

Unemployment as an Inimical Index to Justice for Humanity: Esiaba Irobi's Antidote in *Nwokedi*

Rowland C. Amaefula
Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Ikwo

Abstract

*In every human grouping, there always exists the tendency towards the exploitation of man by fellow man. Regardless of form, the treatment of human beings as a mere means to an end, with feigned consideration for their well-being, has persisted till this present time. This ugly vogue manifests in various ways and plagues human society with grave adverse effects. One of such consequences is unemployment. This study examines the problem of unemployment in different periodical manifestoes of politicians, from a theatrical point of view. The analytical method of enquiry is adopted while Esiaba Irobi's *Nwokedi* constitutes the primary source of data. In the light of these, the study observes that the corrupt old generation of politicians in Nigeria is largely responsible for the high rate of unemployment in the country. They sacrifice the future of the younger generation, in order to perpetuate themselves in key leadership positions. It is in line with this observation that this study undertaken is to constitute a clarion call on all relevant sectors to make concerted efforts to overcome the unemployment challenge.*

Keywords: Unemployment, Drama. Theatre and Humanity

INTRODUCTION

The problem of unemployment in Nigeria is becoming unbearable; it is threatening both Nigerian citizens and the Nigerian economy (Olajide 1). An alarming rate of unemployment is being experienced on a daily basis as a result of the teeming population which our tertiary institutions churn out yearly. In recent times, securing employment is largely regarded as a miraculous feat. In order to address this problem, the government has established different self-employment schemes as part of the strident measures to curb the problem. For instance, at present, 'Entrepreneurial Studies' is offered by all students in tertiary institutions; government has equally been

striving to open up more opportunities for the private sector through its on-going privatization scheme.

In spite of all these efforts, unemployment remains a major challenge to Nigerians. It still persists in escalating proportions, probably because most of the government schemes can only accommodate a few number of unemployed persons. Again, those few slots are mostly given out based on tribal affiliations, 'god-fatherism', personal connections or outright patronage (Ituma and Simpson 17). The rising joblessness among Nigerian youths is a fallout of bad leadership. Most government policies do not consider the unemployed as those that need help. For example, the proposed bill to pay the unemployed some allowances for sustenance while they search for jobs was turned down by the House of Representatives in February, (*Channels* 1).

*Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Rowland C. Amaefula, Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Ikwo.
Email: emy4real2004@gmail.com.*

For these reasons, therefore, the researcher critically studies Esiaba Irobi's *Nwokedi* to examine the causes and consequences of unemployment in Nigeria. The purpose of the paper is specifically to critically analyse the text and suggest ways of curbing the problem of unemployment in Nigeria, using the theatre option. By so doing, the researcher justifies the dramatist as an individual who "...directs his artistic energies towards the elevation of the human condition" (Emasealu, 2010).

The Concept of Unemployment

Unemployment has been explained in many ways by different scholars of varying academic pedigrees. Onwukwe defines unemployment as "a situation which exists when members of the labour force wish to work at the prevailing wage rate but cannot obtain a job" (14). Onwukwe's definition implies that unemployment is generally used in the sense of involuntary occurrence, instead of the voluntary decision of an individual to choose leisure rather than work. Significantly also, it is deducible from the definition that the unemployed is the group of people who are not engaged in any employment and who are either in the process of moving to a new job or unable to find work at the prevailing wage rate.

There seems to be a consensus on the definition of unemployment. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines the unemployed as members of the economically active population who are without work but available for and seeking work, including people who have lost their jobs and those who have voluntarily left work (World Bank 63). In spite of the seeming convergence on the concept of unemployment, its application has been bedevilled with myriads of problems across countries. Some countries cater for the unemployed as vulnerable individuals while some others do not. In accentuating the vulnerability of the unemployed vis-a-vis government attention, Mouhammed informs as follows:

Unemployment is a difficult problem for many people and economies. The unemployed in many countries cannot perform their regular daily affairs and cannot satisfy their basic needs, because in those countries, there is no system of unemployment compensation (1).

He further illustrates it with the United States of America's experience, wherein the situation of the unemployed is still better, as they can receive unemployment benefits and are able to, "put food on the table and compel firms to create high jobs" (2). When unemployment occurs in a nation, "business enterprises slow down and government loses the supposed tax revenues of the unemployed citizens" (Mouhammed 3) and, thus, many national projects cannot be implemented, on the grounds of lack of sufficient fund. In other words, when the problem of unemployment exists in a nation, all agents suffer.

Unemployment has remained a common problem of different nations of the world. Unemployment appears to tie the global economy in general terms as the most crucial problem. Probably, until the advent of the global economic recession in 2008, countries' economies ranked alone as the top issue on the list every year. As evidence to the increasing concerns that unemployment has drawn since 2008, Öner states that:

At the peak of the worldwide recession that began in 2008, the International Labour Office announced that global unemployment reached the highest level on record. More than 200 million people, 7 percent of the global workforce, were looking for jobs in 2009 (1).

The assertion above suggests that it is not a coincidence that the global economy experienced the most severe case of unemployment during the worst economic

crisis since the great depression. In corroboration, Mouhammed asserts that “The American economy and many other economies in the world have been facing a very high rate of unemployment in the world” (9). He states vociferously that, “currently, the American rate of unemployment is about 9.1 percent and the Arab world is experiencing a rate of 23 percent” (9).

In Germany, “as reported by the Deutsche Bundesbank”, the unemployment rate “increased from 7.4 percent in January 2013 from 6.70 percent in December 2012 (*Trading Economics* 1). These resonate the fact that unemployment is on the increase in the world in general. According to Öner, today’s unemployment data debunks the recent claims that the euro zone crisis is over; “the highest rate was seen in Spain at 26.6%” (3). Continuing, he analyses the situation in other countries as follows: “The unemployment rate in Greece is 26%; France 10%; Hong Kong 3.3% and the United Kingdom 5.5%” (3).

Onwukwe posits that in a modern economy, the following types of unemployment can exist: Frictional Unemployment, which according to him, occurs “as the labour market receives new entrants who take time to sample job opportunities before making a final choice...” (97). Similarly, this type of unemployment can equally take place when a worker resigns his or her job to search for a better one. Typical examples of those that experience the Frictional Unemployment are people who change their jobs and fresh graduates from the universities or skill acquisition centres.

Structural Unemployment, as Onwukwe stated further, occurs when there are changes in taste and technology. “Changes in taste and technology render some skills unproductive; leading to the unemployment of people with such skills” (Onwukwe 97). Residual Unemployment results from the disability of the unemployed

while Casual Unemployment is usually experienced by those who do not enjoy any guarantee on their jobs. Ad hoc members of staff usually suffer from casual unemployment. Seasonal Unemployment, on its own part, “occurs in occupations affected by seasonal variations, e.g. agriculture and road construction” workers (Onwukwe 98). Furthermore, Cyclical Unemployment is experienced when there is an economic recession. Disguised Unemployment is seen in a situation where there is underemployment.

Any of the above-mentioned types of unemployment can wreck the human society. Unemployment can destabilize its victim psychologically and emotionally and, possibly, push him/her to unthinkable conducts. Therefore, it is the search for an achievable solution to the problem of unemployment in the Nigerian polity that necessitated this study.

Drama and the Issue of Unemployment in Nigeria

The dramatist’s choice of subject matter is a discretionary exercise. This arbitrariness in the choice of theme is predicated on the fact that the dramatist is a conscious critic of the human society. Being the societal watchdog, the primary assignment of the dramatist is :

...the liberation of the Nigerian spectators, on whom the Aristotelian and conservative theatre had imposed a finished vision of the world, which is the finished image and reflection of the oppressed and exploited class (Enna and Anyagu 85).

Drama is a veritable tool for examining issues that discomfit man in his immediate environment. Dryden states that a play ought to reflect, “the passions and humours and the changes of fortune to which it is subject to for the delight and instruction of mankind” (qtd. in Nwabueze,

Studies 47). Thus, the evaluation of unemployment, using the instrument of drama can be justified, considering that:

...it is the dramatist's duty to sift out information and bring social culprits to the people's court... the court (is) the open theatre where the hidden, the concealed and the guarded are exposed, not for the people's pleasure but for their information and necessary action (qtd. in Atakpo and Umana 74).

The foregoing justifies drama as a veritable platform for tackling social problems. In this section, the scholarly opinions of different playwrights on unemployment are reviewed. In *Once Upon Four Robbers*, Osofisan presents a society where citizens resort to daylight robbery on account of unemployment. Yet, the society (of the drama) recommends the execution of the robbers (not provision of employment!) as a solution to armed robbery. This is akin to the current practice in contemporary Nigeria, where lawmakers promulgate death penalty for abductors, without investigating the (most probable) root of the problem – unemployment. Osofisan identifies three symbols as the major sources of injustice against man in Nigeria: school, church and family. This is captured in Hasan's line of dialogue, thus:

Hasan: Teacher flogged us at the writing desk – remember his Tuesday specials, when he always came dressed in red? Reverend flogged us with divine curses at the pulpit, the light glinting on his mango cheeks like Christmas lanterns... and poor Mama, she laid it into us routinely behind the locked door, her work-hardened palm stinging even sharper than whips... *so that afterwards the grown man can crawl the street from month to month on his belly, begging for work, for a decent pay, for a roof, for a shelter, from the*

pursuit of sirens? (Osofisan 72; my emphasis).

Armed with the technique of Yoruba storytelling tradition, therefore, Osofisan exploits an open-ended resolution that encourages audience participation. In effect, the debate on who should be blamed for the injustice (of unemployment) against poor masses in the country rages on, even beyond the theatre. In lending a voice to this debate, Adeyemi emphasizes “the responsibility of government in turning people into victims, in creating the social conditions” (12) that make social vices flourish. He goes on to express “the contributory role of the society in fostering the conditions that breed criminality” (Adeyemi 15). Continuing still, he states that the main consequence of injustice against humanity by the society “...is to defeat and permanently keep the people ‘colonised’, preventing them from gaining knowledge and power and ultimately pushing them to revolt” (Adeyemi 15).

The authorial position in the play is that the society metes out unemployment and poverty to its people. Consequently, the people end up rebelling against society by indulging in anti-social activities. This line of argument reveals that armed robbery, abduction, etc. are all fallouts of unemployment and other injustices meted out against the ‘massified’ wretched of the earth. Therefore, enacting decrees of public execution for armed robbers or even abductors cannot resolve the issue. Only justice can.

Comparable to Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* is Irobi's *Hangmen also Die* wherein seven Nigerian graduates with varying academic degrees (including Ph.D.) have metamorphosed into terror in their neighbourhood, on account of unemployment. They once hoped that life would get better, but such hope vanished too soon as frustration accosted them severely. According to them:

Acid: ...Then the years went by and we graduated.

Dayan: (*Turns*) And we started looking for jobs.

Chorus: No jobs.

R.I.P.: (*Vehemently*) We have no jobs.

Acid: Therefore we have no money.

Dayan: Which means we cannot marry.

R.I.P.: And consequently cannot have children.

Chorus: We are the rejects of the world...

Chorus: Our job in this nation is to look for jobs (Irobi 45-46).

The excerpt above highlights the dangerous effects of unemployment as a form of injustice to the human race. It calls our attention to the fact that the unemployed is an incapacitated fellow who has no future. In affirmation to the views of both Osofisan and Irobi, Mouhammed maintains that:

Unemployment is a difficult problem for many people and economies. The unemployed in many countries cannot perform their regular daily affairs and cannot satisfy their basic needs, because in those countries, there is no system of unemployment compensation (1).

He further asserts that in the United States of America, the situation of the unemployed is better because they receive unemployment benefits and are able to, "put food on the table and compel firms to create high jobs" (2). When unemployment occurs in a nation, "business enterprises slow down and the government loses the supposed tax revenues of the unemployed citizens" (Mouhammed 3). As a result, many national projects cannot be implemented, on the grounds of lack of sufficient fund. Indeed, when the problem of unemployment exists in a nation, all agents suffer the menace.

Miller's *Death of a Salesman* x-rays the consequences of unemployment in a capitalist economy. It captures Willy Loman as a person who ".....believes that achievement of material success is the only way through which an individual can achieve love" (Nwabueze, *The Polemics of the Dramatic Text*, 355). His inability to measure up with this standard coupled with disengagement from workplace worsens his condition in the play. Therefore, his unemployed situation, which coincides with the time he is drowning with financial responsibilities, cannot be extricated from playing a contributory role in his eventual tragic fall.

Okoh traces the problem of unemployment from the perspective of ignorance on the part of the interviewees. In *Who is Afraid of Job Interview*, she discloses that graduates of tertiary institutions lack the requisite knowledge on how to conduct themselves in order to achieve success in an interview. The play elevates candidates' preparedness for interview to the same pedestal as intellectual prowess in their chosen field. According to Moses, a character in the play, "Job interview requires more than intelligence. You need to acquire certain basic tools for handling the process" (Okoh 7).

Ohiri's *Fire and Hire* re-echoes examines the causes of unemployment in Nigeria in a scene where the unemployed vent their frustrations on the Commissioner for Employment. Thus, the conversation goes:

Vincent: Mr Commissioner sir, we are not happy with serving our fathers. At times, they sit tight to reserve positions for their children who are yet to come out of school or apprenticeship...

Eric: When they want to employ, they take bribes and charge exorbitant fees... the kind of money that the unemployed cannot afford.

All: Greed!

Tina: Sir, they make nasty demands from us, female applicants without minding their ages...

Kate: When they manage to give us the job, they hire and fire us at the same time to keep the positions open so that they can earn money in two capacities – at times, acting allowances and overtime... (62).

The dialogue above reveals that unemployment in Nigeria is a generational problem. The old generation, who easily gained employment, now makes it difficult for the younger ones; they reserve the vacant posts for their family members and cronies, regardless of their competence. Hence, the terms 'god-fatherism' and 'connection' are now used to designate such unfair practices. Those who have no such connections therefore constitute the bulk of the unemployed in Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that the researcher examines Esiaba Irobi's antidote for unemployment in *Nwokedi*.

Theoretical Framework

This study is situated within a radical theatre ideology, as advocated by Saint Gbilekaa, which holds that:

Beginning from the seventies, plays were not written for entertainment alone. The Majority of them were written to express certain ideological positions or condemn decadent socio-political practices. Thus, Nigeria's theatre...bears a mark of ideological commitment and patriotism. It transcends mere protest as it abandons the esoteric banalities of glorifying tradition. Even when it makes use of them, it is from the subversive perspective, squeezing it to make meaning for contemporary existence (Gbilekaa viii).

The foregoing is akin to the Brechtian notion of drama as a medium of entertaining the audience with solutions to their problems. His opinion is that theatre should be employed as a tool of conscientisation rather than as an avenue to harvest feelings and deep emotions. He, thus, avers that discussion of social realities makes theatre "...to edge as close as possible to the apparatus of education and mass communication" (237). It is important to point out that the Brechtian theory is a theatre arm of Marxism. The analysis of *Nwokedi* therefore draws its strength from the line of thought expressed by the Marxist Theatre of Bertolt Brecht. This paper examines the roots, the economic and social core of the problem of unemployment in relation to the connotative essence of the traditional rites of Osisioma people – the setting of the play. Beyond the satirical content of the play, it shall be viewed as an embodiment of the exposures of and the probable solutions to the problem of unemployment in Nigeria.

The Synopsis of *Nwokedi*

Irobi's *Nwokedi* is a reflection of the post-military government that reigns in Nigeria till date. The domineering idea is that of revolution while Osisioma and Bakalori (all in Nigeria) constitute the settings of the play. Having succeeded in politically defrauding the masses for a long time, Nwokedi Senior and Arikpo, his in-law, meet a bloody resistance from the youths who are determined to bring to an abrupt end, their exploitative and unproductive regime. Nwokedi, son of Nwokedi Senior, defies the family sentiments that ordinarily ought to quench his revolutionary appetite, and orchestrates as well as executes the eventual beheading of Nwokedi Senior and Arikpo, as a parting gift for the old year which the Ekpe festival – their cultural festival – celebrates. The revolution sweeps across the nation, as the military intervenes in a military coup and holds on to power, in the interim.

Esiaba Irobi's Panacea for Unemployment in *Nwokedi*

Irobi points out bad leadership as the major cause of unemployment in Nigeria. In *Nwokedi*, he demarcates the characters into predators and their prey – the rulers and the ruled. The Unemployed Youths Association in Ugep, whom Arikpo describes as “pieces of dirt” (Irobi 3), and then Nwokedi and his Ekumeku group of Osisoma all constitute the toiling ruled. On the other hand, Senator Arikpo and Nwokedi Senior represent the rulers. The playwright presents the ruled as innocent victims of the rulers; the rulers being unrepentant plunderers of the people's commonwealth. This is confirmed in Arikpo's first entry and the narration of his awful experience in the hands of the Unemployed Youths Association. He attempts to justify his actions by describing the youths as a troublesome bunch of lazy people who easily take to violence, rather than reason and/or dialogue. However, the playwright discloses that prior to the youth's attack on Arikpo, they had opted for dialogue by writing him a letter. In their letter, they urged him not to campaign for a second tenure, since he did not fulfil his campaign promises of providing them with jobs, in his first tenure. Unfortunately, Arikpo “ignored their lousy letter and campaigned” (p4).

Implicated in the foregoing is that the majority of Nigerian politicians wish to hold onto power for a lifetime, despite their incompetence. They cash on the gullibility of the ruled and erroneously believe that fresh promises on provision of jobs for the youths during each campaign period would renew their hope of having jobs. This informs Senator Arikpo's blatant rejection of the peace path – the letter. He only realises the extent of the youth's anger when they attacked and nearly lynched him. This can be interpreted as the playwright's recommended approach of solving the problem of unemployment in the country. Indeed, he depicts rebellion as the best

method of shocking the corrupt politicians out of their cocoon of contentment.

Furthermore, the playwright perceives unemployment as a generational problem. The corrupt old generation as represented by Senator Arikpo and Nwokedi Senior have usurped all the opportunities of The Unemployed Youths Association in Ugep. Yet, they insist on retaining political power at all cost. In exposing Nwokedi Senior's reliance on voodoo to ensure his men's loyalty, the playwright suggests that the younger generation should do away with the older generation, in order to claim their future. Therefore, through Mrs Nwokedi's re-enactment of Nwokedi's message to the youths during his father's campaign, the dramatist re-echoes the need to give the younger generation a chance, thus:

My generation, we are the only possible alternatives. We are the last human frontiers to the marauding monsters and bleating beasts devouring our lives daily. We are tomorrow. In our hands are the bastons of our destiny. In our arms are the banners of a rumped future. Between our fingers burn the tapers and the flames of a new life. In our eyes gleam the light of dawn. We are tomorrow and tomorrow is us... we shall now select somebody, a younger man with a virile vision to represent us at the parliament (pp11-12).

The above speech, undoubtedly, captures one of the core themes of the play – the innocence of the younger generation. Importantly also, the speech re-echoes the dramatist's portrayal of the issue of bad leadership in the country as a generational problem. Therefore, he urges the youngsters to violently take over from the old generation. This position is underscored by the playwright's choice of Nwokedi, a

revolutionary-conscious corps member, as the protagonist and authorial voice.

To actualize the revolutionary scheme of ending unemployment, the playwright weaves it with the strands of an oxymoronic cultural festival – Ekpe festival. This festival coincidentally celebrates the birth of a new year through the death of an old one on the 31st December of every year. If truly metaphor “entails the suppression of the connectives”, then it follows that Ekpe festival is a metaphorical representation of the dramatist’s artistic vision (Maduka and Eyoh 44). In addition, the festival cannot possibly be reduced to a mere ritual, but a traditionally valid vehicle through which the Ekumeku can prosecute their revolutionary agenda. The festival resonates the need to create employment for the youths by flushing away the corrupt old generation. This fact is buttressed by Mrs Nwokedi in the following lines:

Mrs Nwokedi: Today is 31st December. The old year dies today. It dies with its thousand calamities. It was an evil year. A year in which the rafters in our barn were filled with shrivelled tubers and the husks of life (p16).

The excerpt above highlights the unproductive leadership of the old generation and the preventable hardship it has inflicted on the populace, especially the youths. Therefore, the playwright’s recommended murder of Nwokedi Senior and Senator Arikpo is an implicit call on Nigerian youths to rise above sentiments and overthrow the looting leaders that have ravaged their future.

Beyond the above, the playwright, using various means, ensures that all through the play, the bloody approach to effecting social order looms large in the background. In Bakalori, the NYSC Orientation Camp, Habiba paints white waves and red shores; “the white waves are

washing away the red shores” (p35). Undoubtedly, this image reeks of turbulence. Metaphorically therefore, the dominant idea is not necessarily the waves, shores or beach, but the playwright’s vision that the innocent (as represented by white (purity)) should do away with the corrupt (as represented by red (danger)). This metaphor is in tandem with the oxymoronic undertone of the Ekpe festival, which emphasizes the death of the old year as a pre-requisite to the birth of a new year; a new dawn. In essence, the relationship of this stance to employment generation is that the younger generation must create employment for themselves by forcefully displacing the fraudulent old generation.

The playwright’s graphic attribution of innocence to the youths should not be misconstrued for an act of absolving them of any sin. It is rather meant to contextualise their roles in the current decadent social structure – they are undeserved victims of the system which the older generation of leaders polluted; they are usually described as half-baked and unemployable even as they have no hand in weakening the tertiary institutions that produced them; ultimately, they did not cause themselves jobless!

Political patronage, in the opinion of the playwright, introduced unemployment in the country. This is demonstrated in Senator Arikpo and Nwokedi Senior’s failure to demonstrate contrition for their exploitative leadership, when political clemency seems to come their way. Instead, Senator Arikpo congratulates Mrs Nwokedi for ‘stemming’ the revolutionary appetite of the youths, and assures her that he “can find a job or two for the leaders of Ekumeku within our party” (p55). This is comparable to the current vogue in Nigeria, where the key members of murder organisations are handsomely rewarded, in the guise of ‘monetary’ amnesty. Senator Arikpo also promises to intimate their party chairman that they still “have a lot of political leftovers to compensate. We can employ them in the

state farms” (p67). Implicit in the foregoing is the revelation that provision of employment lies in the hands of debauched leaders who would ordinarily not do it.

This makes it strikingly obvious that any attempt to forgive exploitative leaders grants them a fresh opportunity to loot more. They rather would use such grace to fortify themselves the more and, possibly, exterminate their critics. This is evident in Arikpo’s use of Ezinna, his wife and Nwokedi’s sister, for spiritual fortification only “because she insisted that this senatorial obscenity should stop importing guns into this country” (p62). Therefore, Irobi equates forgiveness to religious docility, thus:

Mrs Nwokedi: God will act on our behalf... He is taking His time, Nwokedi. God is neither rash nor foolish. Look, if it is true that Arikpo murdered your sister and her three children, God will definitely unleash the twelve plagues of Egypt on him.

Nwokedi: Mother, I will not wait for God... because when man waits for God to act and God does not act, man takes up the role of God and acts. That is why he created us in his own image. (charges furiously) That head-hunter and his generation have been a pestilence on the political landscape of this country for four years now, why hasn't God wiped them out? I must spill his blood (p85).

To execute the bloody cleansing of Osisioma land, the members of Ekumeku “bring out the body-piece mask and dress Nwokedi, tying the three lengths of cloth around his waist, and across his chest like sashes” (p85). The connotative essence of decking Nwokedi in traditional regalia testifies that the revolution for which he is dressed to carry out, enjoys widespread communal cum spiritual backing. Hence, his

revolutionary consciousness swiftly transcends the physical, as he becomes possessed to be poised for action. In corroboration to Nwokedi’s deification, Ufo Bearer highlights this fact as follows:

Ufo Bearer: Nwokedi Nwa Nwokedi: You are a spirit. We made you a spirit. But at this hour, as you cross the spill of blood, you will become a god. And like a god, you will walk the earth. With your naked feet, you will stomp the barren soil until it stirs with the greenness of a new life (p91).

It is in this deified state that Nwokedi beheads Nwokedi Senior and Senator Arikpo. The execution of these representatives of corrupt leaders symbolises a sure end to corruption and its numerous consequences. Importantly also, this act by Nwokedi can be termed the peak of patriotism – slaughtering his corrupt family relatives (father and in-law) to achieve a society where employment of youths can be guaranteed. It is the playwright’s implicit challenge for Nigerian youths to rise above sentiments and strive for a society where employment shall no longer be regarded as a miraculous feat!

IMPLICATIONS

This study examines the issue of unemployment in Nigeria, from a theatrical point of view. Through nuanced textual analysis, the study uncovers that majority of Nigeria’s political leaders are not committed to providing jobs for jobless youths in the country. In the light of this, the researcher makes the following suggestions: the current trend of investing heavily in politics and elections should be discouraged. National resources should re-directed towards the establishment of manufacturing firms that would require the services of the unemployed youths; government should establish a social security programme to ameliorate the hardship faced by the

unemployed until they are able to secure employment; the overly emphasis on applying the Federal Character principle in the selection of individuals for employment should be discouraged. Emphasis should be placed on competence over and above Federal Character Principle; there is the need to mechanize agriculture in order to encourage mass participation of youths in it; finally, the current emphasis on embedding entrepreneurship in the University education curriculum should be sustained and extended to secondary school curricula to enhance the training of students with practical matching skills that are desirable in the labour market.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the problem of unemployment in Nigeria. Through textual analysis of Esiaba Irobi's *Nwokedi*, it is revealed that unemployment in Nigeria is a generational problem that has been created by leaders whose main interests are wealth and power. Rather than fulfilling campaign promises by providing jobs for the youths, such political leaders focus on becoming aggressive billionaires. This is to the detriment of the youths. It constitutes injustice to humanity. Therefore, the researcher aligns his vision with Irobi's recommendation that the youths should assert themselves by demanding good governance with emphasis on the provision of employment opportunities.

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Rowland C. Amaefula received his Master of Arts (M.A.) degree from the University of Port Harcourt. He was also the overall best graduating student of the University in 2014. He is currently an Assistant Lecturer at Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Ikwo. His research interests include dramaturgy, sociology of drama, film criticism and dramatic criticism. Amaefula is also a playwright and poet.
 Email: emy4real2004@gmail.com.

