

Reducing Youth Unemployment, Underemployment and Poverty Level: Corporate Apprenticeship Programme [CAP] Route

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Abstract

The unemployment rate in Nigeria is put at 23.1% by the National Bureau of Statistics with the nation having 82.9 million (40.1%) of her citizenries living below the poverty line of N 137, 430 per year. The young people (aged 15-35years) are worst hit with an unemployment/underemployment rate of 55.4%. To create a basis for this work, interviews were conducted, and a questionnaire administered among 612 people, aged 15-34 years across three states in southwest Nigeria. Youth without skill and with informal skill accounted for 68.12% of the respondents, while unemployment and underemployment accounted for 62.6%. To mitigate youth unemployment and lack of skills, the paper proposes a Corporate Apprenticeship Program model. The proposed model has two entry points, one for a person with at least secondary education and the other for persons without secondary education. The apprenticeship's scheme will combine paid work with controlled on-the-job training and classroom-based associated technical instruction (provided by an institution) at the firm's premises. This will lead to either the trainee working for the firm after completing the program or setting up their businesses.

Keywords: Apprenticeship, Unemployment, Underemployment, Skill Acquisition

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Introduction

The population of young people (aged 15-35 years) in Nigeria is put at 55million by 2019 projections of Nigeria Population Commission. Youth unemployment -underemployment is one of the greatest challenging socio-economic problems confronting the nation. The result is alarming. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2020) executive summary, the national unemployment rates for the year 2020 is 23.1%, underemployment is 20.31% while youth unemployment-underemployment is 55.4%. This is literally saying that 30.47million Nigerian youth are either unemployed or underemployed. The general rise in

youth unemployment/underemployment has been somewhat dramatic. The young people are mostly affected by the increase in the rate of unemployment. Incidentally, this has been high in the last four years rising above 40%, there was a marginal drop of 3.28% between 2018 and 2019. In late 2018, the World Bank reported that Nigeria is the Poverty Capital of the World with 87% living in the north. Unemployment and underemployment are closely linked to poverty and the rise in the rate of crimes and criminality. Figures 1 and 2 show the unemployment and underemployment rates in Nigeria from 2014-2018 (NBS, 2018) and in 2023 (NBS, 2024).

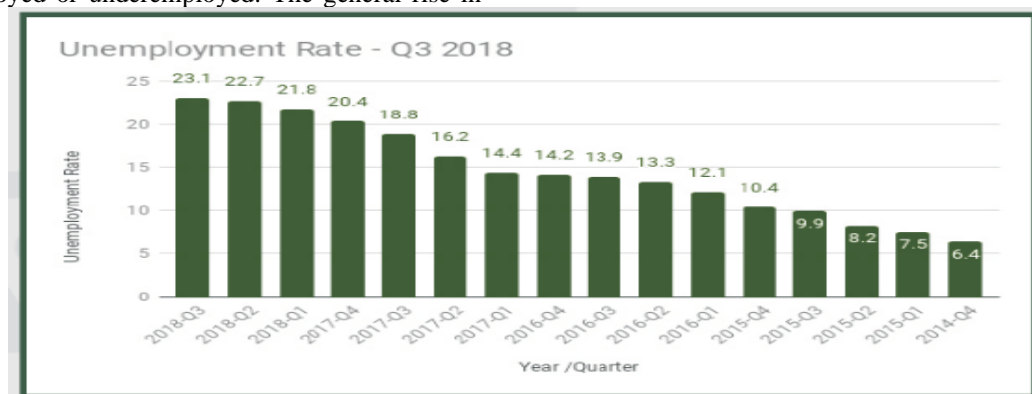


Figure 1: Unemployment Rate in Nigeria 2014-2018 (NBS, 2018)

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Figure 2: Unemployment and Underemployment Rate in Nigeria 2023 (NBS, 2024)

Explicitly, as regards the unemployed and underemployed within the age group, the available data gotten from the publications of the National Bureau of Statistics NBS (2018:1) showed that as at October 2019 in Nigeria, for young persons between ages 15 - 24 years and 25 – 34 years, the unemployment/underemployment rate was 58.6% and 45.1%. Persons with Post-Secondary school certificate or Graduates are mostly hit by unemployment recording 29.8% under educational grouping during the reference period. The youth population in Nigeria ages 15-34 have a combined unemployment and underemployment rate of 55.4% or 24.5 million (13.1 million unemployed and another 11.3 million underemployed). These are a major stakeholder in the project Nigeria and not only the future of Nigeria, but also a very valuable contributor in nation-building.

It is important emphasizing that unemployment and underemployment are worldwide issues (Churchill and Khan, 2021). Young people are disproportionately affected by this global challenge, whether in Africa (Page, 2019; Ampong, 2020; Donkor, 2021), America (Pastore, 2018; Bell, & Blanchflower, 2021), Australia (Sutcliffe & Dhakal, 2018; O'Halloran, D., Farnworth, & Thomacos, 2021), or Europe (Dietrich, 2012; Miyamoto, & Suphaphiphat, 2020; Heyes, & Tomlinson, 2021); however, national experiences differ in various ways. This obstacle involves the difficulties of entering the work market, being underemployed, and not obtaining stable employment. In Asia, however, many young people work for themselves (McKay et al, 2018; Sudan, 2021).

Economic crises during the within the last twenty years have resulted in an increase in structural unemployment, underemployment, and wage polarisation in the labour market (Lehmann, 2000; Bell, & Blanchflower, 2021). This has contributed significantly to young people's unemployment when businesses fail or downsize. Financial crises have a bigger influence on the youth unemployment rate than changes in GDP, and the impact on the youth unemployment rate is greater than the effect on total unemployment (Choudhry et al., 2012; Heyes, *et. al.*, 2017; Mathieu, *et. al.*, 2022).

Nigeria's economy is among the fastest-growing in Sub-Saharan Africa, but the country is finding it difficult to leverage its rapid expansion to expedite the decrease of poverty. Joblessness is one of the main effects of poverty (World Bank, 2016). In Nigeria, 133 million (63%) people live below the poverty line, which is N 1,430 (\$1) per day. There are also a significant number of underemployed and jobless people in the country (NBS, 2022). Poverty and unemployment are related, and they both serve as markers for issues facing modern society. The young of Nigeria are greatly impacted by the intimate relationship between unemployment and poverty. As a result, the effect has been particularly concerning recently, as it is increasing the rate of youth unemployment, which has reached an unsettling peak (Oduwole, 2015; Bello, & Fagbemi, 2023; Olubusoye, *et. al.*, 2023).

Youth unemployment is also influenced by educational attainment, especially for those who pursue post-secondary education. Early-stage unemployment was avoided. Conversely, people with lower levels of education were more likely to experience early unemployment. This is related to

mismatching employment and doing whatever it takes to live, among other things. It's possible that neither group attained the skills necessary for the job at the time. Young individuals may thus exhibit different aptitudes than what employers are looking for. The importance of domestic development in resolving youth unemployment cannot be overstated, since an increasing number of young and lively individuals are struggling to find job in the industrial and service sectors. Similarly, the rapidly increasing urban labour force as a result of rural-urban migration is making things worse in cities. Most of the impacted adolescents lack comparable abilities. Certain skills (bricklaying, carpentry, plumbing, etc.) are currently being filled in Nigeria cities by young people from nearby countries such as the Benin Republic, Togo, and Ghana (Idio et al, 2016). Work-specific talents, on the other hand, can be developed over time, often for many years, and employed only in certain occupations, depending on the work requirements (Pastore, 2018). Another factor is that young people who have trouble finding work eventually lose experience in the workforce that is appropriate for their age (Gregg, 2001), making them "unemployable."

The Integrated Sustainable Development Goals (iSDG)-Nigeria model and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) on the UN website, known as Vision 2030, were developed with the purpose of enhancing living standards and reducing poverty in the country. The aim that is most relevant to this text is number eight, which reads, "Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all." How can we promote, support, include, and ensure that everyone has full-time, productive jobs? One critical element to examine is the apprenticeship scheme. Apprenticeship is a lifelong endeavour. In a nutshell, apprenticeship is the process by which an experienced person helps a less experienced person by providing support, direction, and role models; as a consequence, the less experienced person learns new knowledge, abilities, and skills (Dennen & Burner, 2008; Soyemi & Soyemi, 2019). Prior to schooling becoming a university course of study and even before there were higher institutions, people used the apprenticeship plan to learn from more seasoned individuals. Comparably, competency-based education—which involves receiving instruction from a teacher with experience—has expanded globally and been used in engineering programmes among other subjects. Blandin, 2012.

Around the world, youth unemployment is a major problem that presents both economic and social issues. It transcends boundaries and nations. Many young people face obstacles that keep them from finding steady jobs that are fulfilling when they make the move from school to the workforce. There are

several facets to this issue, with policy, education, and the economy all playing a role in the high rates of teenage unemployment that are seen around the world. The following publications shed light on the difficulties it presents, its effects, and other nations' or individuals' efforts to lessen the hyper-hydrate monster known as "youth unemployment." In 2009, Fougère, *et. al.*, conducted the first extensive research of France, spanning 10 years (1990 to 2000), to investigate the impact of unemployment on violent and property crimes. According to information released by the Interior Ministry, crime data was gathered throughout the 95 metropolitan regions of France. In a similar spirit, methods were devised to ascertain the unemployment rate based on the French Labour Survey. The traditional Becker model was used to determine if the rise in crimes in France and the growth in the unemployment rate were related. Their findings indicate that there is a positive relationship between crime and unemployment, and that rises in crime are driven by increases in young unemployment. They also observed that unemployment is the primary driver of drug offences, burglaries, and thefts. To reduce crime, they proposed using all initiatives aimed at combating youth unemployment.

Alfonsi et al (2017) in a massive project that spans over four years on tackling youth unemployment in a low-income country, Uganda investigated 1700 workers and 1500 firms to compare the effect of engaging the workers on either vocational training (VT) or firm-based training (FT) for half-a-year in a typical setting where youth unemployment is prevalent and rises to 60%. It was discovered after three years of training of FT and VT that they (i) enjoy appreciable enormous and comparable upticks in sector-specific skills, (ii) meaningfully enhanced their expertise and (iii) had enhancements in their market value. They also discovered after the training that FT gains appear rapidly however reduces after some time, while VT gains develop gradually yet are durable, leading VT-trained workers engagement and earning profiles to transcend above that of FT-trained workers. They concluded that tackling youth unemployment by engaging them in vocational training before entering the labour market will be more lasting and reduces drastically youth unemployment and challenges associated with it.

All EU nations struggle with youth unemployment, and since the economy is losing its youthful talent, the issue cannot be disregarded or treated with patchy, ineffectual policies. In the exploratory research of Epure, & Barna, (2021) on characterisation of young people's unemployment in Romania and compare it to other EU countries considering the factors that shape trends, the economic environment, and the outlook for growth, as well as the features and

developments of the labour market. The descriptive statistics are used to portray the picture. It appears that

the primary reason of youth unemployment is a lack of skills and competences that companies now need, rather than a shortage of jobs. The study looks at the changes in the employment landscape, noting that while some job categories will shrink, others will clearly grow. Young people should be encouraged to pursue new avenues for skill development and to be receptive to the opportunities for formal and informal education.

Okafor (2011) conducted insufficient research on the effects of youth unemployment on Nigeria's democracy's stability. He emphasised that young people have a critical role in maintaining democracy since they are the country's future and are thus key stakeholders. The involvement of those who took comfort in the banding jobless kids is what makes democracy strong. He pointed out that Nigeria has a high rate of youth unemployment, which has a significant impact on the durability of democracy. His study identified neo-liberalism as the primary source of young unemployment in Nigeria, attributing it to social and economic upheavals. He goes on to say that a number of anti-social activities that take place within political parties—like fighting, militancy, thuggery, restlessness, and other social misdemeanours—require idle people, who are visible among the jobless, and this poses real risks to the stability of Nigeria's democratic system. In closing, he urged all parties involved to unite in the battle against the evil of youth unemployment. In the recent work of Olubusoye, *et. al.*, (2023), which looks into the types and reasons of young unemployment in Nigeria in an effort to provide evidence-based recommendations for policy. The findings imply that Nigeria's young unemployment problem is mostly structural, non-cyclical, and somewhat frictional. This might help to explain why, despite government efforts to address the issue, young unemployment in Nigeria is rising. The government concentrated on creating ineffective policies to address youth unemployment and rejected the idea that the problem was structural in nature. To address structural young unemployment, demand-side subsidy programmes and relaxing of fiscal and monetary policy are suggested remedies. The report also demonstrates the necessity of enforcing pertinent labour rules and regulations now in place in order to stop Nigeria's young unemployment and underemployment crisis.

Notably, 28% of young individuals in the workforce are officially classified as underemployed, working 20–39 hours per week, while 35% of Nigerians between the ages of 15 and 34 are jobless, eligible for employment, actively seeking work, or working fewer than 20 hours per week.

One of the biggest detrimental effects of young unemployment, as highlighted by Bagchi & Paul (2018), is involvement in terrorist acts within the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, and Pakistan

(MENAP). Their study considers teenage unemployment as a percentage of financial hardship, building on the current examination of studies that underpin psychological warfare. They specifically looked at terrorism in the Middle East and North Africa (MENAP) region and used negative binomial regression models to emphasise information on terrorist incidents that occurred between 1998 and 2012. They discovered in their exogenous model that whereas young unemployment increases domestic terrorism, it has a little effect on international terrorism. They used the death rate for children under five, foreign direct investment (FDI), and military spending as benchmarks for their endogeneity analysis. They found a number of causes for both internal and international terrorism, but youth unemployment was the main one. Their essay eloquently illustrates the harm that resulted from adolescent unemployment.

Awogbenle & Iwuamadi (2010) found that in many developing countries, talented young people with and without education are having difficulty obtaining paid employment. Their research focused on entrepreneurial development programmes as an intervention tool to alleviate youth unemployment. In order to increase youth employment and job creation, entrepreneurship is increasingly seen as a key way to create jobs and increase youth financial independence. They consistently disclosed that unemployment endures in spite of free trade (neo-liberalism), which is meant to increase human capital. The article addressed the barriers that prevent young people from seeking for non-existent employment, as well as the critical need to re-orient them on the importance of being self-employed and creating jobs for others through vocational and entrepreneurial training as an instant intervention mechanism. Furthermore, they suggest that supporting youth entrepreneurship would provide job possibilities, reintegrate marginalised people into the economy, address unemployment-related difficulties, develop new skills, inventions, and open up new economic prospects.

Dennen & Burner (2008) discuss the necessity of integrating the cognitive apprenticeship model into the educational system in their classic book chapter. Through a process of subjective and metacognitive skills and processes, pupils gradually study under an experienced individual through a process known as cognitive apprenticeship. They looked at terminology, historical background, and the foundations of cognitive apprenticeship. They proved that there have been successful outcomes from the

cognitive apprenticeship programmes implemented at all levels. The cognitive apprenticeship model is a precise representation of how learning occurs, according to pragmatic studies, and the instructional strategies gleaned from these observations of daily

life are embedded in informal learning environments that produce positive results. A clear appeal for a gradually organised and integrated programme of research advancing basic values to support instructional design, education, and learning depending on the cognitive apprenticeship model was made at the end of the chapter.

Looking at all of the reviewed studies and taking into account their strengths and weaknesses, the uniqueness of the Nigerian nation, and the thirst of the teeming youth, this study proposed a cognitive apprenticeship programme run by all companies with a staff of at least ten people, with the goal of the apprentice acquiring at least one skill for a long life of work. With this strategy, any unemployed teenager will be able to learn from a more experienced individual.

3. Methods

The method used in this study is a combination of interviews and administration of a questionnaire to determine the skill level of the youth aged 15 – 34 years. 612 young people responded to the questionnaire and participated across three states [Lagos, Ogun, and Oyo] in the research as depicted in Table 1 and Figure 3.

State	No of Respondent	% of Respondent
Lagos	301	49

Ogun	200	33
Oyo	111	18
Total	612	100

49% of the respondents are from Lagos State, 33% from Ogun State, and 18% from Oyo State. The survey is not gender or age group based, it only focused on youth with or without formal education. The respondents were selected randomly.

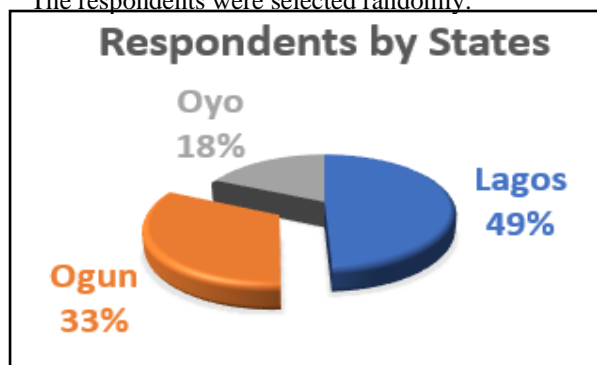


Figure 3: Chart Showing Respondents by States

The respondents were not classified by gender and the focus of the research was to explore apprenticeship programme at the corporate level.

4.0 Results and Analysis

The respondents are made up of 44 (7.2%) illiterates (never went to school), 78 (12.75%) primary school certificate holders, 100 (16.34%) with Secondary School Certificate (SSCE), 148 (24.18%) have National Diploma (ND) or National Certificate in Education (NCE), 222 (36.27%) with Higher National Diploma or First Degree and 20 (3.27%) with Masters or Ph.D. as shown in Figure 4. Table 2 gives explicit details about the total number of the respondents, their educational qualifications, and their level of skills acquired.

Academic Qualification	Without Any Skill	Informal Skill	At Least One Skill	Two or More Skills	Total
Never went to School	12	15	17		44
Pry School Certificate	10	22	42	14	78
SSCE	35	18	45	2	100
ND/NCE	101	11	28	8	148
HND/BSc	172	5	35	10	222
MSc/PhD	10	6	4	-	20
Total	340	77	171	34	612

The degree of skills that the youngsters have learned is one of the aspects that this study endeavour tries to look at. Table 2 provides information about the respondents' ability level. Young people with

informal and no skill made up 68.12% of the respondents. This number is concerning since it suggests that they will be jobless if they don't have a formal employment.

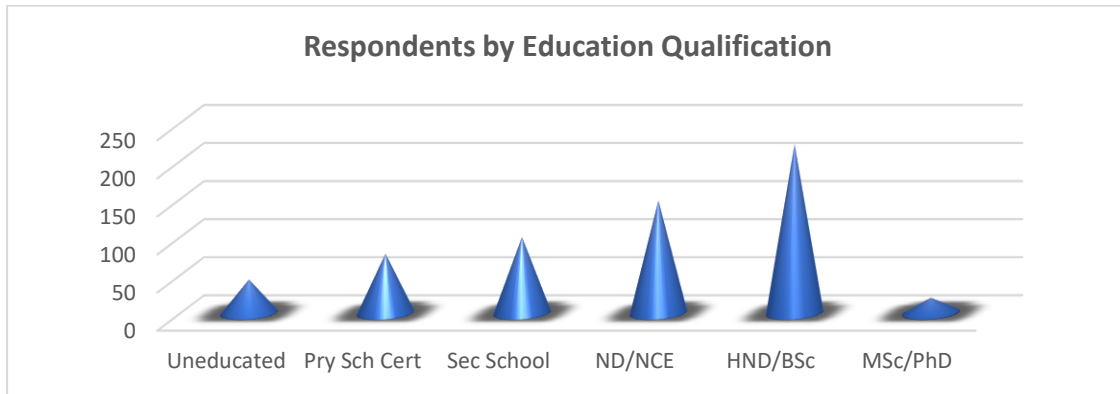


Figure 4: Respondents by Educational Qualification

Considering those with post-secondary school qualifications, the acquisition of skills is very low. This can be traced to their attending tertiary institutions. Interestingly, entrepreneurial education is being taught in most tertiary institutions but not all the students pay good attention to the instructions as

many said, they just want to pass. Also, most of the respondents said they were unable to set up the trade or business after learning them through entrepreneurial education in school. Table 3 and Figure 5 show the relevant skills acquired by these set of respondents.

Table 3: Relevant Skills Acquired

	School-based entrepreneurship education	Personal Arrangement	Total
ND/NCE	25	11	36
HND/BSc	22	24	48
MSc/PhD	2	2	4
Total	49	37	88

The majority of this group (76.84%) believe that while they are still in school or want to continue their education, they do not see the need to acquire skills throughout their studies. The truth that certificates

alone cannot help one in the labour market was revealed to those who dared to acquire any kind of talent throughout their job search.

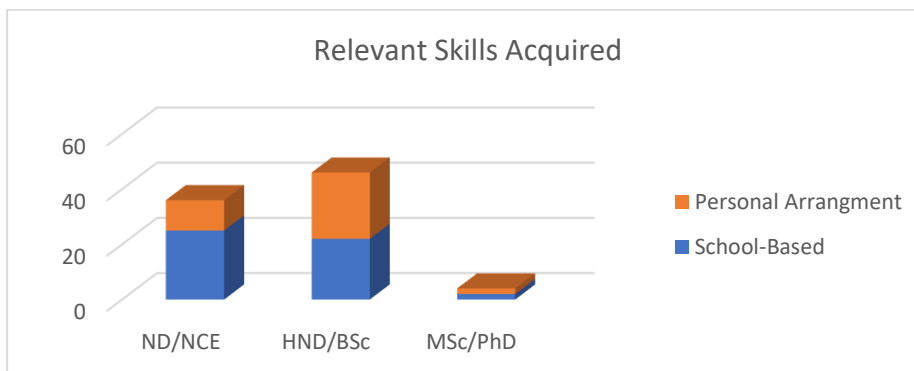


Figure 5: Relevant Skills Acquired at Post-Secondary School levels

The study also examined the unemployment rate among respondents. Table 4 indicates the respondents' job status. 37.4% are employed; 32.8% are underemployed; and 29.8% are jobless. This brought the overall number of jobless and underemployed to 62.6%. Some of the underemployed are graduates who work as instructors

in private schools or in other low-wage positions to make ends meet.

Table 4: Employment Status

Academic Qualification	Employed	Underemployed	Unemployed	Total
Never been to School	24	8	12	44
Pry School Certificate	62	6	10	78
WASC/SSCE	35	20	45	100
ND/NCE	35	21	92	148
HND/BSc	55	144	23	222
MSc/PhD	18	2	0	20
Total	229	201	182	612

Examining Table 4 closely, it is evident that, out of 222 respondents, those with a BSc or HND are most affected by underemployment and unemployment (75.2%). Which implies they will have to leave the employment market if they have learned any useful skills at all.

A formalised framework is suggested; to be known as Corporate Apprenticeship Programme, which would require all young people to learn at least one skill from an established organisation and require such

businesses and entrepreneurs to teach the participants and either engage them after the training or allow them to set up their own businesses. The majority of HND/BSc holders and Secondary School students who were unable to gain admission to a university are the targets. Additionally, each business will work with a local university or polytechnic to improve the training that its apprentices received.

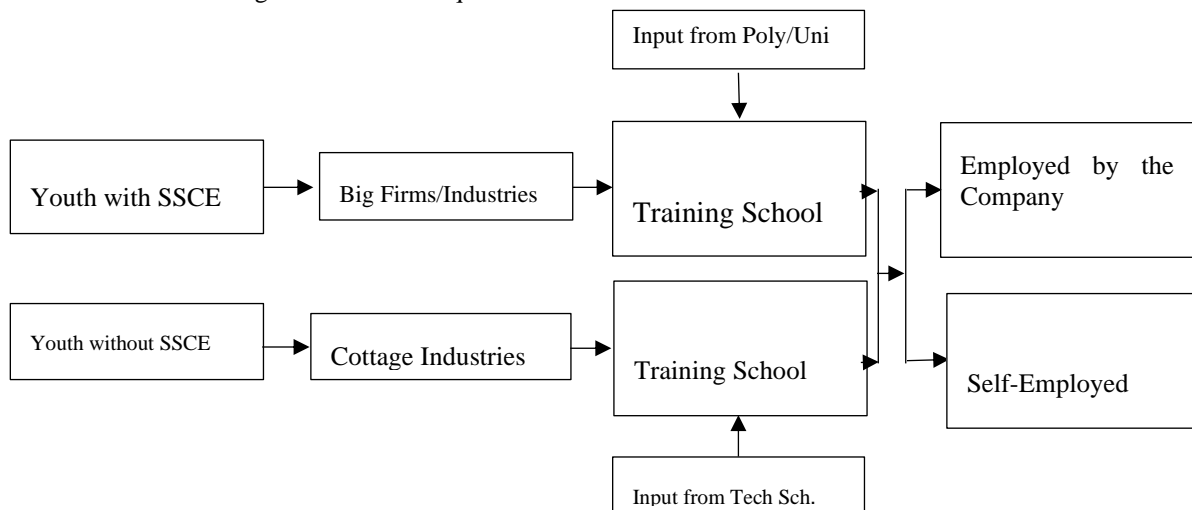


Figure. 6: Proposed Model for Corporate Apprenticeship Program

Figure 6 depicts the proposed paradigm in this study, which has three access points, one for those with at least secondary education and the second for people without secondary education. Those with a school certificate will have their apprenticeship programme in organisations or enterprises with more than 50 employees, whilst those without a school certificate will have theirs in cottage industries. Every major company would operate a training school in collaboration with a polytechnic or university. The training period would last four years, after which participants would be granted a NSQ/HND/bachelor's certificate/diploma/degree. Those with cottage training will complete at least two years of instruction before taking their trade exam. Those that ended up being self-employed will replicate the process by accepting unemployed youth into their organizations and training them again and again. The apprenticeship programme will combine paid employment with supervised on-the-job training and

in-person classroom teaching in related technical subjects at the company's location. Any kind of job experience that is done in the businesses will result in the acquisition of general competencies.

All the respondents, particularly those with tertiary education are sceptical about Government acceptance and supports, stressing that if adequate support comes from Government, many youth will embrace the CAP.

Conclusion

Anything that can be done to reduce youth unemployment and underemployment should be encouraged. The CAP Model, when adopted, will reduce the trend. One other thing to work out is acceptability by the people and this can be fostered by government continuous promotion of skill acquisition and supporting those setting up their firms. Invariably, this will lead to many Small and Medium

Scale Enterprises springing up, many more people will be employed and gradually, we would have a productivity-driven economy.

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