

Appraisal of Youths Employability Challenges in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: Youth employment is the centre of economic and social development in the modern societies. Employment determines the productiveness of an active youth. Recently there is clear expansions and development in education sector throughout the world. Nigeria is not an exception, the tertiary institutions are booming and the graduate youths growing day by day. At the same time there is a clear disproportionate between the number of youths from tertiary institutions and those that get involved in the work. Most of the graduate youths from higher institutions end up as surplus to the labour market and could not get employed too. This study analyses the challenges facing graduate youths in securing employment and also provides a diagnostic view about present job situation in Nigeria. The study adopts a deductive approach of analysis support by the secondary source of data. The findings revealed that in this modern multifaceted and advanced technological society higher educational training play vital role in finding a formal job, but still not guaranteed for the jobs due to the limited availability of jobs. The youth preference towards the white collar jobs is increasing. Thus government should provide suitable medium that will enhance mutual understanding and synergy between the academic institutions and the employers. This will eventually enhance employability chances and also facilitate effective transition of youths learning experiences to the world of work.

KEYWORDS: Education, Employment, Nigeria, Unemployment, Youth.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Education is the most commanding means that guide and ignite the young generation who are the prospective leaders of the world. And also it is the best tool of empowerment which brings different segments of the society into the conventional. According to Bloom et al. [1], in more recent decades most of the developing economies are experiencing shortages in effective human talent and skills that meet the standard of present complex modern societies. Whereas it is evidently clear that these shortages has the possibilities of retarding their progresses and developments economically.

In Nigeria, education is regarded as a vital tool of enriching individuals with knowledge and development of character and also a means of transformation of the environment. Moreover, this obliges the need for educational policies to take full responsibilities of the country's needs in terms of manpower and skills development. Beside Okuwa[2] report which states that resources decline in Nigerian educational sector at almost all level is visible and clear among experts. The deficit in infrastructure and the belatedly payment of teachers' salaries for months are among the major problems affecting the educational sector managed by almost all tiers of government.

The Nigerian system of education is formally divided into primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. These are largely governed and controlled by the local, state and federal governments respectively. Although most of the higher institution in Nigeria whether either controlled by states or federal Government but they are not free from the threats of infrastructural deficit, strikes, teacher's salary related issues, etc. Though, the government effort towards addressing such issues must be acknowledged.

These efforts are seen across most of the tertiary institutions of the country through educational fund interventions known as Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) which is charged with the responsibility for managing, disbursing and monitoring the education tax to public tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The program was initiated by the federal government of Nigeria through endorsing educational Tax Decree 7 of 1993. The fund was generated through accessible profits of 2% of Nigerian registered companies.[2] The Nigerian educational system crisis is yet to be over especially at tertiary level despite the enormous effort done. The Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education are the major producers of the graduate's certificates such as PhD's, Masters' Degree, Bachelors' Degree, Higher National Diploma (HND), National Certificate of Education (NCE), and National Diploma (ND). Regardless of the popular believe that the beneficiaries of the higher educational training should be made accountable to pay some portions of the cost of their education.

Hence, it was recommended by Kolawale and Abam[3] and Brown[4] that privatization or payment of partial cost of education by the student will boost educational attainment at tertiary level.

The quest of higher education in Nigeria is greater than ever across all geopolitical regions. As of late 2016, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) estimated the population of Nigeria to about 180 million people. Since 2009, the NBS data has shown that the unemployed rate has raised from 12% to 22% but the employment only raised by 0.06%, beside a significant increase in labour force most be acknowledged. Moreover, the unemployment rate has increased by 24% (from 21.5%) while the employment rate still stand around 13% only as of last quarter of 2016 alone.

There are clear uncertainties surrounding the future of trained graduates toward getting involved in the world of work and monetary rewards. Consequently, despite the huge investment and resources spend in order to get the education with hopes of improve living standard, better societal recognition and attaining higher professional positions. These among others necessitates the assessment of the enormous challenges facing Nigerian graduate's and further suggest appropriate sustainable measures that will enhance the transition of these skilful and trained minded individuals to the world of work.

The focal aim of the present study is to analyse the challenges facing higher institution graduates in the quest of getting involved in the world of work in Nigeria. In order to achieve this, the following broad objectives were formulated:

- i. To assess the level of unemployment in Nigeria,
- ii. To analyse the challenges encountered by youths toward getting employed, and
- iii. To recommend proper measures that will enhance the synergy between the higher institutions who are the producers and the world of work on the other end as the consumers of the graduate skills.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study employed mixed method which includes both quantitative and qualitative techniques using secondary data. The secondary data obtained for the study are from government sources such as National Bureau of Statistics, Federal Ministry of Education and the Nigeria's 2006 Census Data among others. Furthermore, the study adopts inductive approach using standard statistic and content analysis in order to fully assess, understand and depict the current graduate's employability challenges in Nigeria.

III. STUDY AREA

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is a political entity located in West Africa which lies on the geographical coordinates of 10°0'0"N and 8°0'0"E. According to 2006 national census, Nigeria has a total population of 140 million people with population density of 160.6 per sq. km.[5] But more recently, according to United Nations data, it has an estimated population of about 190 million people as of early March, 2017.[6] The basic or primary education is compulsory for all children ages from 6-14 years with a national average of 72% according to Federal Ministry of Education of Nigeria.[7]

The country labour force stands at an estimate of 70% engaged in Agriculture, 20% engaged in services and 10% engaged in industry. [6] The main providers of tertiary education are the Universities, Mono and Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and various Innovative Enterprise Institutions. Hence, it is evident that all the educational formations (primary, secondary and higher institutions) can be found in almost all states of the federation and the capital territory Abuja.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the present study, the concept of employment and unemployment is regarded in literary terms as getting and not getting a job respectively. Thus, the concept of 'employability' in the study is referred to individual's capabilities to obtain a job. This study considers three main types of employment status; Employee, Worker and Self-employed. Though individual's employment rights will depend upon whether they are an employee or worker, but the self-employee has the most freedom as compared to employee and worker. This relies on the basis that the responsibility for success or failure of the business depends upon them alone. Hence, the different working arrangements which developed over the years have allowed more flexibility at work. The root of graduate's employment issues in Nigeria in the present study is traced back to the curricular used by the country's institutions and the youth preferences to just study any course with the intention of obtaining only certificate. The youths often neglect the importance of the skills and training learned during the process of learning. They just need the certificates, thinking the job will arrive by itself. In spite of the critical role of skills towards getting employment, effective communication skill is the most important criteria mainly considered during interview sessions organized by the employers. Moreover, individualized personality and white-collar job preferences among others are the main challenges facing the youths in their quest of looking for jobs. The graduates tend to spent more time applying and waiting for jobs rather than engaging in any activity that will

earn them a living. These among others, depict the weak entrepreneurship culture among the Nigerian youths today.

4.1 The Employment

Employment is defined as any activity that is done in exchange of monetary remuneration, whether self-employed, under employed or full employment. This involves work that demand connection to the formal educational system or not or the combination of both. Moreover, a study by Babatunde and Adefabi[8] suggested that employability with regards to the graduate's employment is clearly different from employment status. But the present study agrees with Storen and Aamodt[9] view of employability to enhancement of graduate "being" successful and effective functionality in their respective professional qualifications rather than change from prosperity of individual to get employed.

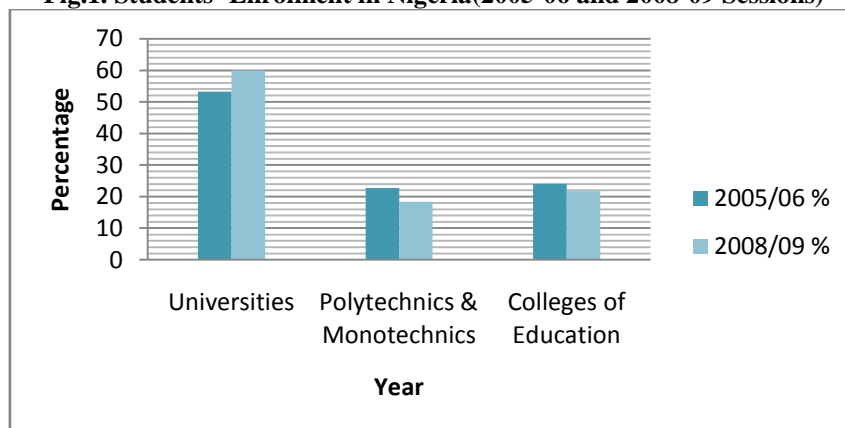
3.1.1 Employment and Education

In line with Bill's study [10] definition of education in broad senses; education embraces more arrays of activities and structures that cover the formal schooling and also the learning that are taking place outside those boundaries. According to study by West[11], with the more recent economic and professional conditions, the idea and the concept of classical employment and lifetime jobs becoming unpopular practices in this present societies. Moreover, there are growing importance attached to the educational certificate which symbolises a tightening bond between education, jobs and reward 'employments'. Brown [12] further reported that it is a fact that there is an increasing participation and enrolment in higher education studies across Nigeria. This among others pilot the public perception and popular view of education as a guarantee or an opportunity in achieving certain social status in the society as add up to the professional position. Thus, many scholars like Bill, Brown and West argue that it may not be appropriate to refer to this scenario as 'opportunity trap'.

The modern academic training tends to assume a declining role in shaping employment outcomes; whereas individual's skills and potentials are becoming more relevant in the contemporary scenario of employment opportunities. The current study observed that this perception was mainly as a result of change or shift in paradigm. The students at the centre of learning processes tend to focus most on the end result among other processes of learning. The certification and the certificate are the most important aspect rather than the skills acquired during the flight through academic processes.

With regards to these issues, many graduates may have certificates but cannot effectively exhibit skills and trainings of their respective educational domains. Moreover, the employers who are the providers of employments give more preferences to mainly experienced workers or graduates in order to minimised cost through trainings and workshops. This can be translated as exclusion of fresh graduates from the real contest of getting employment. This is the main basis that leads to more rotational nature of employers rather than absorption of fresh unemployed graduates in Nigeria.

Fig.1. Students' Enrolment in Nigeria(2005-06 and 2008-09 Sessions)



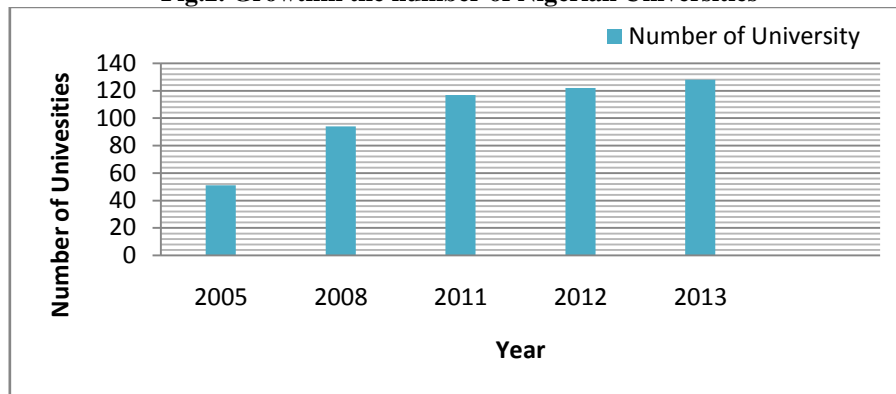
Sources: National Bureau of Statistics, 2016

Based on the above figure 1, it was observed that the students consider university education as the priority. There is an increase in number of students enrolling for the university education while the mono, polytechnics and colleges of education enrolment is otherwise.

3.1.2 Employment and Quality Education

According to Bloom et al. [1]report, most of the developing economies in more recent decades are experiencing shortages in talents and skills that meet the standard of the present societies. These shortages have affected development and progress around the globe. This necessitates the need for educational policies to take full responsibilities of the need of the country in terms of manpower and skill development. The higher institutions of Nigeria have witnessed massive development and expansions. For instance, recently the Nigerian universities that are the major producers of these graduates have experienced both growth and development in terms of manpower and infrastructure.

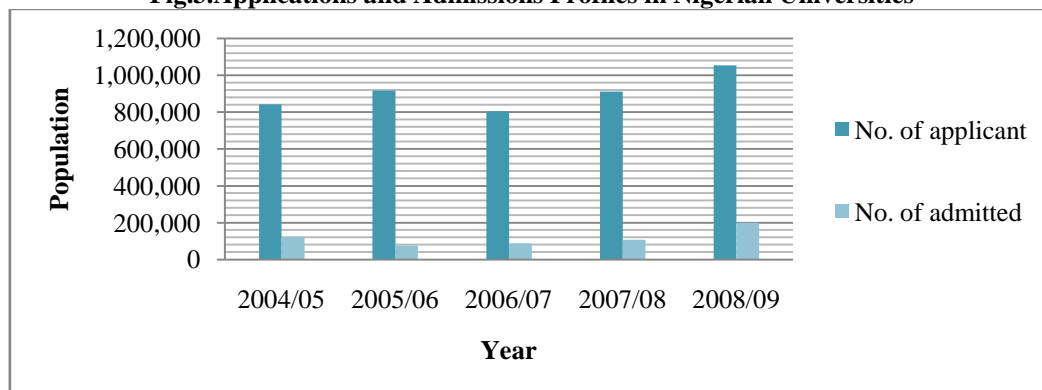
Fig.2. Growth in the number of Nigerian Universities



Sources: National University Commission, 2015

Within a span of 8 years alone, the number of the Nigerian universities increased from 51 to 128. The increasing quest of tertiary education is important in promoting faster technological catch up and in improving the country's economic output. This study supported the Blooms'[6] views that challenges the beliefs that tertiary education has little role to play in promoting economic growth. The higher education creates the potentials, but the public and private sectors always seize the opportunities for their growth and development. Even with the continuous strategies such as expansions of higher education, curricular reforms, development in disciplinary focus and trainings, among others, the efforts towards achieving full potentials is yet to be over. There is still work to be done to improve the synergy between the educational trainings and the demand of world of work on the other side. It was observed that there is a pronounced mismatch in the number of skilled graduates and the available occupational vacancy in the labour market in Nigeria.

Fig.3. Applications and Admissions Profiles in Nigerian Universities



Sources: National University Commission, 2015

It was further observed that the number of applicants and admission taken does not really go hand in hand. Based on the data, the number of applicants recently runs more than a million while those admitted does not in any way reached quarter of the number of applications.

While the tertiary institutions are the major producers of talented and skilful youths, but it is suffering from issues like infrastructural deficits, outstretched facilities, lack of sufficient academic personnel's among others. The present study argues against Okuwa[2] view of declining Nigeria's educational sector at almost all levels and emphasises that the government efforts on curtailing higher education problems are yielding positive results through educational fund known as TETFund. Hence, the study agrees that the country's educational

system crisis of infrastructural deficit is yet to be over, especially at the tertiary level being the vital training mechanism of the country's youths. It is also clear that other problems like deficits in infrastructure and none prompt payment of teacher's salaries contribute negatively and further affect the educational sector managed by all tiers of government which accordingly affects the educational output.

Besides the acceptance of the popular believe by most of the youths that beneficiaries of higher education should be made to pay at least a portion of the cost of their education, which is done through the privatization or partial cost. This is believed to increase educational attainment at higher level as reported by Kolawale and Abam[3] and Brown[4]. Other issues like shortage of senior academic staffs across the Nigerian tertiary institutions must be acknowledged with more than 60% of the academic staffs in the university system are in the category of Lecturer 1 and below. These have great implication on the experience and quality of teaching and learning process across the country's higher institutions. Furthermore, insufficiency of federal ministry of education budgets must be noted since it is responsible for the funding all federal institutions and subsector interventions. For example, allocation to federal institutions and subsections only constitute 7% and 6.45% in the year 2009 and 2010 respectively.[7]

4.2 Education And Economic Growth

It is a fact that education can lead massive economic growth if it is effectively utilized to full potentials. This is inline as the case of graduate's youth employment, which will be achieved through both private and public channels. Hence, there must be full utilization of these graduate's skills in order to reach its full potentials. These graduates are trained with the more recent technological and advanced instrument and techniques. The present study emphasizes and supports the view that the value of tertiary education is the ultimate vehicle for both public and private investment. Additionally, education if properly utilized will result in better quality of life, better health status, higher salaries, earning of more taxes to the government among other.

The poor investments in potentially high employment sectors, like agriculture and service providers always result in creation of big hole in the labour market of the country. There is need for the government to intervene as a matter of urgency and make these sectors attractive by given out loans, rightly timed provision of fertilizer and farm implement among others. In view of the fact that the changing nature of Nigeria's growth rate and age structure of the population is closely associated with different stages of demographic transitions. Thus, in return, it poses a great threat to economic growth and development of the country.

4.3 Employment And Security Challenges

It is no longer a myth but a fact that unemployment in any country is slightly connected to security challenges [13]. More recently the country facing substantial security challenges across almost all the regions. This is ranging from Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East to kidnapping in the south-east and also militancy in the south-south among other issues. In view of this, various studies like Adesina[13] and the likes called the government on the need for urgent action in curtailing the employment challenges facing the country as pre requisite to effectively and efficiently address the security challenges among major issues.

It was further observed that a simple majority of those involved in all act of social vices are youths of working class desperate of getting quick money since they perceived or believed that the employment opportunities were only for the elites, experienced workers, those with political affiliations, and the popular believe of whom you know and so on. In this junction, the present study agree with the views that align the number of youth's unemployment to national security. In order for the country to be safest heaven for all, the government must act urgently to address the issue of unemployed graduates because the greater the number of poor and hungry unemployed youths, the greater the threat pose to national security.

4.4 Unemployment

According to Adesina[13], it is important to note that the intensity of unemployment within the global economy can be seen from the declining vacancies each year as a result of current technological advancements. The Nigerian 2011 Annual Socio-Economic Report by National Bureau of Statistics reported that from 2007 to 2011, US unemployed rate has increased from 5% to 9%, UK from 5.8% to 8.1% and Greece from 8.07% to 18.4% respectively. While in Africa, Nigeria as the largest economy has a rate of unemployment of almost 24%, South Africa with 25%, Egypt with almost 12% and Namibia with about 51%.

3.4.1 Unemployment in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the unemployment rate measures the number of people actively looking for a job as a percentage of the labour force. Many scholars, more prominently Salas-valesco[14] and Alao[15] categorized the Nigerian unemployment on the following concepts: Structural, Frictional, seasonal, Cyclical, Residual,

Voluntary, Disguised and so on. The Nigeria's labour force encompasses all the persons aged 15-64 excluding students, home keepers, retirees, stay at home parents, person unable to work or not fit to work according to National Bureau of Statistics.[5]

3.4.2 Major Causes of Unemployment in Nigeria

Besides the massive oil wealth of Nigeria, many studies like Dougherty[16], Assad &Lenson[17] and Linda[18] have identified several causes of Nigerian unemployment. The most common factors that amount for the high rate of unemployment in Nigeria are as follows; low economic growth, adoption of untimely economic policies, wrong impression about technical and vocational studies, neglect of agriculture by youths, poor enabling environment, higher rural urban migration, rapid population growth, preferences of white collar jobs, nature of the educational system and training, rapid expansion of educational sector among other factors. But further divisions as used in the study are: the young unemployed 'who had never been employed' and older unemployed who lost their jobs or experienced workers'.

Fig.4. Age Stratification in Unemployment



Source: National Census Data, 2006

Based on the age wise distribution of employed and unemployed people as shown in the above chart, it was observed that the peak of employment was only achieved from 30-34 years. This translate that there is delay in getting employment by the youths which supports the view of prioritizing experienced workers by the employers.

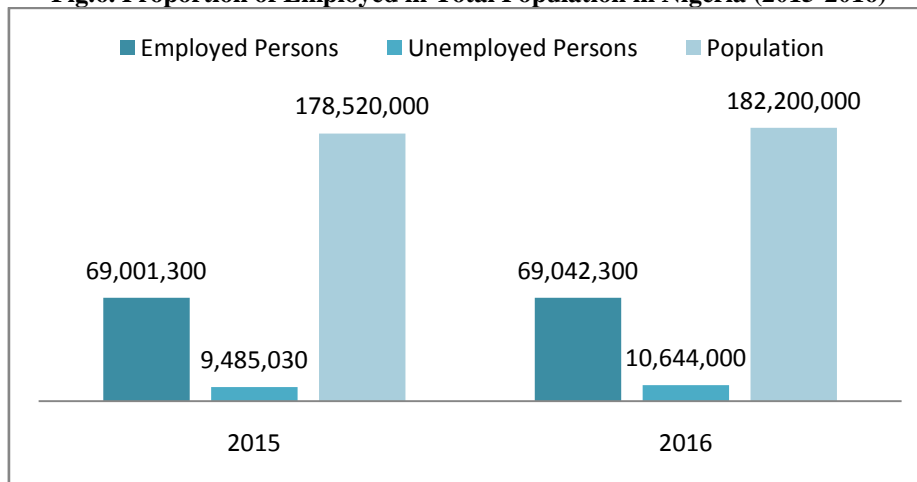
Fig.5. Unemployed Rate in Nigeria from 2013-2016 (%)



SOURCE: WWW.TRADINGECONOMICS.COM | NATIONAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS, NIGERIA

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2016

It was observed that the nature of Nigeria's unemployment is complicated but more recently increasing pace of the unemployment rate is alarming.

Fig.6. Proportion of Employed in Total Population in Nigeria (2015-2016)

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2016)

Based on the figure 6 above, despite substantial increase in the country's population from 2015 to 2016, the number of the employed people remained almost the same but the number of unemployed persons has increased with more than a million people. According to National Bureau of Statistics [19] report, the Nigerian unemployed rate was about 13.3% as of mid-2016. This figure is the highest in more recent past since the year 2009. However, large numbers of youths are neither in school nor employed. Similarly, more emphasis should be placed on technical, vocational, entrepreneurship education and skills, favourable agricultural policies and empowerment of small scale industries.

At the side of the recent increase in the youths employment from 21.5% to 24%, the fact remain that from 2006 to 2016, the unemployment average stands at 9.29%, only reaching peak of 19.7% toward the end of 2009 and also recording the lowest figure toward the end of 2010 respectively [19]. Based on the data, there is clear uncertainty in the Nigeria's world of work on which the future of the trained minded graduates depends on. Nonetheless there is petite increase in the employment rate of the country, but the present study still consider the development as untenable based on the nature of cultural, socioeconomic and political dynamics of the country. On the other hand, it is eminent to note that the intensity of production of skilful and trained minded graduates from higher institutions has never witnessed a backdrop in recent years.

At long last, it was suggested that a well-trained and skilful labour output if properly utilized will translate to more productive and efficient economy in a country like Nigeria. There is a clear negative return of human investment in Nigeria. Even if the technological advancement is partially responsible for the increasing educational attainment, but there is a need of breaching of gap that exists between the academia and industries requirement.

V. CONCLUSION

The present study identified the main challenges of Nigeria's graduate's in their quest for employment. These issues range from pronounced mismatch in the number of skilled graduates to availability of occupational vacancy in the labour market. Secondly, it was observed that despite the non-practical nature of the Nigeria's educational trainings, issues such as youth's preferences of white-collar jobs, employer's preference of experienced workers and youth's preferences of any university degree contributes greatly to the higher rate of Nigeria's unemployment. In addition, there is delay on getting jobs by the youths for first time employment due to the prioritizing of experienced workers by the employers. Moreover, despite the continuous strategies such as expansions of higher education, curricular reforms, development in disciplinary focus and trainings but the full potentiality in Nigerian education is yet to be achieved.

The linkage between the education and employment in many cases is not straight forward despite being clear. Though there is petite increase in the employment rate of the country, but the present study still consider the development as untenable based on the nature of cultural, socioeconomic and political dynamics of the country. Regardless of the importance of youth's skills toward getting employed, but communication is the most important aspect mainly considered during schedule interview organised by the employers. In the face of the above views, it is also very important to note negligence and adverse policies that have greatly contributed to the under-utilization of Nigeria's finite resources of both materials and human.

It was lastly observed that a simple majority of those involved in all acts of social vices are youths of working class desperate of getting quick money due to the clear uncertainty in the Nigeria's world of work on which the future of the trained minded youths depends.

The following recommendations were made in order to enhance the graduates youths employability in Nigeria. Initial, there are needs for close monitoring and regular reviewing of youth's unemployment issues since it is the ultimate vehicle for both public and private investment. Furthermore, the unemployed youths should be encouraged to reduce dependency on government jobs alone and be more engaged in other sectors like agriculture, vocational skills and others. Ultimately, the youth's employment should be prioritised and urgently addressed since it will result in improving quality of life, better health status, and facilitating higher salaries.

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