

Rationale for Students Preparation and Entrepreneurship Education in the Face of Global Economic Crisis in Nigeria

Nwite Onuma

Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.

ABSTRACT

The rationale for students preparation in job creation through entrepreneurship education was examined. Problems of unemployment among Nigerian university graduates and challenges to entrepreneurship in the face of global economic crisis were also highlighted. The persistent problem of unemployment among University graduates and its attendant social problems suggest that urgent emphasis be placed on well structured entrepreneurship education since the National Directorate for employment (NDE) and other government intervention agencies alone cannot cope with entrepreneurship training and employment of youths and unemployed university graduates. The curricular for senior secondary and tertiary education should be reviewed to incorporate entrepreneurship education.

Keywords: Unemployment, Job creation, entrepreneur, Innovation and Self-Reliant

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian National Policy on Education (2012) stated tertiary education should aim to develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual; develop the intellectual capability of the individual to understand and appreciate their local and external environment and acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant. The objective of the National policy is yet to be realized. A greater number of our university graduates are jobless even several years after graduation (Fabiya and Adetoro, 2006) while the business sector complains of lack of skilled workers (World Bank, 2007). The National Directorate for Employment, Ebonyi State in 2008 registered over 8000 graduates without any job as a result of the global economic meltdown. The World Bank (2009) predicted that the ranks and the numbers of the poor and unemployed in the developing nations like Nigeria will soon swell as a result of global recession.

Unemployment In Nigeria

Education today is unabashedly oriented towards the "take-a-job" mentality which conveys in both content and attitude that the student is being prepared for a career in which he/she will be working for some kind of small or large business entity, that is, taking-a-job that someone else has created (Kourilsky, 1995). The current shift toward self-employment education poses a huge challenge to our universities, which are still groping and pretending to lead among the "classical truth seeking" universities which Europe and other civilized world dropped in the '70s (Kpee and Kaegon, 2009). The point of departure of this study solicits for how the legion of challenges facing Nigerian Universities at this point of economic melt-down would affect their ability to compete favorably with those of the "net work universities" and see their certificate as a call for self-employment rather than in pursuit of non-existing white collar jobs.

Unemployment in Nigeria has varied dimensions. The labour market has created the awareness that there are many qualified individuals from the three levels of education without functional employment, amongst these are individuals with university degrees who have searched for jobs without success for years (Osezuah, 2006). In spite of government intervention and initiative programs such as National Directorate of Employment (NDE) of 1986, National Economic Empowerment Development Strategies (NEEDS) in 2003, and Millennium Development Goals (MDGS), Nigeria is still faced with youth unemployment and economic recession. A survey of Ministry of Education showed that 71% of students who graduated from Nigerian Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education in seven years (2001-2007) were yet to find jobs (Dare, 2008) Of the 130,000 graduates produced yearly in Nigeria, only about 13,000 (i.e. 10%) were gainfully employed (Gyamfi, 2006)..

Unemployment among school leavers has dire consequences: it exposes our youths to untold anguish, frustration, depression and other negative tendencies (Onibalusi, 2008). Some of these unemployed school leavers resort to unwholesome means of livelihood, often resulting to youth restiveness, kidnapping for ransom, militancy, prostitution and internet fraud (Afolayan, 2009; Iheberem and Aguba, 2009. Alumode and Nwite, 2009). Ranson (1995) and Nwagwu (2000) identified irrelevant curriculum as a recurring factor of unemployment. According to Ranson (1995), the curricular were not related to the realities or work prospect of most pupils who graduate with little or no understanding of the working or importance of wealth creation of the economy.

In the school system, graduate students seem not to be exposed to creating jobs for one self, only very few tertiary institutions seem to offer some semblance of entrepreneurship education (Uwaneyi and Aduwa,

2006). Adeyere and Akerele (2006) attributed the massive unemployment among Nigerian graduates to lack of entrepreneurship education, which he considered the only key to survival in the present economy.

Education in its entirety should be relevant to the needs of the individual and socio-economic needs of the nation. Therefore, there is need to revamp not only the senior secondary school but also tertiary curricula with emphasis on practical thinking and behavioural skills blended with academic and vocational subjects. The solution to unemployment is to introduce entrepreneurship education into the school system right from secondary to tertiary levels as a break through link between education of the youth and self-employment or job creation.

Rationale for Students Entrepreneurship Education

The state of mind that is required of students is that of entrepreneurial consciousness. Azoka and Adetoro (2008) submitted that entrepreneurship success in any economy requires behavioural skills such as ability to think critically, communicate well and work effectively in teams. They argued that flexibility concepts like creativity, risk-taking and flexibility in the face of change are becoming increasingly important in the development of entrepreneurial education job-creation skills.

Igwe cited in Adeyeye (2008) described the concept of entrepreneurship as:

The process of bringing together creative and innovative ideas and coupling these with management and organizational skills in order to combine man, money, machineries other resources to meet an identified need and thereby create wealth... willingness to think conceptually and the capacity to see change as an opportunity.

The argument here is that entrepreneurship education should focus on nurturing young people's personal attitudes such as creativity, spirit of initiatives, capacity to confront risk and above all being independent. Emphasis here on entrepreneurship education for the young (students) is to support students' knowledge, skills and attitudes needed in their study and in their later working life. Students are therefore, expected to be exposed to entrepreneurship education and commercial studies to enhance entrepreneur's knowledge and confidence in business operations (Fabiya et al 2008). Coombs (1974) also recommended entrepreneurship education for developing particular knowledge and skills associated with various economic activities to promote useful living after school. Ultimately, entrepreneurship education is expected to change the orientation of function of school education as a tool for self-reliance and national development. However, it is relatively a new course in the Nigerian University curriculum. The National Universities Commission (NUC) in the Draft Benchmark and Minimum Academic Standard recommended four (4) credit units of entrepreneurship studies for students in the faculty of education (Uzoka, 2008). A good number of Nigeria Universities are yet to implement the NUC policy statement on entrepreneurship education. Only very few universities take general studies (GS) courses on entrepreneurship education in Nigeria Universities.

Countries like South Africa reflected the importance of entrepreneurship education by revamping their upper secondary school curricula to emphasize practical thinking and behavioural skills while China linked their educational institutions with prospective employers from private sectors through regular consultation and joint University-industry research prospects. Dana (1992) reports that Germany's intuitions of higher education offered curriculum that focused on administration of business; Italy shifted the practice of training entrepreneurs to market place rather than academic institution, this is not the case in Aba in Abia State, Onisha and Nenwi in Anambra State, Nigeria; and Denmark adopted a year Handel's Skean scheme for her university graduates on fundamentals of entrepreneurship.

Again, Adeyeye, (2008) listed four strategic goals of entrepreneurship that will be of benefit to individuals after school and the nation's economy. These strategies include development of entrepreneurship spirit and mindset among Nigerians, especially school leavers; facilitation and enhancement of job creation among underemployed school leavers, facilitation of skill acquisition and development among Nigerians especially school leavers and enhancement of job creation among unemployed and underemployed school leavers and engagement in research and development.

The Nigerian government in an attempt to promote entrepreneurship and resolve the problem of youth unemployment, especially graduates established the National Directorate of employment (NDE) in 1986; supported the Millennium Development Goals Reform (MDGs 2000) and developed the Policy of National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS) in 2003 among others. The NDE aims at alleviating unemployment pressures, especially among technical schools and university graduates (Adeyeye 2008). The MDGs is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger while NEEDS' focuses on poverty eradication, wealth creation and employment generation.

Despite the above policies of the Federal government of Nigeria, unemployment among university graduates still persists. According to Fabiyi and Adetoro (2006), the NDE has not been able to make much impact and relevant data were not readily available on how many Nigerian higher institutions were offering courses in entrepreneurship education; only the University of Lagos introduced the course in 2005. However, most Nigerian higher institutions offer courses in Vocational, Technical and Home Economics but there are no specially designed courses in their curriculum which would enable students acquire the skills of innovation and creativity for entrepreneurship. Based on these lapses, the curriculum of the department should dwell more on skill building, that is, technical courses in negotiation, leadership, new product development, creative thinking and exposure to technological innovations.

The persistent problem of youths (graduate) unemployment, and its attendant social problems as well as the global economic melt-down demands for more technical and behavioural skills, especially during the ages of 15-25 years. The situation calls for the urgent need to emphasize a well structured entrepreneurship education, in our institutions of higher, since government alone cannot continue to offer employment for all Nigerian qualified graduates or citizens. Therefore beneficiaries are expected to apply entrepreneurship education in whatever they choose as career. Its benefits for technical and scientific education disciplines are arguably higher. In the views of European conference (2009), a scientist who imbibed the qualities of entrepreneurship education could maximize his invention; those with background in Arts and creative disciplines can find their initiative yielding dividends. Entrepreneurship education as an emerging discipline needs to be applied to all concepts of chosen creative outlet. Entrepreneurship education then becomes imperative for all disciplines what mathematics is to all scientific, vocational and technological courses.

Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education

Unemployment of university graduates is a serious threat to the individual the economy and the educational sector. Its prevalence among Nigeria graduates calls for the identification of a dimension to solve the problem. Uwameinye and Aduwa-Ogiegbaen (2006) reported that unemployment was a threat to Nigerian economy with, its attendant social problem of armed robbery, youth restiveness, prostitution and female trafficking. However, every effort by the Federal Government to solve the problem has failed because of the following challenges:

a. Weak Entrepreneurship Education

The solution to the problems of youth unemployment lies with effective delivery of entrepreneurship education by Nigerian institutions of higher learning and the introduction of entrepreneurship into the curricula of senior secondary and tertiary education. An educational system embedded with entrepreneurship that will assist undergraduates and graduates to develop a focus on job creation at the early stage (15-25 years) of their lives will produce independent and self-reliant youths.

b. Lack of Enterprise Spirit Among Youths

CELCEE (2003) identified the absence of enterprise spirit among young people as a challenge to entrepreneurship education. Encouraging enterprise spirit as against white collar job mentality among students is a pre-condition to achieving progress in employment, growth competitiveness and innovation. Thus entrepreneurship education in our higher institutions of learning should develop in students the general attitude that can be usefully applied in all working activities and everyday life. Such education should focus on nurturing students with personal attributes that will form strong basis of entrepreneurship such as creativity, initiative, capacity confronting or taking risks and independence.

c. Curriculum Issue

Curriculum issue is an enormous challenge to entrepreneurship education, developing a comprehensive curriculum that will incorporate and address entrepreneurship education from the secondary to tertiary levels of education is another major challenge. Also, the non- or poor implementation of curriculum issues is major limitation.

d. Technical Proficiency

Technical proficiency is another most challenging factor of entrepreneurship education. Adeyeye(2008) suggested that entrepreneurship education should inculcate skill-building courses, which will in turn expose students to technological innovation. Programmes for entrepreneurship students should emphasize commitment and single-mindedness, acceptability, specialist approach, opportunities awareness and above all knowledge in the areas of focus. Students of entrepreneurship (undergraduate/graduates) should be well focused in specific areas of entrepreneurship interest.

e. Innovations and creativity

Entrepreneurship education is also challenged by innovations and creativity. To prepare students for work as entrepreneurs, it is pertinent to design the curriculum of each level of education to be consistent with specific career options. The curriculum should revolve around leadership and organizing ability, positive

thinking, strategic action competency, sound judgment and skills (Adeyeye, 2008). Innovative students of entrepreneurship should have ideas that are unique. He went further to describe innovation as systematic and rational work, well organized and managed for result. When youths are prepared with innovative or managerial competencies, it assures in-dept knowledge of entrepreneurship that will enable them face the economic realities of the nation and competes successfully with private sectors who are not formally trained. These innovative strategies encourage entrepreneurs to distinguish between what is assumed and what really is and also may enable them strive and measure success by what their efforts can accomplish.

Problems and Prospects of Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship is about taking risk, but on the other hand it is cardinal to the economic growth and development of both the individual and the nation. Indices such as high liquidity ratio, deterioration of working capital and fraudulent practices constitute problems for an entrepreneur. However, the major internal problems of entrepreneurship include lack of personal attributes, leadership acumen, knowledge and experiences in a chosen enterprise, poor entrepreneurial managerial know-how and irrelevant curriculum. The external problems include inability to secure funds/soft loans from Banks for small and medium scale enterprises, poor access to relevant modern technology, inability to conduct research for improvement, unfavorable policy framework by government and political instability.

Entrepreneurship is referred to as the engine of economic growth worldwide (Adeyeye, 2008). Students of entrepreneurship studies have the prospect of exploiting untapped industrial and job opportunities and escaping unemployment, enhanced self reliance, creativity and innovative capabilities. It will also favour the development of small scale and medium enterprises reduce poverty, increase better standards of living and leads to specialization. The expansion of the content and scope of entrepreneurship education for undergraduates in the Faculty of Education will not only meet societal needs and demands but prepare young people for living full well-rounded life in the home, community and nation (IFHE, 2006)

Conclusion

The perennial problem of unemployment and its attendant social problems among Nigeria University graduates (youths) calls for the review of higher institution of learning curricula and immediate implementation of the National Universities Commission (NUC) policy statement on Entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship education may provide students with necessary preparation to meet the challenges and problems of economic crisis and unemployment. Any discipline could benefit from entrepreneur drive to enhance the beneficiaries' creative capacity and raise a generation of self-reliant youths sustaining the economy.

Recommendation

In view of the importance of entrepreneurship education in promoting creativity, innovation, managerial competencies and creating jobs, the study recommend that:

The curricula of senior secondary and tertiary education be reviewed to incorporate entrepreneurship education which must be made compulsory to all students of faculty of education in Nigeria. This will enable students acquire the necessary basic business skills for self-employment and self-reliance.

Visitation to successful local entrepreneurs should be organized for students of entrepreneurship education. Through such visits, instructors should expose students to successful small and medium business enterprises. Students should undertake case studies of successful business enterprises to becoming familiar with entrepreneurial and managerial competencies.

State governments should provide enabling environment, more funds to enable State Directorates of Employment grant micro credit loans and provide entrepreneurial skills and capacity training to carefully selected trainees.

Adequate sensitization campaigns should be made by various Faculties of Education to enlighten undergraduate students on the importance of entrepreneurship education for averting unemployment after school.

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