

Reforming Entrepreneurship Education Curriculum of Nigerian Tertiary Institutions for Graduates Empowerment

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship education is a potent tool in the fight against youth unemployment. However, the system of education in Nigeria has been structured in such a way that it is employment oriented to the detriment of employment generation by the individuals. Hence, youth unemployment is soaring unabatedly in Nigeria. However, if the entrepreneurship education curricula of tertiary institutions are properly reformed and reviewed to keep in touch with the current economic trend, then youth unemployment would certainly nosedive into the dustbin of history. This is the main thrust of the paper. Similarly, the paper gave an overview of entrepreneurship education and its curriculum issues. Based on the discourse, conclusion was drawn and it was recommended amongst others that there should be a bridge in the gap between curriculum of theory and curriculum of practice to make it more practical oriented.

Keywords: Curriculum, Economic crisis, Entrepreneurship education, Graduate unemployment, Self-Reliance, White-Collar-Job.

1. Introduction

The quest for self-reliance through education has always been the desire of many nations especially in the present face of global economic downturn. This has made various countries to invest heavily in education as a gateway to better tomorrow. The most pressing need of the country today is productivity. Therefore, the time demands that we should forge a link between education and productivity. To achieve this end, one of the important resources is to entrepreneurize education and ultimately produce entrepreneurs particularly at the tertiary institution level to meet the need of the present economy.

In the early years of Nigeria, securing job after graduation was not a difficult task. Obikeze (2010) observed that the university, polytechnic and colleges of education graduates alike secured jobs in their final years in school. Obikeze maintained that in some instances, appointment papers were issued to young graduates at the orientation camps during the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). So, getting a job was not the problem of the young graduates then but the headache of the employers to get them.

Today the situation is apparently different. The rate of graduate unemployment has become a source of worry to the graduates, the parents, relations and of course, the governments. This has become an economic, political and social problem in Nigeria particularly among graduates. The zeal for tertiary education is gradually being eroded because of the discouraging wave of graduate unemployment.

The tertiary institutions (university, polytechnic and colleges of education) were particularly established to train and prepare students for employment upon graduation. Hence, Oladipo, Adeosun and Oni (2010) asserted that in the early Nigeria, tertiary institutions were regarded as the single most important industry for the production of high-level manpower needed for the transformation of Nigerian economy. Similarly, World Bank (2009) reported that tertiary education in general is fundamental to the construction of knowledge economy and society in all nations. Consequently, young ones struggle a lot to get admission into tertiary institutions and while there, efforts are made to enable them secure jobs and contribute to the transformation of the society.

Unfortunately, many students complete their studies and come out with good grades without hope of securing jobs. According to Denga (1992), seeking for job in Nigeria is fast becoming a job on itself. It is a common feature in Nigeria to see young graduates roaming about the streets in urban areas in search of white-collar jobs that do not exist, while some have resorted to illicit acts as means of consolation and engagement. This is really counterproductive for a developing nation like Nigeria.

This situation of graduates' unemployment is not unconnected with the type of education obtainable in Nigeria. According to Osuafor, Okeke and Nnorom (2010), our educational practices were tailored towards acquisition of the so-called "white-collar jobs" after graduation. Not only that these

jobs are no longer available as the public and private sectors have exhausted their employment capacity, but they have also not led the nation anywhere in terms of development.

With the global dispensation and economic crisis, it therefore becomes imperative for the nation to have a rethink on our education delivery and policies in order to produce from our tertiary institutions graduates who can be self-reliant and self-sustaining. There is need for our curriculum to be tailored towards proper acquisition of entrepreneurial skills and drives for the empowerment of youths and sustainable development of the nation. Hence, this paper is charting a case for the reformation of entrepreneurship education curriculum of Nigerian tertiary institutions for graduates' empowerment.

2.1 Overview of Entrepreneurship Education

The issue of empowering the youths through entrepreneurship education has now taken the centre stage of every development discourse. In the face of the global economic crises and increase in the level of unemployment and poverty, especially in developing economies, the importance of a workable and functional entrepreneurship education cannot be overemphasized. So, the need for its proper integration and articulation in our educational curriculum is a desideratum.

Ifegbo (2000) noted that entrepreneurship education is the training that emphasizes the acquisition and development of appropriate knowledge and skills that will enable an individual to maximize the resources around him and within the limits of his capability. Similarly, Osuala (2004) described entrepreneurship education as a specialized training given to persons to acquire skills, ideas and management abilities necessary for self-reliance. Okoye (2004) puts it that entrepreneurship education consists of ideas, information and facts that help learners develop competencies needed for firm careers commitments such as setting up business, marketing services or being productive employees of organization.

What makes entrepreneurship education distinctive is its ability to imbue in the learner the urge and drive for self-sustainability and creativity. However, entrepreneurship education in Nigeria is relatively nascent and has experienced considerable growth in just a decade of existence. It is becoming a major topic of debate among curriculum developers and stakeholders in education. Hence, Oloide (2000) remarked that the absence of a functional entrepreneurship curriculum is an impediment to sustainable development which if not checked or tackled will continue to incite and increase the incidence of unemployment among the Nigerian youths.

Entrepreneurship education is designed with emphasis on realization of opportunities. According to Abdulkadir (2011), through entrepreneurship education, success and innovation habits are imparted as the person develops entrepreneurial integrity and skills in the process. Indeed, entrepreneurship education will enable potential entrepreneurs to create businesses, manage, market and sustain them into the future.

2.2 Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education particularly in Nigeria is structured to achieve the following objectives according to Paul (2005:18);

1. To offer functional education for the youths so as to enable them to be self-employed and self-reliant.
2. To offer graduates with adequate training that will enable them to be creative and innovative in identifying novel business opportunities
3. To provide university/colleges graduates with adequate training in risk management to make certainty bearing feasible.
4. To provide the young graduates with enough training and support that will enable them to establish a career in small and medium sized businesses.
5. To offer graduates adequate training in the acquisition of skills that will enable them meet the manpower needs of the society.
6. To stimulate both individual and economic growth of rural and less developed areas.
7. To provide both small and medium business enterprises with opportunity of recruiting graduates who are trained and tutored in the skills relevant to the management and operation of small businesses.
8. To inculcate the spirit of perseverance in the youths and adults which will enable them to persist in any business venture they embark on.

In order to achieve these plausible objectives and with the current emphasis on self-reliance because of the economic state of Nigeria, the federal government through its educational regulatory agencies has made entrepreneurship education a compulsory course in the tertiary institutions irrespective of subject disciplines; this is part of the education reform agenda in Nigeria and the essence of it is to equip the students on graduation with skills capable of making them entrepreneurs in their area of discipline rather than job seekers.

Contrarily, Atakpa (2011) noted that Nigerian graduates in recent times are still wondering about seeking for salaried jobs which are not available despite the entrepreneurship courses they went through in schools. This is because; entrepreneurship education curricula of our tertiary institutions have not fully captured the dynamics of the changing economy. Thus, graduates of the tertiary institutions are becoming obviously irrelevant to the current economic trend of the society. Therefore, to ameliorate this disturbing scenario, there is need to reform the entrepreneurship education curriculum of our tertiary institutions so that it will touch the realities of the Nigeria economic situation. Once this is properly anchored and articulated in tertiary institutions, the youths will be ably empowered for self-sustainability and reliance.

3. Curriculum Issues of Entrepreneurship Education

Curriculum is concerned with the why, what and how of instruction. In other words, it is concerned with the goals and objectives of instruction, the content organization and evaluation (Akudolu,

2010). These curriculum elements form the beacon for the development and implementation of entrepreneurship curriculum.

Curriculum in an education system is a planned sequence of learning experiences through which specific behavioural changes will be achieved for students within a given learning setting. Udeiyen in Okoye (2012) therefore defined curriculum as an aggregate of all experiences planned for learners under the auspices of the school. In which case, curriculum embraces all the activities and experiences that contribute to the balance development of the learners throughout their academic career.

The place of curriculum cannot be overemphasized in education. It is the mechanism through which the educational system inculcates into the learner, the knowledge, skills and attitudes which society prescribed (Maduenesi, 2005). If the needs of the society continue to change, the curricular arrangements ought to change with such needs. However, the educational curriculum in Nigeria as it is cannot boast of possessing entrepreneurial modules that prepares her students for self-reliance. From foregoing submission, one can readily points to curricular anomalies of our education system.

In examining the Nigerian education system at glance, the National Planning Commission (NPC, 2005:6) made the following comments: “The educational system is dysfunctional, as graduates of many institutions cannot meet the needs of the country; institutions are in decay, strikes and cultism are common and corruption has become rampant.” The NPC comment goes further as follows: “wide disparities persist on educational standard and learning achievements. The system emphasizes theoretical knowledge at the expense of technical, vocational and entrepreneurial education. School curricula need urgent review to make it relevant and practice oriented”. The above assertion points to the present situation of Nigerian curriculum with respect to entrepreneurship education.

However, if entrepreneurship education is to be a tool in the fight against global economic crisis and to empower the youths especially in Nigeria, then curriculum at the tertiary institutions has to be visited with a view of touching the prevalent economic situation of Nigeria.

4. Towards Reformation of Entrepreneurship Education Curriculum

Reforms might be achieved in our entrepreneurship education when there is proper identification. Entrepreneurship education is no doubt classified as one of the practical subjects since it involves the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge necessary for securing employment or to be self-employed. According to Ime (2009), the problems with entrepreneurship education as a course of study in the curriculum structure are that it lacks identity. Many people do not actually understand the different areas of entrepreneurship education. That is, what entrepreneurship is all about? In order to ensure the attainment and proper reform of entrepreneurship education, there is need to create more awareness to the people in the academic environment and beyond in widest perspective.

However, reforming entrepreneurship education curriculum of Nigerian tertiary institutions for youth's empowerment must be handled with respect to the curriculum blueprint that maps out the direction to be followed in education. The first main task is to bridge the theory—practice gap in the Nigerian educational curriculum. There is a missing link between curriculum planning and implementation. This explains why a scheme such as 6-3-3-4 which lays emphasis on functionalism and education for self-reliance, where product can be self-employed as an alternative to paid employment has not impacted much positively to the Nigerian economy. The result is the demeaning of self-reliance and the encouraging of wastage in the system to the detriment of an entrepreneurial spirit.

Also, the educational system through the instrument of curriculum needs to draw up a proactive design on entrepreneurship education. Many people seem to be in the dark as to what constitutes entrepreneurship and its impact in their lives. As a result people are left with the misleading impression that only graduates of vocational disciplines can be entrepreneurs. The education system working through the curriculum has a prominent role in helping people to form an accurate mental picture about entrepreneurship.

In addition, a reflective and proactive curriculum on entrepreneurship education at tertiary education is most ideal for Nigeria. This is to absorb a large number of school products seeking employment. Therefore, if there is an adequate entrepreneurship curriculum at that level, planners and managers of the economy will be able to project the number of graduates that will be in self-employment in the nearest future.

Furthermore, effort should be made to relate education to the immediate needs of the community. Various cultures and communities in Nigeria have skills, crafts and vocations for which they are noted. But these skills and crafts have not been explored by the school curricula. As such, the school mostly isolates the learner from the cultural environment that he is use to. A learner that is academically removed from this immediate environment might not necessarily cultivate entrepreneurship spirit from the available chances of that environment.

Finally, it is necessary that curriculum process should place emphasis on curriculum of ideas as a precedent to curriculum of product. This is to enable ideas groomed and nurtured in an individual's milieu to be properly harnessed and ultimately used to ensure a productive end. According to Aggarwal (2007) where curriculum of ideas, subsists, individual are trained to be socially efficient as contributors to increase production and national wealth. This can help the course of entrepreneurship education and empowers the Nigerian youths adequately.

5. Conclusion

Graduates unemployment is soaring high in Nigeria especially in the present time of economic depression. Most of the youths are largely unemployed and wondering about searching for salaried jobs; this situation though it might have inference with the current economic state of the nation but

it is intricately connected with the type of education obtainable in the nation's schools. The system of education in Nigeria has been structured in such a way that it is employment oriented to the detriment of employment generation of by the individuals.

However, if the entrepreneurship education curricula of our tertiary institutions are properly reformed and reviewed as enshrined in this paper, then dependency trend and struggle for paid employment would most likely give way for self-reliance among the youths in Nigeria.

6. Recommendations

In the view of the imperativeness of a reformed curriculum for entrepreneurship education in Nigeria for youth's empowerment and self-reliance, the following recommendations are hereby made:

- 1) Reforming entrepreneurship education curriculum for tertiary institutions should be given priority and attention to make it relevant to job through competency for employment generation.
- 2) Entrepreneurship education should be properly infused into the curriculum of all the disciplines of tertiary education to enable the learners identify viable business opportunities in their area of studies.
- 3) There should be a bridge in curriculum theory—practice gap in education for self-reliance.
- 4) Entrepreneurship curriculum must be planned and reformed alongside community needs, aspirations and cultures.
- 5) Government and institutions of higher learning should update and reform entrepreneurship education curriculum from time to time to meet the dynamism and demands of the national economy.

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