

National Institute of Leather and Science Technology and Unemployment Reduction in Zaria Local Government, Kaduna State

¹Abdulrauf Abdullahi & ²IDRIS, Ibrahim

¹Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Management Sciences, Federal Univeristy Gusau, Zamfara State

²Doctoral Candidate, Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Administration, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

Corresponding Email: abdullahi.abdulrauf@gmail.com

Abstract

Successive governments in Nigeria had initiated several programmes and projects overtime aimed at addressing the increasing rate of unemployment among which is the National Institute of Leather & Science Technology (NILEST). NILEST was established to strengthen research in the areas of Science and Technology and training for self-reliance in footwear, leather goods and polymer technology among others. This paper assessed the impact of NILEST in reduction of unemployment in Zaria Local Government through its training in footwear and leather goods. The study used both primary and secondary data with questionnaire and interview as source of its primary data and books and journals as source of its secondary data. Findings in the study revealed that the footwear and Leather goods training has been effective and has reduced unemployment amongst the attendees of the training, however, NILEST is faced with challenges of infrastructure, obsolete machines and shortfall of training staff and all are tied to the low budgetary allocation and approval.

Keywords: Unemployment, NILEST, Technology, Unemployment Reduction.

Introduction

Unemployment is seen as a menace and a stumbling block to economic and social development. Unemployment is not only peculiar to developing nations; the developed countries equally are facing their own share of unemployment. Unemployment is an economic barrier that portends danger to the corporate existence of a country if not effectively and properly checked, it is equally seen as a reflection of a normal economy since it is believed that every normal economy must reflect a particular level of unemployment else, the economy will be said to be abnormal, yet more abnormality will begin to emerge in the face of an economy once it fails to check the level of unemployment that reflects on the books of its economy.

Findings from available literature have shown that unemployment is a tool of measuring viability and progression of an economy whereas the economy which is

said to be able to have fought the menace of unemployment will be tagged as a developed one and that which cannot successfully fight it way out of the battle of unemployment will be tagged as developing or underdeveloped economy. One will appreciate the above submission when we reflect on the three mind blowing questions posed by Dudley Seers (1969) who posits that once an economy can answer the three questions of ‘what is happening to poverty? What is happening to unemployment? What is happening to inequality? If all these can be answered in the affirmation to reflect that these three major indices are on the decrease not increase then, it is safe to conclude that such economy is developed. The area of concern here is the questions about ‘what is happening to unemployment? A critical look into this question when positioned alongside the situation of unemployment in Africa and Nigeria in particular one will be able to say if the economy is developed, developing or sliding further into under development even though Anyebe (2011) noted that there is no economy that is not developed, every economy of the world have developed or is developing in one way or the other so there is no undeveloped economy anywhere in the world.

Unemployment is a global economic trend, but on the scene of the developed countries of the world, it reflects in a different manner and pattern and even magnitude compare to what it is obtained in the developing countries of the world. This is to say that the relativism of unemployment here is hinged on the society and environment. The major line of differences between the unemployment of the developed economy like America, Great Britain, Russia, China, Germany and their likes and that of countries like Nigeria is the way the situations are handled. In the advanced countries of the world, the country is said to quickly move to creating more jobs and dolling out economic policies carefully implemented to ensure that full benefits are recorded for the generality of the masses, alternatively in Nigeria one can safely say that programs meant to reduce unemployment level are either wrongly implemented, politically interfered with or not properly designed from the beginning which makes it difficult for maximum benefit to be derived.

Realizing the growing rate of unemployment in Nigeria and its implications on social and economic development, successive government over time have initiated programmes and/or projects aimed at reducing the alarming rate of unemployment particularly among the youth. For instance, the creation of National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and its skills acquisition programmes, The National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in 2001, the SURE-P, YOUWIN, just to mention

a few, are some of the various intervention mechanisms aimed at ensuring economic growth that is rich with job creation opportunities.

In spite of these efforts the rate of unemployment in the country is worrisome as Onuma (2016) posits that within the context of rising unemployment rates in a skill constraints economy like ours in Nigeria, rising rate of graduate unemployment is particularly worrisome. He submitted further that the Development Policy Research Unit (DPRU, 2006) stated that youths as at that time are unemployed and the situation seems to be growing on yearly basis. Kayode, Arome & Anyio(2014) added that the situation of unemployment in Nigeria with the submission that Unemployment is one of the fundamental developmental challenges facing Nigeria at the moment.

Statistically, Kayode et al (2014) stated that unemployment according to ILO, is among the biggest threats to social stability in many countries (including Nigeria), putting the global rate at 12.6% (ILO, 2012). When compared with her counterparts in the continent, Nigeria's unemployment crisis is more serious. For instance, South Africa's unemployment rate is currently standing at 25.2%, and in Ghana is about 14% in 2010, while Nigeria is around 37%. Recent statistics by the World Bank has put the unemployment rate in Nigeria at 22 percent, while the youth unemployment rate is 38 percent. The report shows that 15-35 years old account for close to 60 percent of the Nigeria's population and 30 percent of the work force. The report also indicates that approximately 4 million people entered into the labour market every year (Subair, 2013).According to recent statistics released by the National Bureau of Statistics, youth unemployment rate in Nigeria averaged 23.63 per cent from 2014 until 2018, reaching an all-time high of 38 per cent in the second quarter of 2018.

Again, the government of Nigeria through its Decrees of 1973, 1979, 1990 established the National Institute of Leather and Science Technology as skill acquisition and empowerment for the teeming population to curb the spate of unemployment. The Institute is to ensure that the country uses its abundant resources to provide jobs, create goods for local and international consumption and reduce the rate of importation of goods which ordinarily can be provided given the abundance of resources available in the country.The institute has over the years been graduating students who earned Diploma or Higher National Diploma in Footwear and Leather Goods Technology. The products covered under this programme includes; shoes, bags, purses, belts, wallets, briefcases, leather watch

traps, pouches, conference bags. Hence the broad objective of this paper is to examine the impact of the National Institute of Leather and Science Technology in the reduction of unemployment in Nigeria.

Consequent upon the central theme, other specific objectives include;

- a. To find out the total number of trainees that NILEST have successfully graduated in Footwear and Leather Goods Technology between the year 2013 and 2018 in Zaria Local Government.
- b. To establish the total number of trainees of Footwear and Leather Goods Technology that has been self-employed after training in Zaria Local Government.
- c. To find out the types of products made by the trainees of Footwear and Leather Goods technology of NILEST in Zaria Local Government.
- d. To discover the total number of apprentices trained by the trainees of NILEST in Zaria Local Government

Conceptual Literature Review

Concept of Unemployment

Unemployment is a multidimensional concept which is to some extent elusive and relative. Generally, what first comes to mind when we mention unemployment is that it is a situation where someone or persons who are able bodied and ready to work cannot secure an employment opportunity. This seems to limit the class of people that can be captured in this definition. The fact that some persons or people are able bodied and are ready to work but couldn't find one does not necessarily mean they are interested in getting something to do like a job. It will be more attention drifting if we use the word "qualified" to accompany the ability and readiness.

There are so many scholarly literatures that are available as far as the definition and meaning of unemployment is concerned. For instance, Pettinger (2017) attempt to put a simple definition of unemployment where he submitted that unemployment is as a situation where someone of working age is not able to get a job but would like to be in full-time employment. This definition although brief, but captures the situation of many developing countries like Nigeria. It is not strange to admit that majority of the youths and adult within the working age in Nigeria have not been able to secure a full-time employment. The reason for their inability have been analyzed in many literatures which ranges from political influence on available

jobs, corruption which has depleted existing organizations and create inability to establish more to cater for teeming population of graduates churned out of the tertiary educational institutions, quality of education offered in our tertiary institution which seems to be deficient because of failure of government to fully and properly equip the universities for good and effective research.

The United States Department of Social Security in 2014 African Gazette of unemployment shed more light into the definition above where it submitted that unemployment is a term referring to individuals who are employable and seeking a job but are unable to find a job. Furthermore, it is those people in the workforce or pool of people who are available for work that does not have an appropriate job. This seems to explain even further than the definition of Pettinger because it goes further to show that unemployment affects those ready to work but have yet to secure one because of that term as “employable and seeking a job”. Understanding this perspective shows that we cannot categorize an individual to be unemployed unless we are able to clarify his status as been employable or not and we need to equally be able to be sure that they are seeking jobs which offers them some payments. This is because not all employable people are job seekers, some only acquire education to be able to succeed in their businesses or other vocational endeavor.

According to Udu and Agu (2005) in Kayode (2014), unemployment is “a situation in which persons capable and willing to work are unable to find suitable paid employment”. This perspective further solidifies the views above as it demonstrated that the unemployed is actually capable and willing but he is rendered helpless to find a job by the economy or the system. To appreciate the above submissions is to bring up the perspectives of Fajana (2000) who opined that unemployment refers to a situation where people who are willing and capable of working are unable to find suitable paid employment. It is one of the macro-economic problems which every responsible government is expected to monitor and regulate. Fajana seems to buttress the fact that responsible and serious government sees it as a macro-economic problem that need to be tackled head-on else the country will face grave consequences which ranges from social injustices, high rate of crime, economic sabotage like theft of economic and government properties, violence and above all terrorism and without forgetting hooliganism and assassination because the idle mind is prone to be used for perpetrating of evil.

In the view of Kundu and Sinclair (1987), unemployment connotes the idea of involuntary idleness not voluntary idleness. They submitted further that it means a state of affairs under which for various reasons, men have to remain without jobs for many months or for several years. The first aspect of this definition captures the fact that unemployment means idleness but the idleness is involuntary. It means that the unemployed individual or persons finds themselves to be idle involuntarily not because they are not putting in effort to get a job. This reflects the situation in Nigeria where someone having successfully graduated from the university and willing to take up a paying job, they are rendered idle involuntarily which may span through months, years and sometimes decades. The developing nations seems to be more captured in the definition of Kundu and Sinclair because most of the developing nation have teeming youths who have acquired higher education; are able and ready to work but becomes idle involuntarily because of the situation in their countries.

Kundu et al (1987) submitted further that unemployment is a condition of labour force when it is greater than available openings. This definition tries to demonstrate that the situation where the number of graduates is far more than the available jobs. This definition is further explained thus; The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) defines unemployment as the proportion of the labour force that is available for work but did not work for at least 39 hours in the week preceding the survey period (Central Bank of Nigeria Annual Report, 2008). The CBN report went further to say that individuals who did not fall into either of these groups, such as retired people and discouraged workers, are not included in the calculation of the labour force. Abiodun (2010) in Akinyemi et al (2012) regards unemployment as the proportion of the labour force, expressed in percentage, which is not employed at any given point in time. This can be explained with the submission of National Bureau of Statistic in 2016 where it was reported that the annual statistics of graduates who can't find jobs annually is 36.26%. This statistic has been subject of debate as many feels that the figure may be misleading and the actual figure may be far more than what the world bank have submitted. Another report has it that in 2015 alone, about 251,000 formal jobs were created whereas popular estimates show that Nigerian universities produce 500,000 graduates annually. Unemployment rate in Nigeria averaged 12.31 percent from 2006 until 2018, reaching an all-time high of 23.10 percent in the third quarter of 2018 and a record low of 5.10 percent in the fourth quarter of 2010.

Pigou (1987) presented a different dimension to the definition, even though he acknowledged the place of ability and willingness to work, he introduced the rationality of the 'class'. In his definition, he submitted that "unemployment is under-employment among the wage earning classes. If a wage earner happens to possess an allotment on which he can work when discharged from his ordinary trade, or if he is able, on these occasions, to turn his hand to wood carving, or some other domestic industry we shall not for that reason decline to class him among unemployed" the definition of Pigou tends to practically agree that unemployment cannot be cured by trade, wood crafting or any other vocational endeavor, he opined that when an individual within the wage earning class cannot secure a job that will pay him a particular amount of money on a monthly basis, he is but unemployed. This offers a question of whether vocational training itself is a way of removing a person from the class of unemployed in the society. The words of Pigou above clearly shows that wage earning is the only way to agree that an individual is not unemployed since to him, resorting to any sort of trade in the name of augmenting for the situation of unemployment is not classified as employment.

The dimension offers by Pigou (1987) above is questionable, it may assume to be correct in the clime of the developed countries of the world where there are abundance of jobs and a reasonable level of unemployment, but in the Nigeria situation where government jobs is lesser than the number of individuals or youths, graduates and able bodied people seeking for it, then vocational training like wood crafting, trade, shoe making, leather technology, polymer technology among others becomes a very fundamental instrument to bring people out of the situation of unemployment. Researcher such as Asogwa & Ethel-Mary (2016) mention in their work that "the great need for entrepreneurship development in Nigeria today, more than ever is necessitated by the rate of unemployment and its effect on both the people and the nation and the need for Small and Medium enterprises". It is in this perspective, that Government established NILEST to provide vocation training to enable the unemployed youths to not only becoming employable but also employer of labour in the long run.

Types of Unemployment

Unemployment like every other concept in the field of social sciences and humanities has its own classification. That is people without jobs fall into different categories and class and there are peculiarities that are observable before an individual can be said to fall into a particular class of unemployment. According

Agbaegbu (2011) in Kayode, Arome and Anyio (2016) the following have been identified as the types of unemployment that are prevalent in Nigeria:

a. Seasonal Unemployment

According to Udu and Agu (2005) seasonal unemployment occurs mostly in industrial sector, and in the enterprise that are seasonal in nature. Such activities engage labour temporarily during peak periods. For example, during the rainy season, many men who are engaged in fishing and building may go out of work during bad weather. Fishing, for instance is not usually done during the rainy season in many parts of Nigeria. More so, during Christmas season, shop owners and companies employ extra hands for the seasonal sales. These extra hands are usually relieved of their jobs when demand for products decreased.

b. Structural Unemployment

This occurs when a labour market is unable to provide jobs for everyone who wants one, because there is a mismatch between the skill of the unemployed workers and the skill needed for the available jobs (Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2011). Structural unemployment could also results from persistent cyclical unemployment, that is, if the economy suffers from long-term low aggregate demand and in the techniques of the industry, unemployment could occur (Udu and Agu, 2005; Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2011; and Harold, 2009).

c. Frictional Unemployment

There seems to be divergence on the meaning and causes of frictional unemployment. For example, Udu and Agu (2005) asserted that, there is frictional unemployment when certain occupations have surplus workers in one part of the country, while vacancies for similar jobs occur and are not filled in other parts of the country. To them, immobility of labour and imperfect knowledge of the existence of opportunities elsewhere are the main cause of frictional unemployment.

d. Transitional Unemployment

Udu and Agu (2005) refer to this as normal unemployment, because it is short duration. It does not harm the economy. In construction industries or contract jobs which rely heavily on manual labour, workers are temporarily laid off at the end of major assignments. Such workers are re engaged when other jobs becomes available. Others may drift to other ongoing projects.

e. Classical Unemployment

This occurs when real wages for a job are set above the market – clearing level, causing the number of job-seekers to exceed the number of vacancies. Most economists have argued that unemployment increases the more the government intervene into economy to try to improve the condition of those with jobs. For example, minimum wage laws raise the cost of labourers with few skills to be above the market equilibrium, resulting in people who wish to work at the ongoing rate but cannot as the wage enforced is greater than their value as workers becoming unemployed.

NILEST and Employment Reduction

The Nigeria government since after independence in anticipation and preparation for the days of rising unemployment and to boost economic activities of the country established research and training institutes. Decrees of 1973, 1979, and 1990 establishing the National Institute of Leather and Science Technology mandated the institute to be a training body that will be responsible for training in vocational endeavor such as leather goods and footwear and Polymer technology in other to bring about self-employment for youths who have acquired such training.

The essence of this kind of agency which is supervised by the Federal Ministry of Science and Technology is to ensure that the country uses its abundant resources to provide jobs, create goods for local and international consumption and reduce the rate of importation of goods which ordinarily can be produced given the abundance of resources available in the country. Nigeria is blessed with so many mineral resources instead of importing these resources for a peanut to technologically advanced country; the country will do better if it decides to maximize the opportunity by using its resources judiciously to produce commodities that attract local and international patronage.

NILEST conducts training in footwear and Leather Technology through formal and informal means. The formal training is carried for a period of two years at first instance where the students are awarded a National Diploma Certificate and they can proceed to acquire a Higher National Diploma in the same institution for another period of two years. On the other hand, the informal trainings are conducted to award certificate after a six week of intense practical training after which the participants can proceed to establish their own businesses.

Available records from the organization shows that it has succeeded in training so many youths who are now self-established and have been successful doing their own businesses. These youths have equally trained so many apprentices which in the long run reduce the rate of unemployment across Zaria Local Government of Kaduna State.

Methodology

This study utilizes qualitative method particularly in analyzing the data from the primary source which were gathered through the use of questionnaire. The structure of the questionnaire was both open and closed ended questions. The populations of the study 203 which is the total number of trainees of NILEST for the period of time under study. Therefore, a total number of 120 questionnaires were administered but only a total of 97 returned the completed questionnaires. The secondary data was gathered from books, gazette of NILEST, Monthly Bulletin, Conference papers of the organization and internet website of the organization. The data from the questionnaire were analysed with the aid of one of the tools of descriptive statistics which in this case, is simple percentage.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Rate of Returned Questionnaires

Category	No administered	Number returned
Formal students	45	29
Informal students	75	68
Total	120	97

Source: Field Survey (2019).

Table 2 Years of Graduation of Respondents from NILEST

Year of Completion of NILEST training	No of Respondents	% Expression
2016	35	29.16
2017	27	22.5
2018	35	29.16
Total	97	100

Source: Field Survey (2019).

Table 3 Respondents Opinion on the when they started their business?

You commenced business operations immediately after completion?	No of Respondents	% Expression
Agreed	64	65.97
Disagreed	33	34.02
Total	97	100

Source: Field Survey (2019)

Table 4 Respondents opinion on the reason they delayed commencement of business after training?

What was responsible for your delay in commencement of the business?	No of Respondents	% Expression
Lack of start-up capital	21	63.63
Location problem	06	18.18
Returned to NILEST for HND programme	06	18.18
Total	33	100

Source: Field Survey (2019).

Table 5 Respondents Opinion on the production capacity of their business (Shoes and Bags)

How many pairs of shoes do you produce in a month?	No. of Respondents	% Expression
10-20	16	13.33
20-30	23	23.71
30-40	25	25.77
40-50	27	27.84
50 and above	08	8.25
Total	97	100

Source: Field Survey (2019)

Table 6: Respondents Opinion on their range of income monthly

What is the range of your income every month?	No of Respondents	% Expression
N20,000-N30,000	11	9.16
N30,000-N40,000	24	20.0
N40,000-N50,000	24	24.74
N50,000-N60,000	28	28.86
N60,000 and above	10	10.31
Total	97	100

Source: Field Survey (2019)

Table 7: Respondents Opinion on the number of apprentices they trained

How many apprentices have you trained and graduated since you commenced your business?	No of Respondents	% Expression
4	18	18.55
6	38	39.17
7	26	26.80
9	15	15.46
Total	97	100

Source: Field Survey (2019)

Discussion of findings

Table 2 discussed the year of graduation of the trainees. From the presentation and analysis made, a total of 35 respondents graduated from training either formal or informal in the year 2016, in 2017, a total number of 27 respondents graduated from NILEST and in the year 2018, a total number of 35 respondents graduated from NILEST. This means that majority of the respondents graduated in the year 2016 and 2018 and this goes to show that, information available at the disposal of the researcher are current and can be relied upon. This is further supported by the submission of the Management and the Head of training of NILEST that, NILEST have succeeded in training more than 500 participants who are informal students of the Institute. Some of these numbers were registered by charity organization, politicians and their host community. NILEST training officer added that, NILEST have also trained and graduate more than 500 students who have acquired National Diploma or Higher National Diploma in Footwear and Leather Goods.

Table 3 discussed the time the respondents started their business after they have successfully completed their training. The rationality here is to find out what the hindrances were encountered which led to either delay in the commencement of a business after successfully undergoing the training. A total number of 64 respondents indicated that they commence business immediately they graduated from NILEST while a total of 33 noted that they did not commence their business immediately. This shows that majority of the respondents had swung into business and got themselves employed after their graduation from training. This shows that vocational education to a large extent helps in reducing the rate of unemployment. Which is in line with the submission of Asogwa et al (2016) that entrepreneurship is necessary reducing unemployment. This is, however, at variance with the submission of Pigou (1987) that unemployment cannot be cured by trade, wood crafting or any other vocational endeavor.

Table 4 discussed the reason respondents delayed commencement of their businesses after they have acquired the training programme. Analysis from the questionnaires revealed reasons which range from lack of startup capital, strategic locations problems and the desire by some of the trainees to return to NILEST to study for the Higher National Diploma Certificate. Most frequent among the reasons for not starting up according to the 33 respondents was as a result of lack of startup capital to purchase tools, rent a shop and other materials needed to start up business. A total of 21 respondents were caught in these problems, others which are 6 apiece could not start up as a result of location problem and quest to return for higher certificate. The challenges on the part of the Institute in delivering more training programmes the interview with the Management and Head of NILEST reveals that; NILEST is faced with challenges of capital projects and obsolete equipment needed to improve their training services which is a result of its budgetary allocation; as well as inadequate staff which is attributed to budgetary allocation of staff recruitment and development. These problems largely limit the success of the NILEST and performance of the beneficiaries after graduation.

Table 5 discussed the production capacity of each of the respondents on a monthly basis. The essence of this is to find out the capacity of the business to generate funds for the owner and guarantee if it suffices for their self-employment. The most frequent response showed that 25 respondents have the capacity to produce female hand bags and shoes to the tune of 40 pieces and pairs monthly. Those who can produce above 50 pieces are just a handful of eight (8) respondents which has the capacity to carryout production above that capacity. It therefore implies that

majority of the respondents can generate the projected income monthly and thus guarantee the viability of their business as self-employment venture.

Table 6 discussed the range of income of respondents from the business on a monthly basis. Analysis from the questionnaires shows that a total of 28 respondents are on the income of ₦34,000 to ₦50,000 monthly from their production, the most income which is ₦60,000 and above are attributed to only 10 respondents. Judging from this, it is safe to conclude that the job have provided opportunity for the respondents as they have attained stage of self-employment. More so, all the respondents have one level of income or the other which means that the job has guaranteed income and security for the operator.

Table 7 discussed the numbers of apprentices trained by respondents. The analysis from the questionnaires showed that from between 4, 6, 7 and 9 apprentices have been trained and successfully graduated by the respondents. The impact of this is that, it will go a long way to have a sporadic reaction on the situation of employments as the apprentice who have successfully learnt the trade too will go ahead to establish their own businesses too and subsequently train others in the business.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Unemployment is a menace that has attracted the attention of government at all levels since the pre-independent and post independent era. Government at all level came up with different strategies packaged in projects, policies and programmes aimed at addressing the increasing rate of unemployment. NILEST although a training institute focused on innovation and invention to provide education for self-reliance as projected in its mandate by training youths both graduates and non-graduates, literates and non-literates in footwear, leather goods and even polymer technology aimed at ensuring that youths who acquired such trainings can be self-reliant after they have acquired such training without waiting to secure a government job.

NILEST have achieved so much in the training of youths in footwear and leather goods in the years under review and are planning to achieve more in the coming years. They are however faced with challenges that have to do with budgetary allocation, lack of ETF projects to help build more classes, laboratory and acquire

new modern machines. In view of these challenges affecting the performance of NILEST the following recommendations are put forward:

From the study conducted, the following recommendations are drafted

1. The organization needs more publicity about its programmes to be able to have more enrollees for admission or non-formal training programmes. Going by the outcome of the study, they have delivered on their mandate which has brought about reduction in unemployment in Kaduna state.
2. The institution should propose for more ETF projects to be able to acquire more classes, laboratories and machines for practical.
3. The institution should go into synergy with international organizations that can provide grant for it or support them with modern and sophisticated equipments in the field of footwear and leather.
4. The institution should constantly trained their academic staff particularly those in the core field of footwear and leather goods so as to keep them updated on new innovations in the field.
5. The institution should form a synergy with the National Youth Service Corps for the purpose of posting corps members who are interested in acquiring vocational training in footwear and leather goods to assist in entrepreneurship undertaken.

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