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### Technology, Development and Unemployment in Africa

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**Abstract:** History tells us of the 18th Century Industrial revolution, which saw the invention and introduction of Cotton engine machine in replacement for manual labour production of cotton which subsequently led to the retrenchment of mass labourers and employment of youths in place of adult family men and women, leaving the family institution totally broken. This was the experience of 18th Century Europe. Today we are faced with such experience in Africa. This may not be unconnected with the African experience after the resultant effect of the scramble for Africa, colonialism and cultural imperialism. Today African societies are developing at the pace of European technology and advancement thereby creating a huge vacuum of socio-economic and technology growth leaving African societies totally dependent on Europe for practically every implement for survival and consequently, lack of initiation, creativity and unemployment. This paper examined the nexus between the problematic scenario described above, the challenges of Africa's development in the face of the above and the implications of the unemployment situation it created in Africa. The paper recommend that it is high time Africans at home and in Diaspora come together to building local technology that will advance the societies of Africa and implicitly creating jobs for the teeming unemployed Africans.

**Keywords:** African societies, Unemployment, Technology, Growth and Development.

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## INTRODUCTION

The 18<sup>th</sup> Century Europe witnessed massive socio-economic and cultural change as a result of Industrial revolution that saw major cracks in the various socio-economic institutions in her various societal structures. Today we are experiencing same exact situation in African such that the people of Africa have been affected terribly by their various experiences. As an instance, the scramble for Africa saw the division or partitions of Africa into units. This affected the culture and way of life of the entire people of Africa and the implications are still living with us till today.

Specifically, the French system of assimilation, absorbed the French African Colonies into their culture and introduced the people into who they are not while the indirect rule system of the Colonial British influenced the English Colonies' culture via the change of their food and in most societies their dressing culture. Thus, today as we can see most societies in Africa are cultureless especially technology-wise and as such depend on Europe for their daily technology needs.

## ASSIMILATION AND ACCULTURATION

### Acculturation

This was a strategy used by the colonialist. In the writings of Beny (1990) acculturation is defined as

“the changes an individual experiences as a result of being in contact with other cultures, or participating in the acculturation that one's cultural or ethnic group is undergoing”. This is the exact experience that African societies went through after the dawn of the scramble for Africa and consequently their colonization.

### Assimilation

This was a calculated programme designed by the French colonialists to integrate the native Africans into the French system with the aim of a total change of the way of life of the people into a designed way of life or better still a change of the African people's way of life or culture into the French culture. This was not well intended for the Africans but a grand design to tactically obliterate their rich cultural heritage so as to subtly annihilate and subjugate them into a dependent status and position in the global system.

### The Scramble for Africa

The scramble for Africa in the 1880-81 totally disorganized the primitive societies of Africa. This is so as we had different Nations (Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Sprain) which had different cultures, language and different ways of life scrambling and breaking up African societies into fragments and influencing the people with their own ways of life. It is important to note that these countries were not scrambling for African nations for Charity as earlier

indicated but rather for the show of power and supremacy within European Power blocks and for their selfish economic gains. At that time acquiring territories was a show of prowess, pre-eminence, domination or national power. The cumulative effects of all these activities altered the psychology and especially the culture of the people of Africa. The act of African acculturation of western culture altered the human identity of the Africans, such that the psychology of the average African became re-programmed to look outside his or her shores for their daily needs. This therefore resulted in the killing of every spirit of advancement, initiation and the need to look within or improve the traditional technological tools of survival.

Africa is considered by most paleo-anthropologist to be the oldest inhabited territory on earth with the human species originating from the continent (Wikipedia, 2019). If this is true and by any means then, under-development should not be attributed to Africa; science and technology should not also be a dream or aspiration for African societies but should have been a way of living. Therefore there has to be a better explanation for the lack of growth in all human spheres in Africa which finds expression in her colonization and the activities of their colonial masters.

### **Growth and Development**

In Africa and shamefully too, it is an act of development or modernization when you act like a European, or rather when you lead a life that can be called a modern way of living that is what the modernization theorist explain as modernization. In other words when the social institutions in a society is consciously altered by another society or influenced by another society the dominated society is regarded as a modern society. This is the unfortunate situation African nations have found themselves. We need as a precursor to have a clear understanding of what development stand for Development is the daily changes, improvements, advancement and up-grade of every aspect of our daily living. Development can easily be defined to be high rising building or new fashion. In all these definitions they all have same meanings. In this paper the entire world is developing at same pace because the latest innovation you can find in Europe or anywhere in the world can be found in all nook and cranny of the world, especially in Africa where the rich can afford to buy the latest cars and house hold accessories that he or she desires and get them delivered to him anywhere in Africa. To this sense the advancement of technology in Europe means development in a state in Africa. If and when that equipment breaks down as a result of environment, e.g bad roads, electric or power energy faults occasioned by in-consistent power supply or bad handling that product or equipment becomes abandoned or moribund. This is the story of development in Africa.

On the other hand, the sense of growth implies the gradual changes that take place in all living and non living organisms, in the case and instance of science and technology, daily man desires a better living, a better conditions of services, a more comfortable and relaxing services from every instruments and tools of human survival. As a result of the daily needs of man and the desires of man to improve his survival tools man is constantly improving and the African man is not and should not be an exception. Upgrading and changing his everyday living conditions and environment is the act of growth as it is applicable in Europe quite unlike in Africa where we buy products, equipment's and gadgets that were made to serve particular societies, peculiar peoples, climate and environments. Such being the case, when we acquire these facilities we celebrate that we are developed or developing but ironically yes. Africa is developed or developing in the fiction sense of what development is for and not what it stands for. At this point in this discuss it may be necessary for us to look at what unemployment is and the situation of unemployment in Africa.

### **WHAT IS UNEMPLOYMENT?**

Unemployment can be likened to where an individual is jobless; an able body person desires to work but cannot get him or herself to be employed. Methods of calculation and presentation of unemployment rate vary from country to country. While some countries may count insured unemployed only, some may count those in receipt of welfare benefits only. Likewise, while some may count only the disabled and other permanently unemployable people, some countries may only count those who choose (and are financially able) not to work, supported by their spouses and caring for a family. Likewise, some count students at college and so on. There may also be differences in the minimum requirements and some may consider people employed even if only marginally associated with employment market (for example, working only one hour per week. There can be differences in the age limit. As an instance, Eurostat uses 15 to 74 years old when calculating unemployment rate and the Bureau of Labour Statistics uses anyone 16 years of age or older (in both cases, people who are under education, retired, on maternity/paternity leave, prevented from working due to health or do not work but have been inactive in seeking employment in the last four weeks are excluded from the workforce, and therefore not counted as unemployed). Unemployment rates are often seasonally adjusted to avoid variations that depend on time of year. Employment rates as a percentage of total population in working age is sometimes used instead of unemployment rate.

In literature there are different types of unemployment but we will focus on very few types of unemployment that concerns this paper. These are briefly looked at below.

**Market Demand Unemployment**

This is a situation whereby manufacturing industries, employ or retrench workers as a result of increase or decrease in market sales of their products This does not mean that the individuals who are by this process unemployed does not have the required skills and competence to be employed but are forced to be unemployed as a result of the market forces especially prevalent in a free competitive capitalist market. This situation might be temporal as the individuals might be reabsorbed into the work force when the market situation changes.

**Structural Unemployment**

This includes any form of changes in the means of production which includes tools, equipments, faulty location of industries etc. This will lead to unemployment and this particular type of unemployment is our concern in this paper. The reverse is the case when you are employed and you are paid for work done.

Youth unemployment has remained a major political and socio-economic challenge in Africa. A study done Baah-Boateng (2016) based on panel data of 41 African countries covering 2000-2010, found a demographic youth bulge and poor economic growth from both supply and demand sides of the market to be key drivers of youth unemployment in Africa. This same study can also be linked up with the study done by Todaro (1997) where he argued that in the past 3 decades the cities of the developing world in general and of Africa in particular have witnessed a remarkable and in many ways unprecedented demographic growth spurn.

According to the United Nations, developing countries mostly in Africa are taking in a disproportional number of refugees currently 80% of the world’s refugee’s population. Refugees hosted in developing countries put enormous pressure on water and health care system in host community. The office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) says the world is currently facing the highest levels of displacement ever in history, with an unprecedented 65.3 million people forced from their homes by war, internal conflicts, drought or poor economies. Among these are 21.3 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18; the rest are economic migrants and internally displaced persons (Momodu, 2017).

More so, despite some slowdown in the rates of increase in the past few years as a result of falling wages, contracting social science and changing

demographic trends contemporary urban areas remain the growth poles of economic progress and the lightning rods of political and social unrest. Nowhere is this dilemma more visible or the resulting problems more intractable than in the crowded cities of sub-Sahara Africa where the most performing economies according to World Bank (2019) has an unemployment rate average of 6.1% for the excluding high income, 5.0% for the high income countries, 4.9% for the low and middle income, 3.6% for the low income, 4.0% for the lower middle income 5.1% for the middle income and 6.1% for the upper middle income economies (World Bank, 2019).

These are all attributed to be the fallouts of faulty governance, faulty systems of government, faulty leadership and faulty adaptations of social institutions that alter the structure of African societies and especially which alters the people culture. Societies of the world have adopted systems of governance as a result of their needs there growth and advancement, therefore societies do not start practicing any particular system of government because they are told to do so by European nations that have laid the foundation for the kind of democracy they are practicing today Rather and regrettably, the societies are ripe or advanced enough to adopt systems of governance that will help engineer or engender the growth of such societies as is the case of African States adopting democratic system of governance which are alien to their indigenous traditional societies, which is a very expensive system of administration and which destructively breed capitalist economy. Unfortunately too, Africa is no more a productive continent but rather subjugated to a consumption continent totally dependent on the European nations for survival thereby breeding and escalating the rate of unemployment in the African continent vis-à-vis the rest of the world continents.

**Unemployment in Africa: The Current Scenario**

For purposes of comparison, harmonized value is published by International Labour Organization (ILO) and by OCED. The ILO harmonized unemployment rate refers to those who are currently not working but are willing and able to work for pay, currently available to work and have actively searched for work. The OCED harmonized unemployment rate gives the number of unemployed persons as the percentage of the Labour force. Most unemployed rates given in the table below are derived from national statistics and therefore not directly comparable (Wikipedia, 2019). The table below displays the actual current values for unemployment rates reported in several countries part of Africa.

**Table 1:** Unemployment Rate/Africa

S/N	Country	% as at Dec. 2019	Last	Previous
1	Namibia	23.2	33.40 (Dec. 2018)	34.0
2	Angola	7.2	30.70 (Sept. 2019)	29.0

3	South Africa	27.3	29.10 (Sept. 2019)	29.0
4	Mozambique	3.2	25.04 (Dec. 2017)	24.37
5	Lesotho	23.5	23.60 (Dec. 2018)	23.61
6	Nigeria	23.5	23.10 (Sept. 2018)	22.7
7	Swaziland	11.0	22.50 (Dec. 2018)	22.3
8	Gabon	19.6	19.50 (Dec. 2018)	19.4
9	Ethiopia	1.8	19.10 (Dec. 2018)	16.9
10	Senegal	6.5	19.00 (March 2019)	15.1
11	Botswana	18.2	17.90 (Dec. 2018)	17.6
12	Libya	17.3	17.30 (Dec. 2018)	17.1
13	Rwanda	1.0	16.00 (Aug. 2019)	15.0
14	Tunisia	15.5	15.10 (Sept. 2019)	15.3
15	Sao Tome and Principe	13.4	13.30 (Dec. 2018)	13.1
16	Sudan	13.0	12.90 (Dec. 2018)	12.7
17	Cape Verde	12.3	12.20 (Dec. 2018)	12.2
18	Mauritania	10.3	11.80 (Dec. 2017)	11.66
19	Algeria	6.1	11.70 (Sept. 2018)	11.1
20	Republic of the Congo	10.4	10.40 (Dec. 2018)	10.2
21	Tanzania	1.9	9.70 (Dec. 2018)	9.9
22	Mali	9.8	9.60 (Dec. 2018)	9.4
23	Morocco	9.0	9.40 (Sept. 2019)	8.5
24	Kenya	9.3	19.30 (Dec. 2018)	11.5
25	Equatorial Guinea	4.1	9.20 (Dec. 2018)	9.2
26	Gambia	8.9	8.90 (Dec. 2018)	8.9
27	Egypt	11.3	7.80 (Sept 2019)	7.5
28	Zambia	7.1	7.15 (Dec. 2019)	7.21
29	Ghana	6.8	6.70 (Dec. 2018)	6.6
30	Mauritius	6.9	6.70 (Sept. 2019)	6.6
31	Central African Republic	6.5	6.50 (Dec. 2018)	6.4
32	Eritrea	6.5	6.50 (Dec. 2018)	6.5
33	Burkina Faso	6.1	6.10 (Dec. 2018)	6.0
34	Chad	2.3	5.89 (Dec 2017)	5.78
35	Malawi	5.4	5.40 (Dec. 2018)	5.5
36	Zimbabwe	4.9	4.90 (Dec. 2018)	5.16
37	Sierra Leone	4.3	4.30 (Dec. 2018)	4.3
38	Guinea Bissau	4.1	4.10 (Dec. 2019)	4.1
39	Comoros	3.7	3.70 (Dec. 2018)	3.7
40	Guinea	3.6	3.60 (Dec. 2018)	3.6
41	Seychelles	-	3.50 (Dec. 2018)	4.1
42	Cameroon	3.3	3.40 (Dec. 2018)	3.4
43	Ivory Coast	2.4	2.50 (Dec. 2018)	2.5
44	Benin	2.0	2.10 (Dec. 2018)	2.5
45	Uganda	1.8	2.10 (Dec. 2017)	2.0
46	Liberia	2.0	2.00 (Dec. 2018)	2.0
47	Madagascar	1.6	1.70 (Dec. 2018)	1.7
48	Togo	1.7	1.70 (Dec. 2018)	1.7
49	Burundi	1.5	1.5 (Dec. 2018)	1.5
50	Niger	0.3	0.30 (Dec. 2018)	0.3

**Source:** World Bank, 2019

From the table I above, it could be seen that it is only Niger that is an African country that has the unemployment percentage of 0.30% as at December 2019 and flowing from the period prior to that. More so, it is only Comoros (3.7%), Guinea (3.6%), Cameroon (3.3%), Ivory Coast (2.4%), Benin (2.0), Uganda (1.8%), Liberia (2.0%), Madagascar (1.6%), Togo (1.7%) and Burundi (1.5%) that posted unemployment percentage rates that are below 4%. Ironically these are countries with very low population and incidentally too,

most of them are Francophone countries. Namibia (23.2%), South Africa (27.3%), Lesotho (23.5%), Gabon (19.6%), Botswana (18.2%), Libya (17.3%) and Tunisia (15.5%) are among the worst countries that posted unemployment percentage rates that were above 15.0%. The implication of this is that poverty rate in these countries will definitely be high while development will be grossly handicapped in these countries. Most of them had long periods of colonization and some of them are still caught in the

web of neo-colonialism and imperialism up till now. With this scenario one wonders how they can compete favourably with developed countries in the globalized capitalist economy and still not have majority of their population unemployed as a result of the technological

growth in these industrialized nations to which they are just puppets or appendages. The table II below presents the picture of the percentage unemployment rate in other countries of the world which could be compared with the scenario in the African countries.

**Table 2:** List of Some Non-African Countries by Unemployment Rate

S/N	Country	Unemployment Rate (%)	Source/Date of Information
1	Andorra	3.7	Sept. 2015
2	Australia	5.0	Dec. 2018
3	Austria	5.1	Oct. 2018
4	Belgium	6.2	Oct. 2018
5	Brazil	13.1	Q1 2018
6	British Virgin Island	2.9	2014
7	Bulgaria	5.4	Oct. 2018
8	Cambodia	0.3	2017
9	Canada	5.6	Nov. 2018
10	China People's Rep.	3.9	2017
11	Czech Republic	1.9	Nov. 2018
12	European Union	6.7	Oct. 2018
13	France	8.9	Oct. 2018
14	Germany	3.3	Oct. 2018
15	Hong Kong	3.3	Oct.- Dec. 2014
16	Iceland	2.9	Oct. 2018
17	Israel	3.7	Jan. 2018
18	Italy	9.7	Oct. 2019
19	Japan	2.4	March 2018
20	Kuwait	2.1	2017
21	Laos	1.5	2016
22	Malaysia	3.5	March 2017
23	Malta	3.7	Oct 2018
24	Netherlands	3.3	April 2019
25	New Zealand	3.9	Q3 2018
26	North Korea	4.8	Q3 2017
27	Norway	4.0	Sept 2018
28	Poland	3.8	Oct. 2018
29	Portugal	6.7	Oct. 2018
30	Romania	4.0	Oct. 2018
31	Russia	6.0	March 2016
32	Singapore	2.1	Q1 2018
33	Spain	13.92	Q3 2019
34	Switzerland	2.4	June 2018
35	Syria	50.0	2017
36	Taiwan	3.72	Feb. 2019
37	Thailand	0.7	2017
38	UAE	1.6	2016
39	United Kingdom	3.8	March 2019
40	United States	3.5	Sept. 2019
41	Vietnam	2.2	2017

Source: Wikipedia, 2019

As could be seen from table II above, it could be seen that it is only Syria (50.0%), Spain (13.92%), and Brazil (13.1%) that posted percentage figures that were above 10% or so to say two digits. On the other hand, countries like Thailand (0.7%), Cambodia (.3%), UAE (1.6%), Czech Republic (1.9%), Laos (1.5%), Japan, (2.4%), Peoples Republic of China (3.9%), Singapore (2.1%), Malaysia (3.5%), United Kingdom (3.8%) Vietnam (2.1%) Germany (3.3%), Taiwan (3.72%) and United States (3.5%) among other European industrial giants had very low percentage unemployment rate compared to the African countries. One therefore wonders what their development would be in the face of their technological backwardness vis-à-vis countries like Malaysia, Japan, China, Singapore among others that are highly technologically advanced and that exports their technology to these consumer African Nations.

### **Technology and Unemployment in Africa**

Just like all other issues, European nations are constantly producing goods and manufacturing product as a result of their own needs. Their products, equipments and services are in most instances environmental based such that in some situations if such equipment is used in tropical environment, such equipment will malfunction and in many instances, Africans go ahead to procure such equipments and unfortunately bring them to Africa and of course the equipments' life span are short lived due to the disparities in their presupposed manufacture and anticipated-to-be-used environment.

In recent times of globalization and the making of the entire world a global village, Africa is most hit in all spheres of unemployment, economic depression and societal breakdown of the various social institutions. This is so because African states are all subject to the modernization fever which they have all been infected with. This in no small way has affected the psyche of the middle class, average white color worker, entrepreneurs, owners of industries and people in the corridors of leadership. Let us remember that as earlier stated; modernization is the act of leading a false life, false institution, and false nation hood thereby producing products that are not culturally compliant to their societal need. In all the various organizations and establishment of labour, daily European nations are introducing automated technology or rather robot technology in place of human labour for almost all purposes ranging from performing of house chores, office secretarial services, security detective operations to operation of industrial machines and war arsenals. In recent times we have seen the production of drones that can be used for different purposes as one may be desire with almost 100% perfection in the delivery of the expected services. The above notwithstanding recent technologies has gone to the extent of manufacturing cars that can travel or operate on roads without a driver and as well cars, trains and other heavy duty vehicles

that can operate conveniently within congested city structures and environments, just as solar and electric automobile engines which are to replace fuel combustible engines has been produced and are in circulation. As could simply be seen with the advent of modern technologies in many spheres of human life especially in this globalized world, WhatsApp has killed BBM, Youtube has killed DVD, Bluetooth killed Infrared, Xender killed Bluetooth, Zappya killed Xender, CDs killed Cassettes, Andriod killed Window phones, Phones killed Post offices, SMS killed Letter writing, E-mail killed Fax, Computer killed Typewriters, E-Card killed Hallmark Cards, Internet killed Libraries, Google killed Dictionary, Winkipedia killed Encyclopedia just as Civilization Killed Culture. These has therefore become a daily challenge in the world and especially Africa with Africa competing with the rest of the western world in this globalized system as an underdog such that with daily introduction of any new world technology thousands of Africans in different states must lose their jobs to these new technologies thereby compounding and complicating the challenging situation of unemployment in Africa.

### **CONCLUSION**

This paper concludes that not minding all the so many challenging situations African societies have gone and is still going through, African Nation can still stand up and not only make a change but start growing as nations and as a continent. But this is only if we realize that we are not growing but rather we are developed in the image of European Nations or rather growing other nations. In other words we are all living in false hood in Africa with our indigenous survival technologies phased out as obsolete and archaic and not in tune with the demands of the lifestyles of the modern world. More so our not breaking from the shackles and strong holds of our erstwhile colonial masters and start looking inwards indigenously will still continue to do us damage the more.

### **Recommendation**

This paper having looked at the various historical experiences of Africans and the world at large recommends an urgent need for African societies to hurriedly take to agriculture extensively employing our local and indigenous technology. By so doing Africans can provide for our basic food needs and would have surplus for export. This means in other words that we have taken care of food security in African and can create employment for Africans too with the adoption and adaptation of our local technology and farm tools to the mass production of the required agricultural products.

Another seemingly, interesting and unavoidable situation is the transfer of technology. It is here suggested that we should not hide about the reality that African societies needs the advanced scientific

knowledge of the Europeans in science and technology growth of African societies in different areas of Agriculture, Science and Technology bearing in mind the Environmental differences and weather conditions disparities in the world.

African Elites and the rich should be discouraged from buying equipments that are not only expensive but are not compliant with African climate and environment. The African rich should be regulated in their spending excesses in European nations, knowing that so much of such monies are looted, and stolen monies from their home countries where millions of their people are dying of hunger. Rather they should be encouraged to invest these fund in the fabrication of adaptable technologies that could be effectively employed in our Agricultural practices and other aspects of our daily living. Just recently, a Nigerian invented an application that could replace WhatsApp and Messenger as an application for mass communication under cheap cost. Such should be encourages and promoted for the purpose of technological growth of Nigeria in particular and Africa in general.

The issue of world globalization by European Nations should not be a do or die affair, such that all nations of the world must not be compliant at same time. This will definitely reduce the African leader quest for compliance to daily inventions and introduction of new technologies in the various sectors of Africa societies especially in the industrial and organizational sectors, where the introduction of any new production technology amounts to the loss of thousands of employees' jobs.

It is high time that Africans in Diaspora start investing their knowledge and acquired wealth back home there by reducing African dependence on Europe for practically everything for instance the establishment of modernHospitals, Schools etc.

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