

Managing Higher Education for Unemployment Reduction in Achieving Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper was a theoretical paper aimed at discussing the strategies to manage higher education that will lead to reduction in unemployment for sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper was justified due to observed unprecedented level of unemployed educated youths on the streets of Nigeria. Several concepts were reviewed such as higher education, unemployment, types of unemployment, consequences of unemployment, state of educational system and unemployment and factors contributing to educated unemployed youths. The paper also discussed the ways of managing higher education which will lead to unemployment reduction among which are; proper functioning of entrepreneurship education, the curriculum should be relevant to the reality of life, application of man-power requirement approach, provision of adequate funding to meet with teaching and learning needs of the students and promote access to technologies that will meet the practical learning of students. When all these are done, to a high extent education will positively lead to reduction of graduates' unemployment in Nigeria and this will lead to both economic and national development.

Key Words: Higher, education, unemployment, reduction

Introduction

Education plays a vital role in the development of a nation. This is because it is seen as the ladder which must be climbed to get to the top of sustainable development. No wonder it was made clear in the National Policy on Education (2014) that education is an instrument par excellence for achieving national development. Due to the key role of education in national development, the government try to commit adequate resources into education. This form of investing in education is known as investment in human capital and this investment is mainly based on economic consideration. Enyi in National Open University of Nigeria (2022) pointed out that investment in education is based on three logic; the educated earn more than the uneducated in most countries, earning power of individuals reflect their productivity level and therefore increase an individual's level of productivity and lastly, since economic development is related to individuals' productivity levels, more education leads to more economic development.

Education in Nigeria is categorized into three levels which are; primary, secondary and higher or tertiary education. Higher education comprises of college of education,

monotechnics, polytechnics and university. It is responsible for the production of middle and high-level manpower needed to drive the economy to sustainable development. This does not mean that the other levels do not play a significant role but the bulk of the development that occurs through education is done by higher education while the other levels act as a forerunner and foundation on which higher education is built. It should be noted that education can only lead to sustainable development if the output (graduates) are gainfully employed. In a situation where graduates are unemployed, there will definitely be the problem of graduate unemployment which will act as a hindrance to sustainable development.

Unemployment is an issue that Nigeria is experiencing presently. This is the most obvious among the graduates that are produced from the various institutions of higher education. Nigeria institutions of higher learning have had serious challenges especially when bringing to focus the rate of unemployed graduates from these institutions. Many graduates cannot find work. Despite the average economic growth rate of about seven percent per annum over the last seven years a good performance by global standards, wage employment is estimated to have declined by about thirty percent (World Bank, 2002).

The graduates' unemployment has led to death of many Nigerian youths in the process of searching for jobs. For example, the case of stampede that killed about 16 graduates and left many injured during the reign of former president Goodluck Jonathan in 2014. It was recorded according to Aririah (2022) that about 520,000 unemployed Nigerians graduates stormed different recruitment centres to apply just for 4000 vacant position that was advertised by Nigerian immigration services. In 2013, the unemployment rate of higher education graduates was estimated to be nearly 65% and the people were faced with the choices of taking work below their qualifications in Gambia. Among the 35% who found a job, some worked in sectors that did not correspond with their education or took job below their income level (Marshall, 2022). This is not different from the experience of Nigeria, where graduate cannot find paid employment as such, they engage in menial jobs and those not related to the course they studied in school. Most of the unemployed graduates have resulted to teaching as their last hope including those who did not have teaching qualifications. It is still the issue of unemployment that propel a PhD holder to teach in the primary schools. Thus, this paper revealed the reasons for the existence of graduate unemployment, the implications as well as ways of eliminating the problem of graduate unemployment for sustainable development.

The Concept of Education/Higher Education

There is no universal acceptable definition of the word education. It is the development of the three domains of man which are the cognitive (head), the affective (heart) and the psychomotor (hand) in order for the individual to be useful to himself, society and the economy at large. Omukalo in Matthew (2016) viewed education as main tool for national socio- economic development and poverty reduction. This implies that education is a key development index as it plays a wider role in the overall individual, social and national development. Higher education on the other hand is tertiary education leading to the award of academic degree. It can also be seen as post- secondary education or the final stage of formal learning that occurs after completion of secondary education. The goals of higher education as enshrined in FRN (2014) are to:

- i. Contribute to national development through higher level relevant manpower training.
- ii. Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of individual and the society develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environment.
- iii. Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful to the society
- iv. Promote and encourage community service and scholarship etc.

The Concept of Unemployment

Unemployment is one of the issues Nigeria is currently facing as a country. Unemployment as noted by Organization for Economic and Development OECD in Ogunjobi, Ekiran and Adesanmi (2021) is the inability of those skilled and semi-skilled individuals to secure a permanent job at a prevailing market wage rate. To them, unemployment has a negative effect on the wellbeing and standard of living of both employed and unemployed as well as negative impact on the development of the economy. In the same vein, Anyanwa (2013) opined that unemployment can either be voluntary or involuntary. Voluntary unemployment arises when one decides not to work because he or she has other means of survival other than employment while involuntary unemployment is that unemployment that occurs when persons who are eligible and willing to work at the prevailing wage rate of pay are unable to secure a job. Similarly, unemployment does not refer to everybody who are not employed but only those who have attained working age, have the required skills and are eager to work but cannot find work (Fourie & Kendall in Ogege, 2011).

Types of unemployment

Tamuno and kalu (2009) classified unemployment into the following;

Frictional or search unemployment:

This is the type of unemployment that arises when an individual leaves his present job with the hope of getting a more lucrative or better one but fails to do so immediately after resigning. Thus, the frictional or search unemployment is the time lag between when the individual resigned from his former work and the time he got the new work job. This type of unemployment can be for a long time or short time depending on the economic situation at that particular time.

Cyclical unemployment:

This is also known as demand – deficient unemployment. This unemployment arises when there is a reduction in the quantity of goods demanded or there is over- production which results in the prices of the commodities that was produced. Since there is fall in the price, the industries will be affected because the revenue of the industries will also fall which may cause the industries to retrenched or lay-off some of its workers. The workers that are retrenched will suffer from deficient demand or cyclical unemployment. Therefore, cyclical unemployment happens when there is a decrease in the demand of goods since demand for labour is directly related or depends on the demand for goods and services.

Voluntary unemployment: this unemployment is deliberate, as an individual who is qualified and up to the working age is not willing or refused to take up any paid employment or decided not to do any work. For example, some husband may order their wives not to do any type of work but to stay at home as full-time housewives.

Seasonal unemployment: this is an unemployment that is caused by seasonal changes that affect some type of work which make the workers not to work at that season that is not conducive. For example, workers that work in road construction companies remain unemployed during rainy season because they cannot do road construction when it is raining. Also, farmers stay idle in-between harvesting and planting periods.

Residual unemployment: this is faced by people who are so low in a standard of efficiency that few occupations may be open to them. For example, those persons that have form of deformity or the other, that is handicapped people.

Technical unemployment: this is an unemployment that results when there is a switch in the method or technique of production. When there is a switch from labour- intensive production to capital-intensive production technique, those individuals that are skilled in the use of the machines will be retained while the unskilled labour will be replaced with machine. For example, the introduction of computers to replace type writers. Those with the computer knowledge were retained while those without it were dropped.

The State of Education and Unemployment in Nigeria

Education is a fundamental social institution that is central to development, this is because it empowers people and strengthen the society. It is the key that opens the door to everybody for them to be lifted out of poverty. Education is vital to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Education can only contribute to development if its educated and skilled individuals are able to secure placement in the workplace.

Nigeria is faced with unemployment problem especially the graduates's unemployment which has hindered the achievement of the sustainable goals by the country. development of the country. Development becomes very difficult or impossible to achieve through education if those who have one form of university qualification or the other cannot secure jobs. Consequently, such person will live in penury. This is manifested in their poor feeding, housing, medical care and other indicator associated with under development.

The continuous existent of graduate unemployment in Nigeria is showing wastage of resources, in terms of finance and manpower. This is because so much is invested in the training of an individual from the primary level to the university level. There is a strong implication of this on household income and investment. Most of the graduates stay for years after graduation without job, leading to manpower wastage. If those graduates are employed immediately, they will be able to increase the productivity and output of the industries where they are working since they will be more productive and efficient compare to those that didn't go to school. Celine in Anuligo (2013) posits that unemployment is a big waste of countries' manpower resources as it generates welfare losses in terms of low output thereby leading to lower income and economic wellbeing. The implication of the absent of job is that there will be no much investment both at the individual and national level and as such have a negative impact on the growth and development of the nation and national level.

Causes of Graduates' Unemployment

There are a whole lot of problems affecting education and the higher education particularly that has led to graduate unemployed youths. Ogege (2011) posited that there are some factors that contributed to educated individuals being unemployed. Some of them are:

Expansion in the higher educational system:

There seems to be a raising figure in the number of tertiary institutions without a commensurable establishment or expansion of industries to absorb the outputs of these institutions that were established. Nigeria has over 43 Federal universities, 52 state owned and 106 private universities (Sasu, 2023). What is seen in Nigeria is increase in the unemployment rate because these various institutions graduate students every year into the labour market without the structural and transformational capacity that is sufficient to expand employment so as to absorb the graduates from the various institutions of learning. According to Mma (2019) Nigerian Universities produce 500,000 graduates annually. This has led to the situation we are experiencing today, where there is a serious increase in graduates' unemployment decline to economic growth and development.

Lack of entrepreneurship education in the curricula of tertiary institutions in Nigeria

Another area where attention is not given to proper management of higher education poor implementation of entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship centers on innovation, creativity, and risk taking (Ogege, 2011). Entrepreneurship education makes it possible for graduates to start up something on their own without necessarily waiting for the government to create jobs. A large number of job seekers lack practical skills that could enhance self-employment. This is why rather than providing jobs for others, the graduates and unemployed persons keep depending on government, non-governmental and private individuals for job opportunities (Nduka, 2021). Lack of entrepreneurship education is triggered by the value we place on white collar jobs. The value system in our society today, where it is believed that every educated person must secure a paid job has aggravated the unemployment problem because the available paid job opportunities in Nigeria cannot absorb all the unemployed graduates

Curricula and pedagogical methods are outdated or obsolete:

The curricula which have been used in the universities as well as the methods of teaching are old or outdated, they cannot meet the challenges of today's workplace. In other words, the number of graduates turned out are not employable due to falling and compromised standard and infrastructural decay (Obanya, Odia & Dike in Ogege, 2011). These deficient graduates discourage organizations from employing them. This is because, they have to train and retrain them before they can fit into the organization. They believe that the huge resources used in training programmes have an impact on their project margin. In the opinion of Anuligo (2022) the quality of training is not in sync with the situation of the society. This means the quality of education offered to students is not tailored to the current need of the society. For instance, we are in the dispensation of innovation where people make use of their brain more than their hands in the workplace but it could be seen that the training in the classroom is still

tailored toward the old era. Thus, it could be said that most of the programmes taught in schools are irrelevant to the current world.

Lack of employable skills:

So many educated people are jobless because there is a mismatch between skills that workers have and the skills needed in the job available. Many educated people are not trained to suit the demand of employers. This is attributed to the poor alignment between labour market needs and the curriculum the education system teaches. There is a wide gap between theory and practices in universities, such that it becomes difficult to apply taught courses to real life situation. Instances have been seen where an individual who graduated with a good degree in computer science or computer science engineering cannot operate the computer. In relation to this, Babalola in Udodu and Mamadu (2016) stated that many graduates are not able to secure job because there is a mismatch between teaching in our educational system and the needs of the labour market.

So, if the entrepreneurship education is taken seriously, there will be more of Dangote that that absorb most of the unemployed graduates or youths. Though, there is the presence of entrepreneurship education in the education curricula but it has not being fully implemented to meet its goals. Development in a country is assessed by high literacy level, reduction in inequality and unemployment as well as other human development indexes. When there is reduction in the unemployment level of a country, it is assumed to be developed.

On the other hand, with the skills and training received from the school will enable the individual to be self- employed and contribute to the nation's development because the individual will be able to generate personal income and as well have some investment, live in a better housing or better housing condition, good medical care and meet his basic needs of life (there will be increase in his income and improvement in his quality of life). These will also reflect in the economy through the increase in national output as a result of increase in goods and services produced in the economy. It will also, reflect in the total revenue that accrued to the nation which is derived from the various taxes paid by them. All these are all indicators of development, with the present of all these indexes in the economy with the help of education, definitely development is bound to occur.

Poor and inadequate funding of higher education

The education sector has been affected as a result of inadequate funding. Anele in Adeyemo (2013) pointed out that chronic unfunding of educational programmes at all levels is responsible for the decay found in the educational system. Higher education in Nigeria has not been adequately funded and this has escalated to other educational problems such as unconducive learning environment, poor salaries of staff and industrial actions e.t.c. the poor condition of the higher education is expressed through brain drain, students riot, instability in school calendar, ethnic and religious crisis and graduate unemployment (Uche, 2020)

Similarly, the poor condition of higher education as a result of inadequate funding has also led to the poor quality of higher education output (graduates). For instance, the recent strike action that occurred between ASUU and Federal government that led to the closure of campuses for good eight months brought about changes in the academic calendar. These

changes may result in the production of half- baked graduates that cannot meet the expectation of the labour market. This occurs because the courses that ought to be properly taught for three months which is one semester will be taught for a short period of one month, thus, making the students not to be properly exposed to what they supposed to know. UNESCO in Uche (2020) supported the point above by stressing that graduates in the last decade failed to meet the labour market expectations and international competitiveness. In line with this, majority of these graduates also fail to secure jobs as a result of inadequate preparation for labour market (Uche & Kpee in Uche, 2020).

Consequences of graduates' unemployment

The following are the implications or consequences of graduate unemployment in an economy as identified by Tamonu and Kalu (2009).

Increase in the dependency rate: the dependency group of an economy are those people who are below the working age and those that are old as such cannot engage in economic activities. Since they are not economically active, they are dependent on others who are economically active for survival or to meet their daily needs. This implies that graduates unemployment will increase the number of people who are within this dependent bracket.

Increase in the rate of crime: when there is lack or inadequacy of job opportunity for the graduate from higher education institution, there is every tendency for them to engage in diverse illegal means of acquiring money or wealth in order for them to meet their basic necessity of life. Some of these illegal means lead to crime and social vices. Crimes like kidnapping, cultism, human and drug trafficking, drug addiction, yahoo and yahoo plus are being perpetuated by youths who are not employed. No wonder, there is an adage that an "idle mind is the devil's workshop"

It leads to rural- urban thrift: unemployment makes a lot of graduates to migrate from the rural areas to the urban areas in search of job opportunity, this eventually make the urban areas to be over populated and its associated problem unemployment. It should be noted that this rural- urban thrift or immigration can be within a state, country or out the country.

Wastage of manpower: unemployment especially the graduate waste the much needed manpower which delays economic development of a nation.

Reduction in investment: the money spent in educating the unemployed and the one spent on them as dependents could have yielded good return if it was into other businesses.

It causes financial hardship: if graduates are unemployed for a long period of time mostly those heading the family. The family will face financial hardship as they cannot meet their basic need of life especially in Nigeria where the unemployment compensation scheme is not in practiced unlike the advanced countries where it is fully implemented or practiced

Ways to Manage Higher Education for the Reduction of Unemployment in Nigeria

There seems to be an increase in the rate at which the educated are unemployed in the Nigeria economy today. There are several factors responsible for this which have been addressed. Nevertheless, there can be a positive relationship between education and employment if management of education is given serious consideration in the following ways;

Proper functioning of Entrepreneurship education

Education will help to eliminate unemployment in Nigeria, if there is the in-cooperation and proper functioning of entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship education is the act of exposing the students to practical business skills that will help them to be self dependent and self-reliance after graduation. With skills they might have acquired in school, they will be able to start up their own business and become self-employed. With the growth and expansion of the business, they will become employers of labour and by this means reducing unemployment. For instance, in Nigeria today, we hear of a great entrepreneur called Aliko Dangote, he is one of the richest entrepreneur in Nigeria and because of his entrepreneurial skills he was able to set up different business that employ most of our youths today. Thus, he didn't wait for the government for white collar job before venturing into it.

The curriculum should be relevant to the reality of life

Education will help to eliminate unemployment and bring about development, if there is proper planning of the educational system. The main purpose of education is to get exposed, acquire knowledge and skills that will help you become useful to yourself and the society. Thus, reduce some of the unemployment occurring in the country today, the educational system should be planned in such a way that the current issues are happening in the society are incorporated into the school curricula. This is to equip the students with employable skills which are needed by the labour market and make a good transition from school to the workplace. This is to say, what is been taught in schools should be relevant to the needs of the society so as to enable the graduates to apply what they have learn to real like situations.

Application of man-power requirement approach

From another point of view, unemployment can be reduced through education through the application of manpower requirement approach to educational planning. Adiele. E. et tal (2017) asserted that, manpower requirement approach to educational planning is aimed at using education as an instrument for the development of manpower needed in quantity and quality to achieve a certain level of economic development.

Manpower requirement approach involves a deliberate process of the relevant government authorities with the collaboration of employer of labour to estimate the future requirements of labour so as to overcome the challenges that are normally imposed by shortages of skills in the economy. Individuals are also guided by shortages and surpluses provided in labour estimates through the shifts in the emphasis on particular skills by planning agencies. (Enaohwo in Obasi et tal, 2017 : P 154)

From the above, it can be said that manpower requirement approach is the deliberate act by the societies, government and employers of labour to project or forecast the future manpower needed to attain a given level of economic development. This will be effective if the number of students admitted at a specific time align with the number needed at the future time. as such there is proper planning put in place in terms of job creation to absorb the graduates for

that year. When this plan is executed by government and those in charge of education, the issue of unemployment will be reduced.

Also, when proper planning is done in terms of projecting the specific number of manpower or employees needed in the various sectors at a specific year the number admitted, it will help to reduce unemployment. It will then lead to the immediate employment of graduates into the workforce and thus eliminating wastages of manpower as well as the financial resources used in investing in human capital through education. Using the manpower approach in planning, if by the year 2030, the Nigeria health sector will need 11000 medical doctors to man the various hospitals in the country, the planning will begin in 2023 by admitting only 11000 students who are required, knowing fully well that by 2030, they will be ready to man the hospital after graduation. As it is done in the health sector that is how it will still be done in the other sectors. This will eliminate the gap that would exist between the jobs available and the numbers of graduates from the various institutions.

Adequate funding of higher education: Adequate funding is of immense importance to higher education and provision of quality education in general. As Eseyin (2013) rightly posited, when there is adequate funding of higher education, there will be quality learning infrastructures such as laboratories, workshops, good classrooms and other facilities that are needed to provide a suitable teaching and learning environment in the universities for both lecturers and students. In addition, adequate funding has been observed to contribute to proper remuneration of all universities which helps to boost the level of commitment towards the achievement of the objectives of the universities. It was also stressed by Asiyai and Okoro cited in Yusuf et al (2020) that adequate funding can increase the quality assurance through provision of quality learners, personnel, context that have relevant curricula, appropriate skills and knowledge that are relevant to life, quality teaching as well as good learning environment. When the education sector, especially the higher education is adequately funded, they will be able to produce quality output (graduate) that will meet the expectation of the labour market and international competitiveness and thus will be employed immediately after graduation by the employers of labour. Therefore, there is need for government to give priority to quality education by proper funding of higher education. However, various higher institutions can also explore other sources of funding in order to provide quality education that will empower the graduates for employment after that are out from the school.

Conclusion and Suggestions

A whole lot of problems are affecting education and the higher education particularly, that has led to graduate unemployed youths. The paper has been able to discuss few of such challenges especially in relation management of education leading to unemployment in our nation Nigeria. Effort was made to discuss the way forward in managing higher education that can lead to reduction in unemployment which among others are; proper functioning of Entrepreneurship education, relevant curriculum to the reality of life, application of manpower requirement approach and adequate funding of higher education. The paper therefore concludes that when all these are put place in the management of higher education there will

lead be that positive relationship between education and employment that will lead to economic and national development. The paper therefore suggests that:

1. Adequate management should be given to entrepreneurship education in higher education to enhance the acquisition of skills for job creation
2. Relevant curriculum that will be positively equip students with employability skills should be adopted in higher schools.
3. There should be application of man-power requirement approach that will lead to matching the required man-power and the number to admitted in higher institutions each year.
4. There should be adequate modern and technological facilities for teaching and learning
5. Provision of adequate funding to meet with teaching and learning needs of the students.
6. Promote access to technologies that will meet the practical learning of students.

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