wrong impression about technical and vocational studies, and poor enabling environment. In addition, Bello (2003) in Nwankwo and Ifejiofor (2014) added that weak educational system is also a cause of unemployment in Nigeria, as it is not adequate to equip the youths with requisite technical and entrepreneurial skills. This claim therefore revealed the place of education in combating unemployment in Nigeria.

Empirically, Nwankwo and Ifejiofor (2014) in their study on the impact of unemployment on Nigeria’s economic development revealed that unemployment impedes the growth and development of the Nigerian economy and if not checked, will deprive Nigeria of her vision to become amongst the top-ranking economies of the world. Hence, they recommended amongst others, the establishment of programmes that will inculcate in the youths, vocational skills that will enable them become entrepreneurs and as such invest in small scale businesses. Similarly, Arthur Okun in 1962 postulated the Okun law that states that a 1% increase in unemployment will lead to over 3% loss in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Akeju & Olanipekun, 2015). Also, in support of this is the Keynesian theory of unemployment propounded by John Maynard Keynes in the 1930s, which states that unemployment occurs when there is no aggregate demand in the economy (Anuligo, 2013). By implication therefore, a growth in the economy will increase the demand for labour which will in turn result in employment opportunities. Thus, when the economy is not growing unemployment will set in,

implying a positive relationship between economic growth and employment and, a negative/inverse relationship between unemployment and economic growth. Thus, Adebayo (2001) in Anuligo (2013) posited that unemployment arises whenever the supply of labour exceeds the demand for it at the prevailing wage rate. In support of these claims is the empirical study of Tabeuina (2000) in Eche, Magaji and Ishaku (2017), which used the ordinary least square (OLS) to analyse the impact of unemployment on economic growth in Nigeria from 1970-2010, and therefore revealed a negative relationship between unemployment and economic growth. Hence, recommended for government restructuring of education to equip the youths with the capability of self-reliance and self-employment. Also, is that of Obandan and Sagbama (1997) in Anuligo, which observed that economic growth and employment moves in same direction whilst there is a negative correlation between economic growth and unemployment. Others include Obandan and Odusola (2005) and Stephen (2011) all in Anuligo, as well as most recently, Bello (2022) who all revealed a significantly inverse relationship between unemployment and economic growth.

Consequently, it has become obvious that unemployment impacts negatively on the growth of an economy as shown in the several empirical studies above. Thus, in order to avert these negative consequences, education has been identified as a veritable tool to be used. This is because education is expected to make the learner to be functional in the society. Hence it is believed that with entrepreneurial and vocational education, many unemployed individuals will become job creators rather than job seekers, and this is what Business Education is aimed at. Therefore, with the use of Business Education, the menace of unemployment can be tackled for the growth of the Nigerian economy.

Business Education: A Veritable Tool to Tackle Unemployment in Nigeria

Business Education, a programme of study at the tertiary level of Nigerian education, is a branch of Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) which according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004) and as enshrined in her national policy on education, the goals of the Technical and Vocational Education are to:

- a. Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels
- b. Provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development
- c. Give training and impart the necessary skills to individual who shall be self-reliant economically (pp. 30-31)

Hence the philosophy of Business Education according to the 2014 Draft of the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) for Education is geared towards a complete development of the individual student teachers in order to make them effective business teachers, and high caliber professionals in business establishments. Thus, amongst its objectives is to produce the manpower endowed with analytical and critical knowledge of the major factors in

contemporary business world in order to influence the development of a virile economy in Nigeria. Drawing from this, the Rivers State University (RSU, 2017) in Kingsley (2018) in Chamberlain (2019) included the following amongst others as their objectives of the programme:

- a. Producing outstanding entrepreneurs and promoters of successful industries in the world of work
- b. Enabling its graduates to understand the critical nature or complexity and diversity of the business world

More so, the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN, 2020) has these as its objectives of the programme, which are to:

- a. Make and develop in all students the ability to choose discriminately and to use wisely the goods and services that business is to offer
- b. Assist in developing the students' interest in the various occupations found in the world of business
- c. Develop in all students the practical way of understanding and appreciating the actual functioning of our economic system
- d. Enable students to acquire basic skills in business occupations
- e. Prepare students to enter and succeed in business occupations
- f. Prepare students to perform business activities common to many professional, industrial, agricultural services and, home-making careers
- g. Prepare students for more effective study in the fields of business and education beyond the secondary school education level
- h. Enable graduates of the programme to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of business
- i. Equip students with the requisite skills for job creation and entrepreneurship
- j. Expose students to the knowledge of business

Thereby presenting Business Education as the vehicle that drives entrepreneurship, successful business establishment and effective business management. By implication therefore, this means that everyone who desires to become a successful entrepreneur or businessman/woman must as a matter of importance seek and undertake a course in Business Education.

It is in the light of this that Osuala (1989) in Ajisafe, Bolarinwa and Edeh (2015) opined that Business Education is an essential part of the preparation of youths for live and living. In his definition, he defined it as both office education (i.e. a vocational programme of office careers) and general business education (i.e. a programme to provide students with information and competencies which are needed by all in managing personal business affairs, and in using the services of a business (Osuala, 2004 in Ajisafe et al., 2015). In agreement to his earlier definition, Njoku (1997) in Ajisafe et al. (2015) claimed that Business Education helps the individual to acquire relevant skills needed for living. Thus Hell (n.d) wrote that "Business Education generally refers to the plethora of courses designed to provide students with any

number of skills needed for success in business, especially those related to launching and running businesses” (para. 1). The definitions therefore point to the fact that Business Education is not only a business-teacher education but also a business-practitioner education. It is a programme of study that prepares and equips not just a business teacher but also other business professionals. As a matter of fact, the whole curriculum can be segmented into three: Teacher education, Office practice education, and Entrepreneurship education. Hence, if entrepreneurship, job creation and establishment of small-scale businesses are the panaceas to unemployment in Nigeria, Business Education is then the veritable tool for tackling and combating unemployment in Nigeria.

Consequently therefore, as a way of combating unemployment in Nigeria, Business Education should be adopted and employed by the government as a veritable tool. Some selected courses of it that focuses on entrepreneurship and business management should be intentionally taught as a part of all programmes of study in Nigeria. Also, some of its professional courses should be taught as professional programmes for career advancement and skill development. As a matter of fact, the business and commercial studies curriculum at the basic and secondary levels of Nigerian education should be reviewed to be more practical and entrepreneurial, and should expose the learners to basic skills that can profit them in the work environment, business world and their academic pursuits. Therefore, Business Education should be embraced by all and sundry (individuals, organisations and the government). It should also be legislated upon to allow for only professionals and, to avoid proliferation of quackery in the practice. With these being done, unemployment in Nigeria will be reduced and, the economy will grow. This is so as Business Education will make individuals to think critically and become creative and innovative in their economic environment, rather than indulge in crimes, criminalities and other social evils.

Conclusion

The Nigerian government, understanding the role of employment in economic growth had over the years come up with measures to tackle unemployment. Amongst such measures is the establishment of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in November 1986, with the aim of promptly and effectively fight unemployment by designing and implementing innovative programmes directed towards the provision of training opportunities through guidance and management support services to graduate farmers and small scale entrepreneurs (Nwankwo & Ifejirofor, 2014). This, they do by the following programmes:

- a. Youth employment and vocational skills development programme
- b. Special public works
- c. Small scale industries and graduate employment programme
- d. Agricultural Development Programme (ADP)

However, all these can only be effective if the agency and indeed the government can embrace Business Education and infuse it into the various programmes.

Way Forward

Based on the study, the following suggestions are put forward:

1. Business Education should be adopted and employed by the government and her economic and labour agencies like the National Directorate of Employment as a veritable tool to tackle unemployment.
2. Some selected courses of Business Education that focuses on entrepreneurship and business management should be intentionally taught as a part of all programmes of study in Nigeria.
3. Some of its professional courses should be taught as professional programmes for career advancement and skill development
4. The business and commercial studies curriculum at the basic and secondary levels of Nigerian education should be reviewed to be more practical and entrepreneurial, in a way that it will expose the learners to basic skills that can profit them in the work environment, business world and their future academic pursuit
5. Business Education should also be legislated upon to allow for only professionals and, to avoid proliferation of quackery in the practice
6. Business Education should be embraced by all and sundry (individuals, organisations and the government) as it will make individuals to think critically and become creative and innovative in their economic environment, rather than indulge in crimes, criminalities and other social evils.

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