

EDITORIAL COMMENT

TACKLING UNEMPLOYMENT: THE RESEARCH INTERNSHIP INITIATIVE NWAOPARA, A.O., FIIA, PhD

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Unemployment is synonymous to ‘joblessness’ and it breeds generalized hardship in life, helplessness, lack of social security, idleness, poverty, depression, suicidal tendencies, loss of self esteem, diseases like hypertension, and dependency even in very minor responsibilities. It has also been implicated in various forms of criminality –child trafficking, advance fee fraud, armed robbery, murder, rape and kidnapping, as well as other vices like drug abuse, prostitution, and alcoholism. The trend takes a more virulent dimension amongst youths who become ready tools for political thuggery, violent rebellion, and terrorism.

Indeed, unemployment has become a monstrous global phenomenon that has seemingly defied all efforts to tackle it. While developing countries appears to be drowning in it, developed countries are grappling with its rising frequency. In fact, the ravaging global economic shock (*melt-down*) coupled with rapid population growth, obvious institutionalized corruption, financial recklessness, nepotism, parochial sentiments, wars, over-bloated recurrent expenditure (as against capital spending), and the lack of sound policy implementation, especially in developing countries, has worsened the situation globally.

Ironically, unemployment status in some instances becomes the foundation pillar for success stories. In such instances, the state of joblessness bred creativity, perseverance, foresightedness, patience, passion to succeed and the famous “*never give-up spirit*” that is synonymous with the admonition “*winners don’t quit*”. In other words, unemployment is a phenomenal challenge that exists in the midst of several opportunities waiting in limbo. Of course these so-called opportunities are not visible to all and as such, can’t easily be accessed. It indicates to an extent, that in the actual sense, unemployment is not insurmountable but a transient issue of the mind that needs to be conquered.

Thus, the bondage of unemployment as perceived by individuals, might therefore be the failure to realize that one can be: 1) hired to provide service in a government or non-governmental organization and get paid via salaries/ allowances (herein tagged PSGPSA); or 2) render same service directly and get

paid directly (herein tagged RSDGPD). Both PSGPSA and RSDGPD have their similarities and differences. For PSGPSA, the overall risk - administrative, managerial, and personnel cost, is borne by employer and not the employee, while the reverse is the case for RSDGPD.

Both PSGPSA and RSDGPD however, bridge the unemployment gap since all those involved can not be said to be jobless; satisfaction notwithstanding as “*I don’t like my job*” is by far a lesser problem to those who say “*I don’t have a job*”. Most importantly, RSDGPD encapsulates entrepreneurship which has been adjudged as the easiest way out of the quagmire called ‘unemployment’. In that regard, emphasis must be laid on mapping out strategies to unveil the ubiquitous opportunities around us that can serve as veritable instruments for job and wealth creation, since oftentimes, has a multiplier effect.

Research therefore, becomes that inevitable tool needed considering its status as the famous scientific strategy to identifying the root cause of problems, their ramifications, and solutions; while also predicting likely future trend and the needed balance. Surely, exploiting the abundant resources of research will go a long way in granting freedom to individuals trapped between the claws of unemployment. It will equip them with strategies to harness their potentials towards providing remunerable services to the society. This is evident in the ongoing innovative revolution in the Nigerian Music and Movie industries which hitherto, was a ‘no go area’ but now provides employment opportunities for thousands of Nigerians and Non-Nigerians.

Unfortunately, there is relatively no emphasis on research being the bedrock of undergraduate training in higher institutions. Most graduates are seemingly ignorant about the basics of research and the application of research strategies to unearthing innate potentials that resolve challenges especially the challenge of unemployment. For sure, no one can deny the economic benefits of innovation -a lot of which has been witnessed in information technology. This is the philosophy behind the Graduate Employment and Research Skill Enhancement Project (GERSEP) undertaken by the Innovative Science Research Foundation (ISREF) for young

graduates in Nigeria. Participants are admitted as Research Interns and are exposed to the basics of research and research reporting. Most importantly, participants of GERSEP are compulsorily expected to design and test run an *Effective Enterprise Model* before the completion of their training. This implies that they become automatic entrepreneurs and the huge benefits are better imagined. It is sincerely hoped that this initiative by ISREF will be sustained and relevant university authorities are once again encouraged to design curricular that addresses the future-laden challenges of their eventual products.

