Abstract

The rate of youth unemployment in Nigeria, no doubt calls for concern. Moreover, innovative and creative skills seem to be lacking among unemployed youths. Consequently, social vices in Nigeria such as armed robbery, extortion through blackmail, and kidnapping and most recently, internet fraud have become rampant. The lack of innovative and creative skills among most of the youth could be adduced to their foundation or upbringing in pre-primary and primary schools in Nigeria overlook the role of foundational creative and innovative skill development, hence the clustering of curriculum in pre-primary and primary schools. Currently, in a globally competitive world of ours, the average Nigerian child needs to explore his/her environment and be nurtured to think in a creative and innovative manner in order to globally compete favorably based on current national and global needs. Making use of secondary data, this study argues that the high youth unemployment rate in Nigeria could be traced to lack of proper curriculum development from the Pre-Primary and Primary schools. This paper posits that the best way to enhance creativity and innovation among the Nigerian youths is to expose them to acquire these skills from their Pre-Primary school education level. Among the recommendations is that there should be a review of the curriculum at the elementary level to minimize the curriculum contents and increase the co-curriculum activities. Emphasis on assessment of learning should be more on vocational skills acquisition than grading and certification.

Keywords: Creativity, Innovation, Curriculum Development, Cradle, Youth Unemployment.

Introduction

Youth unemployment in Nigeria remains a time bomb that opposes the developmental strides of Nigeria. It is a major social problem that gives birth to social vices in Nigeria such as gross inequality, low standard of living and increased poverty rate (Afolayan, Okodua, Oluwatoyin and Osobohien, 2019). Unemployment is described as a situation where a person is financially independent and does not engage in a job that yields positive economic returns. Uddin and Uddin (2013) reported that unemployment is a state of not securing and engaging in work or job of one's capability. According to Onu, Onwughalu and Chiamogu (2013), the rate of unemployment in Nigeria has built a paradoxical image of the nation when there is abundance of human and natural resources, yet poverty continues. Despite all policies and programs of the government, these social problems continue. The failure of these policies and programs suggests that the problem of unemployment in Nigeria has foundational undertone which could be traced to the education given from the cradle (Pre-Primary and Primary School). Onuet al. (2013) argued that the quality of education, unemployment and poverty rate are interrelated. Education increases the number of employable labor force, and reduce poverty in the society. This is why creative and innovative curriculum is very important at all levels of education, especially at the cradle, basically because not all families can afford to train their wards beyond primary schools.

Many of the graduates from Nigerian tertiary institutions tend to lack some basic skills that could give them the opportunity of employment. Some school leavers roam about in the streets without focus. This is largely due to the failure of the education system to provide creative and innovation driven curriculum for self-reliance from primary schools. The emphasis placed on certification for evaluation of intelligence and knowledge is more fascinating compared to skill acquisition. Little attention is given to free periods for teachers and students for creative reasoning and tactical application. This is further intensified by cluster of primary schools' curriculum. Thus, teachers work hard to cover the scheme of work and give little attention to individual student's needs and abilities that promote creative skills. According to Veilleux (2013), creativity is the ability to develop new ideas, possibilities where there is none. Creativity is the manipulative ability over ideas for a better result (VanTassel-Baska and Macfarlane, 2009). It is the ability that allows students to work out ideas independently under the guidance of the teachers. Students' independent work promotes self-realization and productivity as well as wage war against unemployment. Thus, to win the war of unemployment, practical measures must be taken in education. Therefore, the researcher reviewed
enhancing creativity and innovative skills among the Nigerian youths for global competitiveness: The role of curriculum development from the cradle.

Curriculum development and unemployment situation in Nigeria
Curriculum is a planned course of action that guides the activities of teachers and students in school. According to Ogwu, Omeje and Nwokenna (2014) curriculum is a planned and organized learning experience used in any institution of learning for the purpose of producing useful citizens. Curriculum is a dynamic and flexible document that guides planned transmission of knowledge from one person to another. Curriculum dynamism is a reflection of the dynamics of a society. Thus, curriculum is a reflection of the needs and wants of every nation. It contains planned and unplanned activities expected to engage students during the course of their educational carrier. According to Achimugu (2016), curriculum is the amalgam of learning experiences students get in schools under the guidance of teachers. This definition presents curriculum as a tool that determines what students learn in the school. It is the planned philosophy of a society (Ogwora, Gerishon, Nyamwaka and Nyakan, 2013). It guides the activities of teachers and students in order for the former to form the latter into becoming effective and useful adults. Therefore, the nature of the curriculum of every society determines its level of development and its citizens’ innovative and creative ability. The need of a society determines the level of curriculum development. Curriculum development is the systematic, intentional, planned and organized method of selecting learning contents, experiences and materials for improvement of learning. It is different from curriculum planning which is the act of producing a curriculum.

Unemployment is economic and social state where employable labor force is not engaged in any meaningful employment. It is a situation where employable population is not employed. According to Phillip, Amppilai and Gnanachandran (2013), unemployment is a social phenomenon resulting in a large number of labor force that are willing to work but do not find work for a living. One of the social implications of unemployment is poverty produce other social vices like prostitution, armed robbery, banditry and terrorism. Galadima (2014) grouped unemployment in Nigeria into two. The first group is older labor force who, through retrenchment and redundancy, bankruptcy or economic changes lost jobs. The second group is younger labor force, who has never been employed. Uddin and Uddin (2013), added that when the demand for labor force (irrespective of age) is lower than supply, unemployment sets in. These trends presents unemployment as a social, economic and political phenomenon where older and younger crop of labor force are unemployed.

Reports from the National Bureau of Statistics in the chart below reveal increasing trend of unemployment rate in Nigeria for four years. From 2014 to 2018, unemployment rate has increased from 6.4% in 2014, to 10.4% in 2015. From there to 14.2% in 2016, to 20.4% in 2017 and finally to 23.1% in 2018.

![Unemployment Rate - Q3 2018](chart-unemployment.png)

*Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2018)*
Creativity and innovation in primary school curriculum

One cannot create or innovate when one is not given the opportunity to create. According to Cambridge Assessment International Education, (2018), a school that promotes creativity and innovation goes beyond classroom teaching and learning to effectively manage time as they provide opportunities for pupils to explore their talents. In pre-primary and primary schools, creativity can be seen when children try to engage in either group or independent acts of problem solving, drawing different objects, and forging of songs. At that stage, every object is seen as a car or used to construct a car and sands are used to make houses. This is a sign of creativity. However, some of the potentials pupils have at this level of education tend to wither away after primary school largely because they do not have the opportunity to explore them due to clustering of the curriculum which the teacher must cover within the term.

Cluster of school curriculum therefore, presents teacher as a tale taller who runs fast to complete the subject scheme of work, and pupils in such class mostly regurgitate teachers' tales. According to Cambridge Assessment International Education (2018), any educational system that is successful at stimulating creativity and innovation in the learning process do well by valuing and appreciating learners' creative and innovative contributions. This trend does not operate with overcrowded curriculum. Creativity involves risk taking. It requires focused and determined mind to achieve success. As pupils mature and move through their school career, they become risk takers in different ways and do not entertain fear to take risks or make mistakes. However, in a situation where the curriculum encourages grading and positioning more than practical learning, pupils do not take risk and may not become creative. Pupils entertain fear to make mistakes when they receive recognition for answering teachers' questions rather than valid original thinking and ideas (Cambridge Assessment International Education, 2018). Ferrari, Cachia and Punie (2009) found out that the culture of one right answer in the teaching and learning process does best in stopping learners from being willing to make mistakes which will improve their creative and innovative ability.

Enhancing creativity and innovative skills for global competitiveness

The current changes in the world calls for innovative thinking education sector of nations. The promotions of innovation and creativity (invention) in schools have been on the lips of every successive Nigerian government. However, little has been achieved as government sees innovation and creativity (invention) as practicable only in senior secondary and tertiary institutions while the primary schools are neglected. According Sinay, Nahornick and Graikinis (2017), innovators and inventors rearrange methods, and the current data based on changes in the society with ability to find opportunities where others could not. The characteristics of innovators and inventors are high self-regulation, persistence, patient, resilience, confidence, high energy and risk taking. These characteristics could be innate, yet do not materialize when there is no opportunity. The primary school curriculum in Nigeria promotes theoretical transmission of ideas from teachers to the pupils. It does not prepare pupils to be innovators and creative individuals. The best place to lay foundation for creativity and innovation among the youth is at primary school education. This will make pupils to appreciate being self-employment and risk taking. There is the need to review curriculum of primary schools in Nigeria. Any process of creativity requires time and collaboration. Addition of more time for free periods in the primary school curriculum will promote creativity and innovation. This is because such time will permit teachers and students to engage in self-driven activities. The activities are initiated independently and individually too. Pupils explore their learning environment, manipulate objects and elements and ideas in innovative and creative manner to promote self-actualization, realization and self-dependence. Innovation signals changes or application of creative results and it relates to changes in doing something differently from the old ways (Fiberesima and Amadioha, 2016).

Innovation cannot take place without creativity. When there is no innovation, unemployment is imminent. Children are acquainted with skills needed for creativity and innovation when there is a review of curriculum. Creative and innovative skills permit them to globally and favorably compete and curtail unemployment rate. Jegede (2016), argued that no meaningful development can take place in Nigeria except when the Youth are seen as asset to invest in. Investment in youth can at best be done through education. Too do this, reforming primary school curriculum to fit into the current needs of the society is required. This is because, the road to curtailing unemployment and enhancing development in Nigeria starts from curriculum development at this primary education level for creativity and innovation. In this world of digital technology, innovation and creative skills are therefore very important. This is especially, because ICT has made the world a global village where both the economy and education of nations have been made easy through the use of information and communication technologies. The teacher in the primary school therefore, needs to be trained on how to use creative and innovative methods...
to enhance creativity and innovative spirit among the pupils for global competitiveness.

According to Cropley as cited in Sinay, Nahornick and Graikinis, (2017) teachers that foster creativity among the students are those that encourage students to learn independently, use a cooperative and socially integrative methods of teaching. Such teachers regard mastery of factual knowledge high. They accommodate both “sensible” and “bold errors” as courage and being right are rewarded. They promote self-evaluation mode, value students' questions, create enabling environment for working with varied materials under different conditions. They also assist students to learn and manage frustration and failure. This suggests that at the center of reforming the cradle school curriculum for enhancement of creativity and innovation, the teacher is a key player. This is largely due to the fact that he/she is responsible to a greater extent in determining the educational experiences of the learners (Amadioha, 2016). Thus, updating the teacher's knowledge and skills to meet current need of the society through in-service training will help them facilitate the inculcation of the spirit of creativity and innovation among the pupils.

Conclusion
Youth unemployment is a social problem in Nigeria that increase poverty, illiteracy, crimes and death rate. In spite of all economic policies, programs and schemes, little success has been recorded to curtail unemployment in Nigeria. Creativity and innovative skills are remedies for youth unemployment and lack of employable skills. However, youth in Nigeria are not exposed to acquire creativity and innovative skills during educational career. This paper concludes that the best way to enhance creativity and innovation among the Nigerian youths is to expose them to acquiring these skills from their primary school education level.

Recommendations
Based on the conclusion reached, the paper advocate for Curriculum development to minimize content and give more time to activity that promotes creativity and innovation. Teachers in the Pre-primary and Primary schools, should adopt constructivist mode of teaching. They should give every student opportunity to develop objects from their innate abilities. Finally, Emphasis on assessment of learning should be more on vocational skills acquisition over grading and certification. Teacher's training and re-training in the course of their job is also recommended.

References


