

# Imperatives For Apprenticeship Education As Panacea For Youth Unemployment In Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *Apprenticeship is a viable but an under used solution for the problem of training affecting the industrial community, employment and consequently national development. This paper shows through a review of literature, the need for apprenticeship training and its economic empowerment on youths both illiterates and graduates of various forms of formal education in Nigeria with a view of improving and creating avenues for it to meet the challenges of the future.*

## Introduction

For a nation to progress socially and experience technological growth, emphasis should be placed on the development of man who is responsible for the transformation of the resources. It is a recognized fact that for any sustainable development, investment in man is superior and more durable than any infrastructural development or the building of the machines. Walter (2003), noted that youth empowerment itself has been in practice in pre-colonial Nigeria. Walter maintained further that Trans-Atlantic slave trade and the colonization of African states eventually led to the impoverishment of African youths. To this end, the post independent African Countries inherited the problems and challenges of youth empowerment, including other social problems.

The youth of Nigeria are also becoming better educated. Estimates show that the proportion of 20-24 years old who complete secondary education will increase from 42 percent to 59 percent over the next 20 years. (*The World's Youth 2013*). Consequently, as sub-Saharan Africa's workforce becomes larger and better educated, there is an overwhelming potential for economic growth and development. Countries must take the opportunity to cultivate the capacity of their youth, a valuable resource for their prosperity. Youth population in sub-Saharan Africa is increasingly rapidly. The World's Youth (2013). Nearly one in three people living in the region, or about 297 million, is between the ages of 10 and 24. By 2050, that age group is projected to nearly double to about 561 million. According to Population Reference Bureau's (*The World's Youth 2013*).

In Nigeria, the Federal and State Governments in their desire to achieve the objectives of the National Policy actually recognized and substantially expanded technical and vocational institutions particularly during the third national development plan period of 1975-1980 (*Aghenta, 1982*). However, such re-organization, expansion and even the subsequent adjustments did nothing to improve the apprenticeship training situation in Nigeria. The various levels of government in Nigeria did not show enough concern in this area. It is thus left in the hands of the private sector. And the private sector has run it without any form of co-ordination or guiding statements either from among themselves or from government. This apparent negligence is rather unfortunate especially when one considers the fact that apprenticeship training is one important way of solving the national unemployment problem.

In this regard, Metz (2004) identified that within the African context, youths empowerment is a means of encouraging young people to gain skills and knowledge that will allow them to overcome obstacle in life. He further stated that youth empowerment does the following for youth in Nigeria:

1. It provides them with the ability to make decision about personal/collective circumstances
2. It grants the youths the ability to access data and information including resources for self-development.
3. It provides them with the capacity to think positively and make change in their entire lives.

Additionally, the Federal Government of Nigeria (*FGN, 2000*) in recent years have come to perceived youth restiveness in Nigeria, particularly in the Niger Delta region and introduced various economic programmes targeted at diverting the attention of youths empowerment as a new vocabulary in governance and in Nigerian society today. Brasin (2005) noted that youths empowerment has been a major social issue, hence the need for job provision and creation for the youths cannot be over-emphasized. It is believed that when the youths are empowered through apprenticeship training, skill acquisitions and practical works, they would help to develop expertise in the areas of their interest.

In the view of Deborah (2001), youth empowerment challenges should be viewed as one of the major priorities of responsive government globally particularly those in the study area. Deborah further stated that the unempowered youths are much vulnerable

to social deviance than the empowered and employed youths in the society. Furthermore, Imarhiagbe (2007) stated that the interest in the development of apprenticeship training is based on the necessities of the training towards National Development and youth's empowerment. Engaging youths in apprenticeship and vocational training programmes will enhance self-reliance and take the youths out of poverty through sustained growth and increase employment, Akewushola et'al (2014). Moreover, youth empowerment is vital to building a virile and sustainable society which empowers and allows young people overcome poverty and become self-employed, developing self-esteem and self-efficacy, Zeigler-hill et'al (2007) and Jansen et'al (2015). In this regard, the youths are more able take decisions on issues that bother on their lives, particularly their well-being in the society. Accordingly, Akewushola, et'al (2014) further argues that poverty alleviation provides a veritable opportunity through which governments can revamp the battered economy and rebuild self-esteem in majority of Nigerians who have over the decades suffered dehumanization.

The objective of this paper is to identify the need for apprenticeship training and its economic empowerment on youths both illiterates and graduates of various forms of formal education in Nigeria and the need for both Federal and State Governments can streamline and coordinate this mode of economic empowerment with a view of improving and create avenues for it to meet the challenges of the future.

### **Conceptual Framework.**

For the purpose of this paper, apprenticeship is a model in the plane of community, involving active individuals participating with others in culturally organized activity that has, a part of its purpose the development of mature participation in the activity by the less experienced people has been provided, Sharma A (2014). Similarly, Cantor J (1993) defines Apprenticeship training to mean where the employer agrees to provide structured and formal training in a specific field(s) or trade over a defined period of time. The idea of apprenticeship necessarily focuses attention on the specific nature of the activity involved, as well as on its relation to practices and institutions of the community in which it occurs economic, political, spiritual and material. The programme is for skills development of youths as artisans who later find use for them and eventually, get the participants empowered economically, socially and psychologically.

### **Apprenticeship Training:**

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Apprenticeship has been seen as a form of ritual servitude that legitimated an illusory division between skilled and unskilled work (Shields, 1995:239)

Apprenticeship as a means of thoroughly learning the intricacies of a trade has been well adapted to modern industries to meet work force needs. Even with innovations in industry, experience has shown that the learner masters a skilled trade only by diligently repeating job operations under the capable supervision until they are fully mastered.

Apprenticeship is defined in *Encyclopedia Britannica* (2007) as: "training in an art, trade, or craft under a legal agreement that defines the duration and conditions of the relationship between master and apprentice". Apprenticeship originates from the French phrase *prendre* which means to learn or grasp mentally (Webster, 1968).

Craig and Bittel (1967) explained that apprenticeship was not restricted to artisanship alone. It was also the vehicle for instruction in medicine, law and education. They stated further that as recently as the 1920s, it was possible in the U.S for a man to read law in the office of a local attorney. This was a form of apprenticeship and guidance which when passed legalized his practice of law. In Nigeria, apprentices lived with their masters and received no pay except maintenance and training. After their period of training and after satisfying the required standard of proficiency in that particular trade, the apprentice then graduates to a journeyman status. The journeyman is a worker who has passed from the stage of apprenticeship but is not yet qualified to be a master, they work under a master to receive more experience especially in management, leadership and customer handling. The journeyman receives a fixed wage for his labour.

According to Bequel and Meyers (1965) apprenticeship system of training keeps away youths from the abusive and exploitative conditions of child labour. They argued that: If it is assumed that certain children are going to work, perhaps out of economic necessity, no matter-what attempts are made to discourage them, then one way to keep them out of work that is hazardous is to provide them with employment that is safe by offering them vocational and other training to help prepare the participating children in life skill.

It is popularly said that one of the most traditional and best known measures for promoting education at the same time as vocational skills is the apprenticeship system. But in Nigeria, it is considerable potential for educating and training large numbers of poor population while offering them work in safe condition has rarely been explored. Government can play an effective role in promoting this system through organizing a sort of formal training for apprenticeship and by setting out the conditions under which apprenticeship may be engaged. Sequel (1991) summed up this view thus: Child labour cannot be abolished so long as poverty persists. The best that can be done is perhaps to legitimize child employment and to ensure that child workers are provided with legal protection and adequate training through the apprenticeship system.

The relationship between master and apprentice in Nigeria is based on a contractual agreement between the parent/guardian of the child and the master of the workshop or trade. This agreement in its general terms stipulates that the parents give out his child to be trained in a specified trade by the craftsman for a definite period of time until the child acquires the necessary skill to set up his own. For this period of training, the parents may or may not make a financial deposit. In the South Eastern part of Nigeria, the apprentice serves his master for a fixed period mostly 5-7 years or maybe 8, while living with his/her master and engaging in domestic chores. Furthermore, the contribution of apprentice in the workshop or trade shall not earn any form of wage. It is more of a father-son relationship. After successfully serving and also acquired good morals, his master settles him within the same business in a particular location and in turn the apprentice brings another which he will train and so on and so forth. This paper is however of the opinion that the government and various stakeholders should encourage and also let those successful graduates of apprenticeship who are skilled and also gifted to be part of employment as those who attained same skills through the formal educational process. However, it is very unnecessary to expect that they should be placed at par; they can however have their own separate scheme and recognition that seeks to encourage such individuals who may have a lot to offer the systems they are found.

### Benefits of Apprenticeship Training

1. **Hands-on training:** while you work in a profession that you want to master. This concept is about as old as the concept of professions themselves. It's the way people used to learn how to perform a trade. Blacksmiths had blacksmiths apprentices, and journeyman had journeyman apprentices. When you think about it, the first neanderthal to use a tool for hunting probably taught others, turning them into his apprentices.
2. People who prefer interactive learning tend to go into the arts and manufacturing or creative fields like dance, acting, jewelry making, carpentry, physical therapy, and carpentry. All of these fields have on-the-job training elements to them, and often, that learning never stops.
3. **Customized training:** for the apprentice, they get to learn about a profession that interests them, and they don't have to waste with a lengthy, well-rounded education. For the employer, they can train people on how they specifically like to have things done.
4. **Professional pipeline:** the trades that require apprenticeships are constantly feeding their industry supply and demand cycle.
5. **Job security:** for employees, once you get into your apprenticeship program, you stand a great chance of getting a job and staying employed. That's incredibly valuable in this area.
6. **Continued learning:** many apprentices are not new to the field; they're just adding to their skill sets. It's not uncommon to have refresher apprenticeships for established employees or professionals; certificate training that lets you advance in your career through on-the-job learning.
7. **A culture of cooperation:** one benefit to employees and employers that often gets overlooked is the atmosphere or assistance that happens when you have an apprenticeship program. Everyone in the company knows what it's like to learn from others and then instruct others. That makes it much easier for people to ask questions, get help, and continually cooperate. It creates a sense of camaraderie that makes work more enjoyable.

### A Curriculum Proposal for Apprenticeship in Schools.

Apprenticeship training should be encouraged and introduced into schools. A dual system can be adopted whereby the practical training attained in the workshop or shop is backed up by a more theoretical study. The Government needs to strategize and harmonize the curriculum of both settings of training. Take for instance, at the time of theoretical training section, students can be grouped according to their trade, their year of apprenticeship, their level of proficiency at their job. At the completion of the training both theoretical and practical, the apprentice is then assessed and certified.

A slight improvement of the above aforementioned is explained on the fact that most apprentices are school dropouts, which are not because of poor academic performance but because of their economic situations. However, their economic situation may improve creating an urge to go back to the formal schooling process. Unfortunately, age factor may be a barrier at that time. It is therefore important for a school system that is more open for admission to be created especially for those apprentices who left school at one point in time to be able to come back and resume a level in which their competences qualify them for.

Intellectual attainment alone should not be used as the only criteria for admission. It is contention that this paper for instance that a good road side motor mechanic can cope with the requirements of diploma in auto engineering if he is not bugged down with too many theoretical requirements. Bishop (1981) suggested quite rightly that the public educational system will have to provide multiple entry points. So that a child can re-enter the formal school system at whatever point he or she is motivated to do so.

Many graduates of apprenticeship perform even more efficient than those who attained the theoretical certificates at formal institutions reason is that for all their time as apprentice, they were involved in daily practical focusing on that particular field not having to divert or combine multiple tasks from different fields. The popular phrase ‘practice makes perfect’ can be applied to the apprenticeship system. The set of skills which an apprentice acquires on a particular job through training and experience and which increases the apprentices value in the market place can be seen as human capital. Human capital is the abilities and skills of any individual, especially those acquired through investment in education and training that enhance potential income earnings.

The concept of human capital can be interpreted in many ways. One of them could be looking at the person as an asset, as a resource that belongs to the organization and from which we can demand all its capacity and commitment. A more suitable definition is that human capital is a treasure that a company or institution has available with respect to the qualification of the personnel that works there. Therefore, human capital represents the value that each employee brings to the table, according to his/her studies, knowledge, capabilities and skills.

### **Conclusion**

It is concluded that the apprenticeship system of training, is an intended means of manpower creation which if properly strategized, can be used to solve the unemployment problem ravaging Nigeria and other African nations. Apprentice have been poorly looked on as low lives and so on, however, this can be set right by putting in place a school system that accepts and recognizes potential as a basic requirement for admission rather than just writing and passing of exams. More so, the customary way of advancing educationally from one step to the other as regards to a set sequence should be liberal in the ease of apprentices so that their practical skill can be used.

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