



Employment Generation in Nigerian Economy: Agenda for Sustainable Economic Development

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Abstract

Achieving full employment has been one of the most important economic issues and a major macroeconomic focuses of the government in order to attain economic growth and development in Nigeria. Thus, this paper looked into the issue of employment system and generation in Nigeria which has its root in the country's economic development and performance since 1960 during independence. It also reviewed the trends of employment generation from 2012 to 2015 and some associated problems. The study revealed that the Nigerian economy generated 385,913 jobs in the fourth quarter of 2012, 265,702 jobs in the fourth quarter of 2013 showing a decline in job generated from the fourth quarter of 2012, while at the end of the year 2014, 369,485 jobs were created which showed an increase in job generation from 2013, and in the third quarter of 2015, the total number of jobs generated stood at 475,180 jobs which is a significant increase in job generated as compared to 369,485 jobs generated in 2014. In this same relation, the study revealed that unemployment rate stood at 27.4% in 2012, dropped at 24.7% in 2013, and at the third quarter of 2015, the unemployment rate stood at 9.9%. As a result, the study recommends that the government should modify the existing job creation strategies by committing more funds to the various government agencies involved in employment generation, government should embark on rural development such as rural industrialization and electrification to curtail rural-urban drift to ensure that the rural areas are attractive to live in so that unemployed people can become productively engaged, the education system curriculum should be remodeled to inculcate technical skill acquisition which will help even secondary school graduates to have employable skills, among others were proffered.

Keywords: Employment, Unemployment, Policy, Economic Development.

Introduction

Employment is one of the most important social and economic issues in Nigeria. It is seen as a relationship between two parties, usually based on a contract between employer and employee. In other words, employment is seen as the total number of people in a community, state or country that are gainfully working. According to Kareem (2015), employment refers to the number of people who either work in government establishment or parastatals or private sectors. It could equally mean people who are self-employed or are unpaid family workers.

In most civilized countries of the world, achieving full employment has been one of the main macroeconomic focuses of the government in order to attain economic growth and development. A country's economic growth is the process where the real per capital income of a country increases over a long period of time. This is measured by the increase in the amount of goods and services produced in a country. However, the level of employment can be used to measure or drive the level of economic growth and development in a country. In Keynesian economic analysis, employment is envisaged as a pathway to enhance the growth rate of an economy. This is because when there is employment in a country, there is increase in productivity (Keynes, 1936). Apart

from Nigeria, in most industrializing nations, employment generation is said to be a primary economic development goal. More jobs generally mean more economic activities, more tax revenues for the government, and less idle time. Job growth permits the expansion and improvement of public goods and services, leading to an improved quality of life and enhanced prospects for future employment growth.

In this case, expanding job market encourages workers to upgrade their skills in order to qualify for available higher paid jobs. Sustained job growth stimulates improvements in the education and skills of the labour force, thereby making the nation a more attractive location for foreign investors and businessmen to do their various businesses in the future (Ukwuegbu, 2012). Where all these are not achieved or where there tend to be no employment in a country, the situation will tend to be known as the presence of “unemployment” in that country. Unemployment has been defined by many scholars in many ways. One of the concrete definitions of unemployment was one defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO, 1982), seeing it as the numbers of the economically active population who are without work, but are available and seeking work, including people who have lost their jobs and those who have voluntarily left work. In most developed and developing countries, the level of employment has been measured by knowing the number of the population that is unemployed. The employment system in Nigeria has its root in the country’s economic development and performance since 1960 during independence. According to National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2009), the agricultural activities as the mainstay of the Nigerian economy, accounted for about 71.7% of her total employment generation between 1960 and 1973. However, with the development of the oil industry which began to boom in the early 1970s, the dependence on agriculture was swiftly transformed into oil dependency. Furthermore, the issue of shift from agricultural sector to oil sector as means of employment generation has led to unemployment to good number of Nigerian population. With this, Nigeria’s unemployment rate stood at 23.9% in 2011 with \$193billion GDP in 2010. Then it increased to 27.4% in 2012 and dropped a bit to 24.7% in 2013. The unemployment rate dropped drastically to 6.4% in 2014 and shifted upward a bit to 7.5% in the first quarter of 2015 (NBS, 2015).

Trends and Status of Employment in Nigeria

The trend of employment in Nigeria, will be focused from 2012 to the third quarter of 2015 which is categorized into formal jobs sector, informal jobs sector and the public jobs sector. The formal jobs refer to employment generated in establishments that employ ten persons and above, or formal professional services that employ less than ten persons. The informal jobs are those generated by individuals or businesses employing less than 10 persons, or those businesses operating with little or no structures (e.g. Agriculture, Wholesale and Retail Trade and Personal services like those of barbers and hairdressers, mechanics, plumbers, etc). While, the Public institutions are the Government ministries, Departments, Agencies, Government Parastatals, Academic and Research institutions at federal, state and local government levels (NBS, 2015).

Available statistics shows that Nigerian economy generated 385,913 jobs in the fourth quarter of 2012. A breakdown of job created in the fourth quarter of 2012 indicates that 152,018 jobs were created in the formal sector, 208,920 jobs in the informal sector and 24,975 jobs in the public sector (NBS, 2013). In the fourth quarter of 2013, 265,702 jobs were generated showing a decline in job generated from the fourth quarter of 2012. The formal sector contributed 101,597 jobs, while the formal and public sectors created 143,278 and 20,827 jobs respectively in the total jobs generated at the end of year of 2013 (NBS, 2014). At the end of the year 2014, 369,485 jobs were created across all sectors of the Nigerian economy. This shows an increase in job generation from 2013 of 265,702 jobs. In 2014, the formal sector generated 37.4% of the total jobs generated giving 138,026 jobs. While the informal and public sector generated 227,072 jobs or 61.5% and 4,387 jobs or 1.2% of the total jobs generated respectively (NBS, 2015). While, in the third quarter of 2015, the total number of jobs generated stood at 475,180 jobs which is a significant increase in job generated as compared to 369,485 jobs generated in 2014. The increase in the number of jobs in the third quarter of 2015 was driven mainly by the informal sector jobs which accounted for 90.2% of the total jobs which stood at 428,690 jobs. This was also driven by the formal and public sector which accounted for 8.8% of the total jobs generated or 41,672 jobs and 1.01% of the total jobs generated or 4,818 jobs respectively. The jobs generated from the informal sector were predominantly in rural agricultural activities due to the beginning of the farming season where rural and subsistence farmers became fully engaged on

their farms. Also accounting for the increase in informal jobs in the third quarter of 2015, is the increase in the number of people previously not in labour force in 2014 but now in the labour force and working informal jobs due to their inability to find white collar formal jobs. It shows that there is a continuous drop in formal employment

generation while there is a rise in informal employment generation which is visible across most economic activities (NBS, 2015).

These trends of employment in Nigeria explained above can be illustrated in the tabular form below from the year 2012 to the third quarter of 2015:

Table 1: Jobs Generation/Employment across all sectors from 2012 to third Quarter of 2015.

SECTORS	2012	2013	2014	2015		
	4 th Quarter	4 th Quarter	4 th Quarter	1 st Quarter	2 nd Quarter	3 rd Quarter
Formal sector Jobs	152,018	101,597	138,026	130,941	51,070	41,672
Informal sector Jobs	208,920	143,278	227,072	332,403	83,903	428,690
Public sector jobs	24,975	20,827	4,387	5,726	6,395	4,818
Total new Jobs	385,913	265,702	369,485	469,070	141,368	475,180

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2015.

However, despite the level at which employment has been generated, there are still traces of unemployment which brings about the gap between the jobs available and the number of job seekers that are actually seeking work in the country. It was noted in 2012, where unemployment rate stood at 27.4%. However, it dropped at 24.7% in 2013. And at the third quarter of 2015, when the Nigerian economy generated 475,180 jobs, the unemployment rate stood at 9.9% which indicates an increase from 7.5% of unemployment rate in the first quarter of 2015 (NBS, 2015).

Problems Militating Against Employment Generation in Nigeria

Problems militating against employment in Nigeria have been so alarming that many scholars have tried to trace out causes that are responsible for the employment situation in the country. Some of these causes or factors responsible for the problems of employment in the country have summarized and they include; poor quality education, lacks of skills, poor power supply, corruption and the negligence of the agricultural sector.

- **Poor quality of Education:** In Nigeria, every year, many graduates come out from the universities and colleges of education with little or nothing to contribute to the society. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, more than 200,000 alumnae graduate from Nigeria tertiary institutions yearly, but only very few of them secure jobs after years of their graduation (NBS, 2015). This happens because; there are little facilities and ill-equipped lecturers or

instructors who rendered poor services to the graduates when they were in their institutions. So, the graduates come out of school poorly trained, without practical background to make good impact to the society. Some of them are even unable to defend their certificate which they hold, and as a result, increases the level of unemployment in the country each year.

- **Lack of technical skills:** This is closely related to the poor quality of education mentioned earlier. For years now, most Nigerian youth have disdained acquisition of skills, thinking that the time spent on such is wasted, and opting for the so-called ‘easy’ ways of making money. With such mentality, these youths have grown into middle-age and even senior age without any skill to fall, thus becoming liabilities to themselves and others. A skillful person has the ability to adjust to many situations and environments and at least, feed himself and his household appropriately. Therefore, it recommended that graduates who studied various fields of practical courses (i.e. engineering, home management, etc) should humble themselves to do practical training or entrepreneurship training in workshops and centers for practical knowledge. In that way, such graduates will be fully equipped for employment and help reduce unemployment in the country.

- **Poor electric power supply:** This happens to be the biggest cause of the lingering problems of employment in Nigeria. If there were sufficient power supply in the country, many foreign companies would have remained in the country for possible investments which would have provided many employment opportunities to Nigerians to reduce unemployment rate. But since the case is otherwise, these foreign companies have changed direction to other neighboring countries with constant electricity supply in order to avoid operating at loss with twenty-four hours running of generator, which is the tradition in Nigeria. The same problem has affected many local companies which could not cope with the high cost of running electric generators at all time, thus were forced to fold up their businesses and as well threw their employees into the labour market.
- **Corruption:** This which is seen as immoral or illegal act involving bribery, embezzlement or misappropriation of public funds for personal use, is also a cause of the problems affecting the employment situation in Nigeria. This is because, government who are to use public funds or money for building industries, get busy embezzling these funds for their selfish and personal use, resulting to a massive increase in unemployment rate. And this makes the government to spend less on the welfare of the citizens of the country. In addition, we often hear of ‘ghost workers’ in some government establishments where names of imaginary workers are added to pay-rolls and some few corrupt office leaders or bosses collect such salaries at the end of the month without any work done. These immoral acts result to increased unemployment for the masses.
- **Negligence of the Agricultural sector:** Nigeria is known around the world to be blessed with many un-utilized and mineral resources which are enough to gainfully engage every unemployed person. But this has been neglected due to the large revenue gotten from the oil industries by government and individuals. Before the

discovery of oil in the country, agricultural activities were the mainstay of the economy. Cocoa production was mainly found in the western Nigeria; groundnut production was mainly found in the northern Nigeria with the famous ‘Groundnut Pyramids’; while coal, rubber and palm oil production was mainly found in the eastern and southern Nigeria respectively. All these provided good employment for the common man in Nigeria, which also contributed widely to the growth of the economy. But nowadays, agricultural activities are at minimum due to the discovery and production oil. Youths no longer value agricultural activities because of the unfashionable title attached to it due to the local or crude system in which the activities are been carried out. Therefore, the youths prefer going out seeking for the so-called ‘white-collar jobs’. This is also one main factor leading to the problems of the employment situation in the country (Nigerian Finder, 2015).

Government’s Efforts in Ameliorating the Problems of Employment Generation in Nigeria

Various efforts had been made by government in tackling the issues pondering the employment situation in the country. These efforts made include policies and programmes created over the years from the 1980s which were aimed at reducing the rate of unemployment in Nigeria. However, these policies and programmes have been implemented with minimal effect, and they include:

- **National Directorate of Employment (NDE):**

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was established and approved by the Federal Government on 26th March, 1986. And its programmes were launched nationwide in January 1987. The NDE’s enabling Act, CAP 250 of the Laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (formerly Decree No.34 of 1989) gave the NDE her legal backing as an employment agency statutorily charged with the responsibility to design and implement programmes to combat mass unemployment in the country. The sole aim and objective of NDE is to design and implement job creation programmes that will promote attitudinal change, employment generation, poverty reduction and wealth creation in Nigeria (NDE, 2014). The

strategies made to achieve its aim and objective includes:

- i. Vocational Skills Development Programme
- ii. Small Scale Enterprises Programme
- iii. Rural Employment Promotion Programme
- iv. Special Public Works Programme
- v. Collaboration with National and International Agencies.

For proper implementation of the programmes and in order to have adequate grassroots impact and coverage in the discharge of its mandate, the NDE has offices in all the 36 State Capitals of the Federation as well as the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Also, at the Local Government Council Areas, there are NDE Desk/Liaison Officers who ensure adequate coverage and implementation of all its employment generations schemes.

- **Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN):**

The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) was established by the SMEDAN Act of 2003 to promote the development of the MSME sector of the Nigeria Economy. The Agency positions itself as a 'One Stop Shop' for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) Development. Micro Enterprises are included in the clientele of the Agency since they form the bedrock for Small and Medium Enterprises(SME's). It aimed to facilitate the access of micro, small and medium entrepreneurs and investors to all resources required for their development. And due to lack of access to income earning opportunities and lack of capacity to take advantage of the opportunities which has been a social malaise that is threatening global prosperity in general and national economic growth and development in particular, SMEDAN through a well-developed MSMEs sector has proven to be one of the most veritable channels to combat poverty (SMEDAN, 2015). The mandate of SMEDAN as contained in the enabling Act can be summarized as follows:

- i. Stimulating, monitoring and coordinating the development of the MSMEs sub-sector;
- ii. Initiating and articulating policy ideas for small and medium enterprises growth and development;

- iii. Promoting and facilitating development programmes, instruments and support services to accelerate the development and modernization of MSME operations;
- iv. Serving as vanguard for rural industrialization, poverty reduction, job creation and enhanced livelihoods;
- v. Linking MSMEs to internal and external sources of finance, appropriate technology, technical skills as well as to large enterprises;
- vi. Promoting and providing access to industrial infrastructures such as layouts, incubators, industrial parks;
- vii. Working in contact with other institutions in both public and private sector to create a good enabling environment of business in general, and MSME activities in particular.

- **National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP):**

National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) is a 2001 program by the Nigerian government aiming at poverty reduction, in particular, reduction of absolute poverty. It was designed to replace the Poverty Alleviation Program. Its goals include training youths in vocational trades, to support internship, to support micro-credit, create employment in the automobile industry, and help Vesico Vaginal Fistula (VVF) patients. The program is seen as an improvement over the previous Nigerian government poverty-reduction programmes. According to a 2008 analysis, the program has been able to train 130,000 youths and engaged 216,000 people, but most of the beneficiaries were non-poor (Wikipedia, 2015).

- **National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS):**

National Economic Empowerment Development strategy (NEEDS) is a 'home-grown programme' created by the former president of Nigeria Chief Aremu Olusegun Obasanjo, it is a four years' medium term plan for the period of 2003 to 2007. The Nigerian Government's National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) outlines policies and strategies designed to promote economic growth. NEEDS, a federal strategy, is complemented by equivalent approaches at the state level (the State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, or SEEDS) and the local level (the Local Government Economic Empowerment and

Development Strategy, or LEEDS). In line with NEEDS, the government's Commercial Agriculture Development Programme aims to strengthen food security, increase employment opportunities and boost agriculture as an engine for broad-based economic growth in the country. The main goal of NEEDS is the reduction of poverty. The government is particularly concerned about worsening rural poverty, rising unemployment rates among young people and the marginalization of women. It recognizes, as well, the importance of empowering people to design and manage their own development activities (Rural Poverty Portal, 2015). The current strategy for the protection of poor rural people includes efforts to strengthen:

- i. Access to credit and land;
- ii. Participation in decision-making;
- iii. Access to agricultural extension services;
- iv. Access to improved seeds and planting materials, farm inputs and tools;
- v. Traditional thrift, savings and insurance schemes.

• **Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Program (SURE-P):**

The Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Program (SURE-P) is a scheme established by the Federal Government of Nigeria during the administration of Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, the former President of Nigeria to re-investing the Federal Government savings from fuel subsidy removal on critical infrastructure projects and social safety net programmes with direct impact on the citizens of Nigeria. It was established on January 2012 when the Federal Government of Nigeria announced the removal of subsidy on Petroleum Motor Spirit (PMS). The scheme was one of the pivots of Transformation Agenda of the Federal Government. The core objectives of this scheme are:

- i. Provision of employments for unemployed graduates through internship programs;
- ii. Creating database of unemployed youth and reduce social vulnerability among the group in the country through the mechanism of the policy (Wikipedia, 2015).

• **Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS):**

The Federal Government of Nigeria through the Public Works, Youth and Women Employment Component of the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Program (SURE-P) established the GIS on October 2012, which aims to provide the

unemployed graduates youths with job apprenticeship opportunities that will expose them to skills and experiences relevant to the current labour market and enhance their employ ability. GIS seeks to create opportunity for eligible graduate youths to be placed as interns in reputable public/private sector firms to enhance building the manpower requirement to drive the Nation's Transformation Agenda and Vision 20:2020. It aims at employing 50,000 youth across the country to ensure that their skills have been developed towards empowering them to be employable in the short, medium, and long term. GIS is created to ensure that youths are attached as apprentices in reputable public/private firms for a period of one year where the skills of such individuals will be sharpened as well as boost their chances of becoming self-employed. While the GIS is designed as a short-term measure, it has high prospects for job creation (Jobgurus, 2015). Thus, its aim objectives are:

- i. To enhance the employability of up to 50,000 unemployed graduates in the 36 states of the Federation and the FCT through internship programs in pre-selected institutions;
- ii. To reduce the vulnerability of unemployed graduates; and
- iii. To build manpower base towards attaining national development operations.

• **Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (You Win):**

The Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (You Win) is a youth development programme, established by the regime of Good luck Jonathan in 2012 to empower Nigeria Youth. The programme is a Private and Public initiative with the aim of financing outstanding business plan for aspiring entrepreneur Nigerian Youth (Wikipedia, 2015). It was created and launched in collaboration of the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Communication Technology (CT), and the Ministry of Youth Development. The main objective of this programme is to generate jobs by encouraging and supporting aspiring entrepreneurial youth in Nigeria to develop and execute business ideas that will lead to job creation. The programme will provide aspiring youth with a platform to show case their business acumen, skills and aspirations to business leaders, investors and mentors in Nigeria (Bella Naija, 2011). Other objectives include:

- i. To attract ideas and innovations from young entrepreneurial aspirants from Universities, Polytechnics, Technical colleges, and other post-Secondary institutions in Nigeria;
- ii. To provide a one-time equity grant for 1,200 selected aspiring entrepreneurs to start or expand their business concepts and mitigate start up risks;
- iii. To generate 80,000 to 110,000 new jobs for currently unemployed Nigerian youth over the three years during which the three cycles will be implemented;
- iv. To provide business training for up to 6,000 aspiring youth entrepreneurs spread across all geo-political zones in Nigeria;
- v. To encourage expansion, specialization and spin-offs of existing businesses in Nigeria; and
- vi. To enable young entrepreneurs to access a wide business professional network and improve their visibility (Bella Naija, 2011).

In spite the fact that government over the years was interested of how to reduce unemployment through various employment strategies, there have been many problems hindering such efforts. Such militating factors according to FMLP (2015) include the followings:

- i. Most of these polices lacked a clearly defined policy framework with no proper guidelines for job creation, rather, were meant to enrich the pockets of political appointees and stooges.
- ii. The unwieldy scope of policies and programmes which resulted in resources being thinly allocated to projects.
- iii. Poor governance leading to abandonment of projects.
- iv. The policies suffered from political instability, political interference, policy and macro-economic dislocations.
- v. They also lacked continuity as different regimes, both military and civilian, enunciated different policies.
- vi. Lack of involvement of beneficiaries in project design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. This

stands as a result of the ineffective targeting of real beneficiaries which leads to leakage of benefits to unintended beneficiaries or targets.

- vii. Overlapping of functions of the agencies/ institutions which ultimately led to institutional rivalry and conflicts.
- viii. Inadequate information and data that can form the basis of effective planning as employment data are very hard to obtain even from statutory institutions and agencies established for gathering socio-economic data.

Recommendations

From the study carried out, it is important to note that different policies and programmes have been initiated by the government to ameliorate the problems militating employment generating in the country. However, such problems have not been properly tackled because the polices advocated by the government lack substance to tackle the problems properly. Based on these, the following recommendations were made:

- i. The federal, state and local governments should modify the existing job creation strategies by committing more funds to the various government agencies involved in employment generation.
- ii. Government should embark on increased labour-promoting employment generation strategy that would combine increased government spending and tax-cut to create more jobs that will help to reduce the high current open unemployment in Nigeria.
- iii. Government should embark on rural development such as rural industrialization and electrification to curtail rural-urban drift to ensure that the rural areas are attractive to live in so that unemployed people can become productively engaged.
- iv. The education system curriculum should be remodeled to inculcate technical skill acquisition which will help even secondary school graduates to have employable skills.
- v. Employers should adopt restrictive application of retrenchment of

workers as a survival strategy during the period of negative economic shock.

Conclusion

This paper looked into the issue of the employment system in Nigeria which has its root in the country's economic development and performance since 1960 during independence. This study reviewed that the problems of the employment situation in other words, known as unemployment in Nigeria, has been in existence since the neglect of the agricultural sector with more focus on the oil sector, where income seemed to be generated in larger amount. And in addition, the issue has been compounded by the expanding number of students gaining admission into tertiary institutions in recent years, which in turn, has led to a large turnout of graduates without the corresponding number of available jobs. However, in curbing these issues of employment generation in the country, over the years and recently, the government were able to put in place reliable policies and programmes with the aim of closing the wide gap between jobs seekers and the jobs available. With these measures put in place by the government, there has been some improvement in the providing jobs for the Nigerian populace. With reference to the information given by NBS (2015), the unemployment rate of the country reduced drastically from 23.9% in 2011 to 6.4% in 2014, and rose again to 7.5% in the first quarter of 2015, and shifted upwards to 9.9% in the third quarter of 2015. This shows that previously, a lot has been done by the government in providing employment opportunities in the economy. However, due to the minimal effects of the aforementioned policies and programmes by the government in generating employment, a slight gap still exists between the jobs seekers and the jobs available in the country which is shown in the sudden rise of unemployment rate from the beginning of 2015 till date.

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