

**COMBATING UNEMPLOYMENT VIA INCORPORATION OF  
INFORMAL ACTIVITIES BASED ON SCIENTIFIC CONCEPT IN  
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULA**

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**Abstract**

The Nigeria economy grew relatively in the greater parts of the 1970's with respect to the oil boom of the 1970's, the outrageous profits from the oil boom encouraged wasteful expenditures in the public sector and neglect of the agricultural sector. This among many other factors such as preference for white collar jobs etc. led to high rate of unemployment in Nigeria. The decline in 2003 of unemployment rate which correlates with the poverty alleviation programme, brought about increased number of people who got engaged in the informal sector activities. This paper looks at how unemployment could be reduced through the incorporation of the learning of informal activities (traditional vocation) in the primary and secondary schools curricula, with emphasis on the scientific concepts behind each informal activity taught.

**Introduction**

The Nigeria educational system took its root from the traditional system of the pre-colonial era, (Alebiosu, K. and Ifamuyiwa, S.A. 2008). This was a period of indigenous education in which traditional educational activities were practiced in various vocations like farming,

weaving, blacksmithing, pot making, hunting etc, (Alebiosu, K. and Ifamuyiwa, S. A. 2008). Learning at that time was characterized by apprenticeship and much of unrealized and unexplained science and technology were practiced. There was no formal curriculum but the training was relevant to the needs of the society. Some

authors described the training as somehow primitive and localized (Ajeyalemi, 2008), because it was informal. Essentially, the science that was regarded as informal and indigenous was practiced in the pre-colonial era. It was stimulating, informative and useful, (Alebiosu, K. and Ifamuyiwa, S. A. 2008). It provided a lead way for understanding, interpreting, and relating with the world and nature. The limitations however, were numerous especially in its inability to provide adequate scientific explanations for causes and events observed in the natural world. The science practice lacked documentation and it was conservative and authoritarian.

This era ushered in western education with the advent of missionaries in Nigeria. It was through this that the informal or crude science became reformed as the formal science and technology. There was better understanding that transformed individuals and Nigeria as an entity from the world of yesterday to western world characterized by increased discoveries, inventions and innovations. This development also paved the way for the integration of science and technology into the curricula of schools. The curriculum conference of 1969 finally gave rise to a change in Nigeria educational policy which cemented the urge to develop relevant education system that would serve as a tool for accelerating national growth and development. The stride championed a reformation in science and technology education in Nigeria.

### **Unemployment in Nigeria**

According to International Labour Organization (ILO), the unemployed is a member of the economically active population who are without work but available for and seeking for work, including people who have lost their jobs and those who have voluntarily left work (ILO, 1996).

Unemployment is one of the developing problems that face every developing economy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Nigeria economy since the attainment of political independence in 1960 has undergone fundamental structural changes. The domestic structural shifts have however not resulted in any significant and sustainable economic growth and development. Available data show that the Nigeria economy grew relatively in the greater parts of the 1970's because of the oil boom of the 1970's, and the outrageous profits from the oil boom encouraged wasteful expenditures in the public sector and neglect of the agricultural sector (Akintoye, 2008). This among many other issues resulted in the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1986 and the current economic reforms. The core restructuring of the Nigerian economy in the face of population explosion (Doughlason et al, 2006). However, these economic and financial structural reforms put in place have yielded significant results (Akintoye, 2008). In the light of this, this paper seeks to examine how unemployment could be reduced through the informal sector which is a global issue targeted at empowering people

towards being self productive and independent (Akintoye, 2006).

### Statistics of Unemployment in Nigeria

The national unemployment rate, estimated by the Federal office of statistics, Abuja in 1989, reveals that 4.3 percent of the labour force in 1983, increased to 5.3 percent in 1986 and 7.0 percent in 1987, before falling to 5.1 percent in 1988 as a result of measures taken under the SAP. Most of the unemployed were city dwellers, as indicated by urban jobless rates of 8.7 percent in 1985, 9.1 percent in 1986, 9.8 percent in 1987, and 7.3 percent in 1988 (<http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-9405.html>). Underemployed farm labour, often referred to as disguised unemployment continued to be supported by family or village, and therefore rural unemployment figures were less accurate than those for urban unemployment. Among the openly unemployed rural population, almost two-thirds were secondary school graduates.

The largest proportions of the unemployed (consistently 35 to 50 percent) were secondary school graduates. There was also a 40 percent unemployment rate among urban youth aged 20 to 24 and a 31 percent rate among those aged 15 to 19. Two – thirds of the urban unemployed were 15 to 24 years old. In recent times however, the situation has been compounded by the increasing unemployment of professionals from tertiary institutions. According to a 1974 survey, graduate unemployment accounted

for less than 1 percent of the unemployed, by 1984, the proportion rose to 4 percent for urban areas and 2.2 percent in the rural areas (Akintoye, 2008). Between 1992 and 1997, graduate unemployment accounted about 32 percent of the unemployed labour force. In 2003, Nigerians unemployment rate declined substantially to 2.3 percent. This decline was attributed to the various government efforts aimed at addressing the problem through poverty alleviation programme. This decline also pointed to an increased number of people who got engaged in the informal sector activities. In 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 till presently 2010. The unemployment is 2.90 percent, 5.80 percent, 4.90 percent, 4.90 percent and 4.90 percent respectively.

Table 1 summarizes the unemployment rate from 2003 – 2010.

Table 1 (summary of unemployment rate from 2003 – 2010)

Years	Unemployment rate
2003	2.30%
2006	2.90%
2007	5.80%
2008	4.90%
2009	4.90%
2010	4.90%

Source: CIA World Fact book.

The Nigeria educational system, the 6-3-3-4 policy focuses at purposely enhancing quality, ensuring balancing national development and accelerating the attainment of the globally acclaimed education for all (EFA). The 9 years basic

education curriculum is such that provides for the Nigeria children to be in school for 9 years of continuous schooling made up of 6 years of primary education and 3 years of junior secondary education. The programme is targeted at improving relevance, quality and efficiency in education, reducing school drop out and promoting the acquisition of functional, literacy, numerally, life skills and values for long education and useful living (NERD, 2007). The place of science and technology in this programme is amplified in the lower basic education class (primary 1-3) where basic science and technology is one of the core subjects, and studied through out the primary level.

Incorporation of traditional vocations such as farming (crop cultivation, poultry, fish farming etc), weaving, pot making, carpentry, brickmaking etc. into the primary and secondary school curricula will help students to acquire skills that could help them later in life to become productive and useful members of the society. The learning of these traditional vocations will be theoretical and activity-based, so that learners can master the skills. Unlike the apprenticeship scheme, where there is no formal education ; the incorporation of these traditional trades into the school curriculum in a formal setting will entail using scientific concepts to explain the processes involved in each vocation.

The science that is formal involves a systematic study of natural phenomena and its study allows students to experience the richness and the excitement of the natural world as they engage in inquiry,

critical thinking and the demonstration of skills. The scientific enterprise is one that is challenging and innovative. It blends with technology which focuses on inventions and problem-solving. Consequently, the harmonious interplay of science, technology and society is the springboard for sustainable development. Using scientific concepts to explain the process involved in traditional vocation (informal activities) will shift it away from being primitive, conservative, and authoritarian method.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The educational sector is a means of enlightening and impacting knowledge to the people so as to live purposefully and meaningful lives. Because, in some cases, the younger ones, find it difficult or embarrassing to go to learn informal activities, the school sector therefore becomes a vital place within which some informal activities can be taught to them. The learning of this informal activities will be theoretical and activity based (practical oriented), and the scientific concepts behind each process associated with a particular informal activity will be enumerated, so as to shift it away from the primitive, conservative, localized and authoritarian way it used to be.

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