

## **Eradicating Unemployment and Poverty through Textile Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Economic Development in Nigeria**

**Nwaopara Jane Nwamaka**

Department of Industrial Design, School of Art, Design and Printing, Yaba College of Technology, Yaba, Lagos

E-MAIL: [jnwaly@yahoo.com](mailto:jnwaly@yahoo.com), [janenwaopara@gmail.com](mailto:janenwaopara@gmail.com)

### **ABSTRACT**

*Nigeria is a great nation endowed with abundant natural resources and population. These resources however are under-utilized and as a result of this, it has really affected the lives of people negatively, rendering them poorer every day. The unfavourable economic situation has driven many people into the labour market and has made it difficult for them to be employed. This unemployment has affected the unemployed individuals, the society and the economy of the nation and has resulted in abject poverty. High rate of unemployment and poverty level have robbed Nigeria citizens their contributions to economic growth and development. It is against this background that this paper takes a good look at "Eradicating unemployment and poverty through textile entrepreneurship for a sustainable economic development in Nigeria". The aim of this paper is to discuss how textile entrepreneurship could translate to eradicate unemployment and poverty and encourage a sustainable development. In addition, this paper explains what unemployment and poverty means, their causes and implication. It also highlights entrepreneurship and entrepreneur, enumerates the prospects of textile entrepreneurship, gives some recommendations and concludes by stating that emphasis should be laid on practical aspects of textile entrepreneurship so as to produce productive people who will be self-reliant, creating jobs for themselves and for others and as well contribute immensely to economic development of the Nation.*

**Keywords:** *Textile Entrepreneurship, Poverty, Sustainable Development, Self-reliant, Unemployment.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The issue of unemployment among the most productive section of the population is one of the greatest challenges bedevilling our nation. The prevalence of unemployment in Nigeria remains the greatest challenge confronting the government and the people today Udoh (2013). Taking the statistics of unemployment from the Nigeria Economic Fact Sheet released by United States Embassy in Nigeria (2012), Udoh (2013) points out that Nigeria's unemployment is concentrated in the younger age group with unemployment of 41.6% among 15-24 years old. The prevalence of unemployment, under employment and high competition in the labour market and the frustration job seeker cannot be over emphasised.

Nigeria is blessed with abundant natural resources and population and these however are under-utilized. There are so many available lands all over the country. Sambisa forest is one of the lands that are wasting. The government can utilize it for agriculture or use it to establish industries and universities. Plant fibres in the country have not been fully explored and thousands of

graduates are produced every year and all of them are in the labour market.

Looking at the situation in the country now, it is obvious that people are really suffering due to the negative drastic change (economic recession). People especially the poor are no longer happy simply because things are difficult. People are unable to make both ends meet and one would continue to wonder why all these challenges when Nigeria is one of the countries in the world that is blessed with abundant human and natural resource. Adeniyi (2011) confirms this by stating that "Nigeria is blessed with abundant natural resources including available land, tree, plant fibres, natural gas, petroleum lead, zinc, kaolin, gold, gemstones, graphite, marble, tantalite, uranium, salt, soda, sulphur" to mention but a few. He has it that Nigeria has intimidating credentials of which one of them is "greater agricultural potentials." Yet he is of the opinion that Nigeria has one of the weakest economy in the world and that she has lost decades of development as a result of slow economic growth. Because of this, resources are under-utilized; it has affected

adversely the lives of the people, rendering them poorer every day.

Poverty has been a threat to individuals and to national development. Buttressing this fact, Okoh, Udofia and Udofia (2013) assert that Nigeria ranks among the nations that are naturally endowed with both human and natural resources also that she occupies an enviable position in the League of Nations, yet poverty strives the land. Even though, efforts had been made to fight poverty, majority of people in the country are still feeling the impact of poverty and its inherent consequences.

Mbong and Nyanabo (2006) state that in Nigeria, various government have initiated poverty alleviation programmes which turned out to be at best palliatives, and at worst, the unusual government programmes that ended up as drainpipes on public coffers and eventually became failure. Oboh (2004) as cited by Okon et al (2013) indicate that successive Nigeria government, military or civilian have tried so many ways or the other, through different programmes, to address this menace but without much success. They are of the opinion that governance which relates to the establishment and existence of transparent and accountable institutions and practices with adequate capacity to develop public policies and laws that would enable a country to manage its market, political and social life in an open and just manner for the achievement of sustainable human development is lacking in Nigeria.

The objective of this paper is to discuss how textile entrepreneurship can lead to self-reliance which is the key to eradicating unemployment and poverty so as to attain sustainable economic development in Nigeria. Education is the greatest weapon to combat unemployment. When men, youths, women, students and children are given proper education/training on textile entrepreneurship, they will become self-reliant. In being self-reliant, they will also become employers of labour. When most people are employed, they will be able to provide their daily bread and their other needs thereby eradicating poverty in their lives

### **CONCEPT OF UNEMPLOYMENT**

Unemployment is a phenomenon that occurs when a person who is actively searching for employment is unable to find work. The health of the economy is often measured by unemployment and the most frequently measure of unemployment is the employment rates, which is the number of people in the labour force. Adeniyi

(2011) citing Gbosi (2006) defines unemployment as a situation in which people who are willing to work at the prevailing wage rate are unable to find job. According to International Labour Organization (ILO) (1996), Adeniyi (2011) pointed out that 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. To corroborate this definition, an unemployed person is one who is willing and able to work given the prevailing terms and conditions of employment but does not currently have a job.

### **CONCEPT OF POVERTY**

Poverty is a state whereby individuals and groups lack the essential necessities of life and are less privileged than other member of the society. Poverty is “the state of being in want of necessities, Okon et al (2013) opine that poverty in the generic term is a social, economic and political deprivation. From the view point of United Nations Development Programmes UNDP (2000), poverty is a state of deprivation of basic necessities of life. Akerele (2007) as referenced by Ogunshina(2013) states that poverty is pronounced deprivation in well-being and comprises many dimensions which include low income and the inability to acquire the basic necessity and services necessary for survival with dignity. He further states that poverty encompasses low levels of health and education, poor access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate physical security, insufficient capacity and opportunity to better one’s life.

From all that have been said one will easily conclude by saying that poverty is the state of one having little or no material means of surviving, that is, inability to provide the essential things needed from improving one’s life.

### **CONCEPT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

An entrepreneur is one who explores and exploits business opportunities to make profit, generate employment and create wealth (Ejikeme 2011). Meredith (1983) as cited by Ejikeme (2011) views an entrepreneur as a person who has the ability to see and evaluate business opportunities, gather necessary resources to take advantage of them and initiate appropriate action to ensure success.

There are so many meanings given to the word entrepreneurship. Ibrahim (2011) defines entrepreneurship as the transformation of an innovation into sustainable enterprises that generate values. He sees entrepreneurship as any entity, new or existing that provides a new

product or service that develops, produce or deliver existing goods and services at lower cost. Citing Gana (1995), he affirms that entrepreneurship is the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunity in an environment and be able to establish and run enterprises opportunities. Agreeing with the above, entrepreneurship is all about acquiring the skill to run a business.

## **CAUSES OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND EFFECTS**

Unemployment has been on the tremendous increase in Nigeria and this has resulted in so many social vices. Referencing Oluba (2010), Udoh (2013) states that the cause of this massive unemployment are a widespread liking for white collar jobs as well as the unemployability of our graduates. He is of the opinion that unemployment in Nigeria has been on the tremendous increase and is causing many social vices such as poverty, psychological problems of frustration, depression, hostility, suspiciousness of people, food insecurity, all managers of criminal behaviours and general insecurity of life and property particularly youth restiveness, Kidnapping and lately Boko Haram insurgency. To buttress this fact, Adeniyi (2011) has it that the causes of unemployment in Nigeria can be attributed to: faulty educational planning, rural-urban migration, retrenchment in the both public and private sectors in recent times, poor/lack of infrastructural facilities especially electric power supply.

When people are without job, they will be handicapped from doing and achieving so many things. Adeniyi (2011) from his own perspective opines that one of the serious consequences of unemployment is poverty and that it is one of the major problems confronting Nigeria citizens. The effect of unemployment cannot be over emphasised. It causes: Unhappiness, personal hardship, delayed of acquired but unused skills, delayed marriages and even broken homes. For this, more efforts have to be made to make sure that it is reduced to its minimal or be eradicated entirely.

## **CAUSES OF POVERTY AND ITS IMPLICATION**

The scarcity of human basic needs or the inability of one or society to acquire human basic needs for existence calls for serious attention; In view of this, Okon et al (2013) trace to various causes of poverty as: unemployment, population, exploitation, war, unhealthy environment, improper planning by the government and inefficient infrastructures. They also mentioned

some of the factors that can lead to extreme poverty: Natural disaster such as flooding, famine as a result of draught, earthquake, and windstorm. Again, they point out that the unfavourable government policies on immigration, land allocation; employment generation and general insecurity also aggravate poverty. In addition to the aforementioned causes of poverty, they also have it that societal attitudes and policies such as high interest rates, corruption, unequal distribution of natural wealth and incomes, unstable currency exchange hoarding and smuggling, also give rise to poverty. Insufficient facilities such as electricity, water, communication, and roads affect the cost of production which put the prices of goods and services out of the reach of common people, making poverty inevitable. Ogunshina (2013) from her own angle outlines the causes of poverty as corruption, bad governance, unemployment, low productivity, unfocused government policies, lack of effective skill training and failure to adjust or readjust when situation demands.

The effects of poverty are so many that it cannot be over emphasised. Poverty causes people to rebel against authority and contributes to crime in the society. Oludotun (2001) in Okon et al (2013) enumerates some of the products of poverty as increasing rate of crime such as armed robbery, "419", corruption, prostitutions, nepotism, drug trafficking and cultism. They are of the opinion that when people feel uncatered for, their loyalty and patriotism become shaky and the effect can only be imagined than experienced.

Poverty will definitely be eradicated if people especially the youths are provided with good jobs whether government or private to earn money and take care of their basic needs.

## **TEXTILE ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES**

Textile entrepreneurship will create employment for so many people in the country. Ogunbowale, M, Maiwada, S and Bello, K(2008), in Wali (2003), point out the fact that textile industries are the second largest employer of labour after the government and creating avenue for several to be employed.

To eradicate unemployment and poverty to its minimal, these textile entrepreneurial opportunities will avail to these:

**Weaving:** Weaving is a method of fabric production in which two sets of yarns are interlaced at right angles to each other. This is usually accomplished with hand or a powered

operated loom (for instance the Aso-oke of the Yorubas and Akwaete of the Igbos). Of all the methods of fabric production, weaving is the one popularly used and that is what most textile industries use in producing their fabrics.

**Tie dye:** Tie dye is a method of fabrics decoration whereby some paths of the fabric are tied and dyed in a desired colour to produce some effects on loosening the strings. Beautiful designs are achieved using different techniques of resist for instance, marbling, stitching, tying, folding, knotting to mention but a few.

**Batik:** This is another method of designing a piece of cloth. Paraffin wax is used to create designs on fabric and at the same time resist dye from penetrating into the created designs. Batik designs can be achieved using stencilling techniques, free hand drawing, tyjant or stamp. Adire eleko is also part of resist textile entrepreneurship. It has attracted merchandisers from different parts of West Africa especially in Abeokuta and Ibadan.

**Hand Screen Printing:** Designs are introduced onto fabrics using screen, squeegee and long smooth and padded table. The fabric is always stretched out flat on the long table with pins holding it all through before the designs on the screen are transferred to the fabric. Hand screen printing is equivalent to printing done in the textile mill but the difference is that machines print produce thousands yards of fabrics with limited space of time. Hand screen textile print can grow into large scale business if the entrepreneurs are encouraged.

**Knitting:** Knitting can be done by hand or manual machine. Most nursery primary and secondary schools put on customized knitted sweaters. This is achieved with a continuous interloped years.

**Finishing:** A finish is any process that is done to fabrics to change the appearance, the hand or the performance. This involves the starching, ironing and the packaging of the fabrics for sales or for gift items. Division of labour helps to facilitate production therefore, youths can take up any of these finishings as their job, to enable them be self-employed and at the same time become employers of labour.

**Textile Merchandizing:** Youths can be entrepreneurs in the selling of assorted textile materials to retailers and consumers by buying in wholesale prices directly from manufacturing companies. Other textile entrepreneurship are embroidery, appliqué, patch works, quilt works and fibre spinning. Growing and harvesting of

cotton and flax fibres can be an entrepreneurial opportunity for the youths. Cotton is the most important fibre for apparel fabrics and an important cash crop in more than 80 countries. Radolph and Lanford (2002) attest that cotton in 1999 met 54% of worldwide demand for apparel fibre. In addition, rearing of sheep especially the Merino breed for wool fibres will also create employment for people. This will give room for the production of natural manure for farmers, meat for food and Lanolin (natural grease) for cosmetics, drug and detergent industries (Igbo, 2013).

Most of these textile designs methods and techniques are suitable for house hold linens and soft furnishings like wall hangings, curtains, head and arm rests, table mats and table covers, foot mats, carpet and rugs. These can also be used to designs backdrops, towels, handkerchiefs, napkins, aprons, bed sheets, pillow cases and many others. Textile design is an ancient tradition of African people and the whole world at large. It is an instrument that has the potential for economic development, Nwaopara (2016). In support of the above, Olugbemi, Ajolu and Abubaka (2008) state that the textile business is a business that is profitable and relevant to the development of the economy. In addition to this, people who work in textile mills and fashion industries make a lot of money from the business. The locally produced materials and other textile designed products are greatly cherished when they are exported to European countries. Also, the income derived from all these will help to boost the economy of the nation.

These potential areas in textile are very much available to Nigerian youths irrespective of their area of study in the university. Nowadays most people do not practice what they studied because of the situation of things in the country. The labour market is now very competitive and for the youths to make both ends meet, these textile entrepreneurial opportunities are there for them to explore.

In addition to all these business opportunities discussed, the resuscitation of more textile industries (especially large scales) will provide jobs to people for instance engineers, administrators, labourers, textile designers, producers of raw materials and promoters of textile products. In support of this, Alesagba (2011) states that textile industries create more employment by enhancing other services such as real estate firms, lawyers, caterers, doctors and

other services such as banks, telecommunication firms, electric utilities and advertising firms.

If all these measures are well embraced, most people will have something doing to earn substantial income to take care of their basic needs. With these, poverty and unemployment will be forgone issues.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

For textile entrepreneurship to contribute to eradicating unemployment and poverty in Nigeria, the following should be put into consideration.

**Entrepreneurship Training:** Entrepreneurship training teaches entrepreneurial skills that will help people become self-reliant and employers of labour. Therefore entrepreneurial education on textile business opportunities should be made available to people with qualified personnel that can impact the appropriate knowledge so that they can identify their entrepreneurial skills and develop them. The development of entrepreneurial trait through education is very vital as this will enable one catch up with the high level of scientific and technological advancement and to be aware of the many entrepreneurial ventures that are available today and how best to exploit these opportunities for the good of man, Ejikeme (6).

**Fund:** Financial support should be embarked for textile businesses from government and private sectors. Banks should be encouraged to grant soft loans to enhance the growth of these textile businesses and ensure that the interest rate is low.

**Constant Power Supply:** People will be encouraged to work and not being idle. It will help them save money by not buying fuel for their generators. This will go a long way to reduce their cost of production thereby increasing their profits. So, there should be constant power supply to keep the business alive.

**Tax:** The government should give tax holidays and tax rebates to people. This will encourage their business to grow.

**Reviving textile industries:** The government should try as much as possible to revitalize our textile industries so as to assist in providing jobs for the youths and young graduates.

**Land:** Land is one of the factors of production. For effective production, Land (space) should be made available for people so that their businesses can expand from small scale to large scale. This is feasible because Nigeria is blessed with vast lands that are wasting.

**Patronage:** Nigerians should patronise indigenous textile fabrics and articles so as to encourage the producers.

**Raw Materials:** Government should encourage the growing of natural plant fibres and the rearing of animals especially cotton and sheep respectively. This will discourage the importation of textile fibres.

## PROSPECTS:

There are lots of prospects in textile entrepreneurship if people especially the youths are encouraged. There shall be high rate of employment, poverty eradication to its minimal, great decline of crime rate, security in the country, peace, joy, happiness and fulfilment in individuals and the nation as a whole, economic growth and development in the country.

## CONCLUSION

There is no alternative to improving the economic standard of the nation if the fight for unemployment and poverty is to be won. Promoting and embracing textile entrepreneurship (large scale and small scale) is one of the most practical measures by which individuals and societies can be self-reliant and employers of labour. When people are gainfully employed through these entrepreneurial opportunities, they will be able to take care of themselves and poverty will reduce to its minimal.

If emphasis is laid on practical aspects of textile entrepreneurship, self-reliant people will be produced; creating jobs for themselves and for others and as well contributes immensely to economic growth and development of the Nation.

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