

Curriculum Contents Reform and Graduate Entrepreneurship Training in Nigerian Universities

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ABSTRACT The aim of this paper is to investigate the relationship between curriculum contents reform and graduate entrepreneurship training in Nigerian Universities in the southwestern geo-political zone of the country. A questionnaire was administered to five hundred and forty four students from six universities in Southwest Nigeria. The results showed that the current curriculum is deficient in producing the much needed graduates with sound entrepreneurial skills, who could be self-employed after leaving the universities. It was further discovered that curriculum has a direct relationship with the level of skills and knowledge students acquired to establish their own enterprise. The study therefore concludes that curriculum contents need to be reformed, be flexible and practically oriented. More importantly, the involvement of successful entrepreneurs and other relevant stakeholders with adequate experience within and outside the universities should be engaged. Similarly, the new curriculum should encourage entrepreneurship training throughout the duration of students' university programme.

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, the global economic meltdown has been worrisome to economic analysts with the majority clamoring for economic re-engineering and re-positioning through job creation and provision of incentives for entrepreneurial initiatives. In an attempt to achieve this, the National University Commission (NUC) instructed all universities to embark on curriculum review with a view to making entrepreneurship study a must for all undergraduates. The anticipated outcome was to stimulate acquisition of skills and make graduates self-employed and by extension create more jobs. The process gained more popularity during the current democratization era since the agitation started in 1999 in Nigeria. The graduates' unemployment rates had continued to increase and this was confirmed by the former Nigerian Minister of Labour and Productivity, Alhaji Hassan Lawal who states that only twenty-five percent of the over 150,000 graduates produced yearly by universities in the country are employed (Nigeria Tide 2008). According to him, while the unemployment level was two percent in the 1980s, from 1999 to date when government was doing everything possible to enhance job creation through entrepreneurial development, unemployment rate rose to a two digit

level. It is in the light of this that Nwangwu (2007), stressed that in the present day Nigeria, 8 out of every 10 graduates roam the streets looking for non-existing jobs. Therefore there is no understatement that cases of mis-match have been established between what is required to stimulate the economy and the career choices of the students.

This is perhaps one major reason why most of the graduates being produced in Nigeria lack the needed employability skills and creativity that can make them self-sustaining. Looking at the following entrepreneurial skills identified by Achibong (2005) as propeller of business success, one is tempted to ask one pertinent question: How much entrepreneurial development is the Nigerian graduate exposed to in their programme? It assumed to be theoretically completed in the entrepreneurial programme are as follows:

- Creative ability for innovations and inventions;
- Practical demonstration of skills and creativities;
- Ability to plan, organize and manage small scale or medium scale business;
- Ability to develop skills of keeping the accounting records of small-scale business;

- Developing human and public relations skills;
- Ability to source for funds for the running of a small-scale business;
- Skills for effective supervision and coordination of both human and material resources;
- Developing skills for effective utilization of the profit for the growth and development of the firm.

It is germane at this juncture to ask how many of the above listed skills are embedded in the curricula of tertiary institutions in Nigeria? The answer to this is not far-fetched as revealed by a study conducted by NUC (2004) which reported that curriculum across many universities in Nigeria have failed to adequately prepare graduate for self-reliance. Interestingly, the same regulatory institution has made entrepreneurial studies compulsory for all courses in Nigeria without recourse to the need to adequately train the lecturers teaching entrepreneurial related courses. This trend is also attested to by Nigeria president, Muhammadu Buhari at the University of Benin 41st convocation ceremony, where he stressed the need for universities in Nigeria to be more entrepreneurial in outlook (Thisday Newspaper 2015). According to him, the university educational curriculum design should be industry driven and participation of all stakeholders' inclusive. The president also noted that university education in Nigeria at present is undervalued. The result is the training of three categories of graduates: "a minority that is well educated, a majority that is either mis-educated or poorly educated and those graduating without any education".

On the part of the government, adequate efforts in terms of policy formulation and infrastructural supports are being made towards producing self-reliant graduates by tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It is on this premise that the present study was undertaken to establish the extent to which curriculum contents reform has provided adequately for graduate entrepreneurship training in Nigeria.

Problem Statement

The importance of entrepreneurship to the 21st century economic situation all over the world makes it necessary to investigate. With peculiarity of unemployment to Nigerian youths grad-

uating from the universities, there is need to look into how these large number of graduates could be equipped for self-employment through entrepreneurship education while they are in schools. A number of studies exist on the need for enterprising development curriculum in the universities in Nigeria while studies also exist on the universities entrepreneurship education. Ochuema and Ozang (2010) in their study titled integrating entrepreneurship education within primary education curriculum for National development stated that entrepreneurship education should be included in the university education curriculum and should be made compulsory for all teacher trainees as catalyst for self-reliance after graduating. The focus of this study was merely to modify the exiting entrepreneurship curriculum and not on the appropriate model that determines the amount of such education risk entrepreneurship needed.

Similarly, Fiac-Mmeremiku (2010) submitted that students should be encouraged to form cooperative societies from school for learning rudiments of business formation. He added that more time should be given to entrepreneurship courses for the sake of practicalising what they have been taught. However, the curriculum that will support her submission was not solicited for. Uduak and Aniefiok (2011) studied entrepreneurship education and the career intentions of tertiary education student. To the authors, the rationale for the inclusion of entrepreneurship curriculum in Universities according to Cotton et al. (2000) is that it would help graduate acquire increased understanding of entrepreneurship, equip them with entrepreneurial approach to the world of work and prepare them to act as entrepreneurs and managers of new businesses. However, the relationship between the curriculum of the said entrepreneurship education and how it would influence entrepreneurial skill and attitude in studies was left out. Also, Oghojarfor et al. (2009) explored the role of entrepreneurship education in empowering Nigerian youth for national economic development and found out entrepreneurship education favorably predisposes students toward establishing their own business. The outcome of this study is good as it reveals the importance of entrepreneurship education but the curriculum of the entrepreneurship education was never examined vis-à-vis its strength and weakness to bring about entrepreneurs.

Onyeachu (2010) looked into the contribution and dimension of adult and non-formal education in bringing about skill acquisition. Whether entrepreneurship education termed skill acquisition by Onyeachu is through whatever form of learning, there is need for a functioning curriculum before the aim since could be achieved. In the same vein, Emechete and Awill (2010) examined skill acquisition in Nigeria education system through educational technology and discovered that training in technology will enhance acquisition of appropriate skills, ability and competencies. Yet, the place of viable curriculum was left out.

To Arogundade (2011), in his study of entrepreneurship education, an imperative for sustainable development in Nigeria uncovered the importance of entrepreneurship education towards enhancing sustainable development in the country. He stressed that it was the only tool to fight poverty, youth and graduate unemployment, over depending on foreign goods, low economic growth and development. In spite of the findings of this study, there is the need in specific terms to come for changes in the curriculum that would impact right knowledge and competencies to students to be able to start their own businesses. More also, Gerba (2010) shared the view of Arogundade in his study titled: *Refocusing Education System towards Entrepreneurship Development in Nigeria; A tool for poverty eradication* when he submitted entrepreneurship education as a panacea to socio-economic problems. According to him, human capital theory provides a framework for examining the impact of acquired variables such as education, learning, experience, curriculum content, curriculum implementation, evaluation, development, distribution and use of teaching materials and the relevance of the curriculum to the needs of the society. The theory was also based on the assumption that education could serve as a key determinant of decision choice and providing benefit to specific venture (Dickson 2008).

Okafor and Mordi (2010) studied women entrepreneurship development in Nigeria and the environmental factors affecting them. In their submission, women force remains a central force for economic change. However, some found environmental factors left government policy as a major factor affecting women entrepreneurship development negatively, which also affects other factors. The focus of this study, however,

was on women engagement in entrepreneurship and factors causing them setbacks and not on course of action that brings about development. The various studies carried out on entrepreneurship education have not addressed the correlation between the institution curriculum on entrepreneurship education and its strength to raise entrepreneurs among graduate in Nigeria. Graduates are not entrepreneurship inclusive and motivated to venture to self-business ventures after leaving schools. Therefore a gap exists between literature and knowledge which this study tried to fill up. To this end, this study explored contents of university curriculum and the impact on breeding graduates with right and motivated entrepreneurship skills in Nigeria.

Objectives

The broad objective of this research work was to examine the university curriculum and its adequacy in producing graduates with right entrepreneurial skills with a view of bringing an end to unemployment in Nigeria. The specific objectives however were to:

- Assess the relevance of educational curriculum to graduate entrepreneurial skills acquisition in Nigeria;
- Evaluate the adequacy of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian Universities;
- Provide a possible model for a sustainable skill acquisition via entrepreneurship studies in Nigerian Universities.

Literature Review

The goals of tertiary education as enshrined in the National Policy on Education, 2004 edition in its section 8 were considered vis-à-vis youth entrepreneurship. The goals include the following:

- To contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training;
- To develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society;
- To develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environment;
- To acquire both physical and intellectual skills which would enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;

- To promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
- To forge and cement national unity and
- To promote national and international understanding.

Ajibola (2008) in his article titled *Innovations and Curriculum Development for Basic Education in Nigeria: Policy Priorities and Challenges of Practice and Implementation*, stated that education reform all over the world is increasingly curriculum-based, as mounting pressures and demand for change tend to target and focus on both the structures and the very content of school curricula. Arising from the revolution in objectives, some radical changes were made in contents. At the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions, the contents of subjects studied were reviewed so that they would gear towards achieving the set objectives. The provision for a core curriculum (or core subjects) and optional curriculum (or elective subjects) is also a significant change. The aims of these changes are to guarantee an all-round education for learners, and to bring some degree of diversity into curriculum development (Aja-Okorie et al. 2013; Alabi et al. 2014; Gerba 2010). The curriculum provisions are immense and profound for school teaching and learning. Reviewing the experience in the United States, entrepreneurship curriculum contents embedded activities such as small business management, new venture creation and entrepreneurship sustenance (Muhammad and Ramoni 2015). These approaches are directed towards instilling entrepreneurial mindsets in American university graduates. The methodologies involve the use of mentoring, internship, role play, case studies, seminars, business plan, discussions as well as lectures to reinforce learning. Such curriculum contents in America, according to OECD 2010 as cited in Muhammad and Ramoni et al. (2015), is structured in such a way that forty one percent (41%) training is done at the level of department in line with students' chosen careers. The thirty one percent (31%) of the contents is domiciled in the business schools/ faculties while the remaining twenty three percent (23%) is administered by the university entrepreneurship development centres. This is a contrast to what is presently practiced in most Nigerian universities where the teaching and learning of entrepreneurship is totally centralised and generalised.

Although, universities had made several attempts in the past at encouraging entrepreneurial trainings, yet many graduates do not have the needed skills to begin their own businesses despite entrepreneurship courses taken while in schools. A closer look at the Nigerian Universities in recent time revealed that the universities have challenges in the area of curriculum development. This is more evident in the recent events where many of the courses across universities were denied accreditation based on the relevance to the required standard for sound academic growth and development. These institutions could still not meet the need of graduates for the promotion of economic self-reliance and self-sufficiency due to factors such as ill-structured curricula.

In a study conducted by the National Universities Commission (NUC) in 2004 on the labour market expectations of Nigerian graduates, it was observed that curriculum in Nigerian University had not adequately prepared graduates for self-employment. Graduates are rather prepared as job seekers instead of job creators. Underlying this situation is the fact that the contents of curriculum for entrepreneurship learning are not broad enough to equip graduates with desirable skills required for self-employment. It is in the light of this that stakeholders in recent times had called for designing appropriate curriculum as equipment for graduates self-employment and relevance in society (Oyesiku 2008).

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive research survey of expo-fact design was adopted in this study. The main instrument used for this study was a standard questionnaire on University Education and Entrepreneurship Development Questionnaire (UE-AEDQ) which aimed at assessing the current universities curriculum and its sufficiency to impart required entrepreneurship skills, knowledge and attitude on university graduates. The population of this study included undergraduate students, graduating students, lecturers, Directors of Entrepreneurship Development Centre and entrepreneurial instructors from the six Universities in Southwest Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted in this study. Firstly, purposive sampling technique was used to select six Universities across South West

Nigeria. Secondly, a simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents who completed the research instrument. Similarly, convenient sampling technique was used to delineate the respondents into, forty (40) graduating students, thirty (30) undergraduates, twenty (20) lecturers, one (1) director of entrepreneurship centre/programme and nine (9) entrepreneurship instructors. In all, the subjects of this study are six hundred (600) respondents from the selected universities. Frequency counts, percentages, F-test, ANOVA and Regression Analysis were used to analyze data collected from the field at Alpha 0.5 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 600 questionnaires were distributed to respondents at the six universities in south-west Nigeria and 544 questionnaires, representing 91 percent were returned for analyses.

To meet the first research objective, responses were analysed to determine if the educational curriculum development is relevant to improve the entrepreneurial skills acquisition of graduates in Nigeria. Table 1 shows that the calculated F value is less than the critical F table (8.64) at 0.05 significance level and at 3.23 degree of freedom. Hence, Table 1 indicates that educational curriculum development is highly relevant to improved graduates entrepreneurial skills acquisition in Nigerian Universities.

When a curriculum is difficult, not much could be achieved in the course of learning. Hence, a curriculum should be holistic and practical ori-

ented. UNCTAD (2010) maintained that the curriculum determines the outcome of learning process. This is to show that the development of a curriculum is germane to production of graduates with relevant experience and skills.

In addition, to meet the first research objective, responses were also analysed to determine the relevance of curriculum to entrepreneurship education. Table 2 shows the calculated F – Value as 80.807 and a critical F table of 8.66. The calculated F value is greater than the critical F table (8.66) at 0.05 significance level and at 3,19 degree of freedom. This indicates that the importance and benefits of entrepreneurship education is significantly high.

Therefore, entrepreneurship education should be given priority in the university curriculum. Alarepe (2008) and UNCTAD (2010) had earlier stressed the importance of entrepreneurship as it creates jobs and diversifies management knowledge. This shows that the importance of entrepreneurship education cannot be over emphasized. Yakubu and Hussani (2011) see it as the instrument for national development.

To meet the second research objective, responses were analysed to determine the adequacy of entrepreneurship education in producing graduates with relevant entrepreneurial skills. Table 3 shows the calculated F – Value as 1.856 and a critical F table of 8.70. The calculated F value is less than the critical F table (8.70) at 0.05 significance level and at 3.15 degree of freedom. This indicates that there is significant relationship between entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities and production of graduates

Table 1: Analysis of responses whether educational curriculum development is relevant to improve graduates entrepreneurial skills acquisition in Nigeria

<i>Source of variation</i>	<i>Degree of freedom (Wf)</i>	<i>Sum of square (SS)</i>	<i>Mean square (MS)</i>	<i>Variance ratio F cal.</i>	<i>F table</i>
Decision	3	15,579.5	5193	3.472	8.64
Error	20	29,912	1495.6		
Total	23	45,491.96	1977.9		

Table 2: Relevance of curriculum to entrepreneurship education

<i>Source of variation</i>	<i>Degree of freedom (Wf)</i>	<i>Sum of square (SS)</i>	<i>Mean square (MS)</i>	<i>Variance ratio F cal.</i>	<i>F table</i>
Decision	3	91101.2	30367.1	80.807	8.66
Error	16	6012.8	375.8		
Total	19	97114	5111.3		

Table 3: Adequacy of entrepreneurship education in producing graduates with relevant entrepreneurial skills

<i>Source of variation</i>	<i>Degree of freedom (Wf)</i>	<i>Sum of square (SS)</i>	<i>Mean square (MS)</i>	<i>Variance ratio F cal.</i>	<i>F table</i>
Decision	3	22075.75	7358.6	1.856	8.70
Error	12	4757.0	3964.4		
Total	15	17318.75	1154.6		

with relevant entrepreneurial skills to create own jobs for self-employment after graduation.

However, the current university entrepreneurship education is deficient as only theoretical aspect is included. Also, it was uncovered that most universities in Nigeria, with reference to South West in particular, do not have entrepreneurship centers. This further deteriorates the quality of entrepreneurship education in our nation. Hence, the current entrepreneurship education in Nigeria is grossly inadequate, thus, the need for a new model. Alarepe (2008) submitted that the current curriculum model in some Nigerian Universities where entrepreneurship courses are part of departmental courses is deficient. He suggested that entrepreneurship courses should be separated from departmental courses and be offered by entrepreneurship development centres at various institutions. Yakubu and Hussan (2011) also shared this view when they mentioned that university graduates lack the practical skills which could be acquired through entrepreneurship education programmes. Ifedili and Ofoegbu (2011) also corroborated this in their study.

In addition, to meet the second research objective, responses were also analysed to determine whether the skills students acquired after completing an entrepreneurship course is adequate to become an entrepreneur. Table 4 shows the calculated F – Value as 4.309 and a critical F table of 8.79. The calculated F value is less than the critical F table (8.79) at 0.05 significance level and at 3,11 degree of freedom. This finding indicated that the level of skills acquired by students is significant to their becoming entrepreneurs. This shows that when students are properly trained and allowed to practice what they have learnt, they will have courage to start their own business when they are out of schools should white collar job is not found. This agrees with UNCTAD's (2010) position when it stressed that entrepreneurship curriculum should be tailored to local environment to promote innovations and creativity.

To meet the third research objective, responses were also analysed to determine how many of the respondents supported the review of the model for a sustainable entrepreneurship skill acquisition in Nigerian universities. Table 5

Table 4: Analysis of whether the skills students acquired after completing an entrepreneurship course is adequate to become an entrepreneur

<i>Source of variation</i>	<i>Degree of freedom (Wf)</i>	<i>Sum of square (SS)</i>	<i>Mean square (MS)</i>	<i>Variance ratio F cal.</i>	<i>F table</i>
Decision	3	24687.34	8229.11	4.309	8.79
Error	8	15276.36	1909.5		
Total	11	39963.7	3633.1		

Table 5: Support the review of the model for a sustainable entrepreneurship skill acquisition in Nigerian universities.

<i>Source of variation</i>	<i>Degree of freedom (Wf)</i>	<i>Sum of square (SS)</i>	<i>Mean square (MS)</i>	<i>Variance ratio F cal.</i>	<i>F table</i>
Decision	3	115725.82	38575.3	61.51	8.64
Error	24	15051.43	627.143		
Total	27	130777.25	4843.6		

shows the calculated F – Value as 61.51 and a critical F table of 8.64. The calculated F value is greater than the critical F table (8.64) at 0.05 significance level and at 3,27 degree of freedom. This indicates that the present model of entrepreneurship curriculum needs to be reviewed.

Support was received for a model where the time allotted to practicals should be equal to the time allotted to theoretical learning. The entrepreneurship centre should be well equipped and staffed. Training programme should be available for the staff of the entrepreneurship education centre in the universities. Also, entrepreneurship courses should be made compulsory for all students and it should be run throughout their years in the university. The students should also be allowed to interact with successful entrepreneurs and stakeholders in and outside university communities.

This agrees with the submission of UNCTAD (2010) when it asserted that entrepreneurship education is a lifelong process. It also calls for involvement of several stakeholders in the development of entrepreneurship curriculum and its implementation. These stakeholders include the NGOs and successful entrepreneurs in the society. It also stressed the need to train and retrain the teachers of entrepreneurship education, the need to tailor curriculum to local environment was also revealed. This implies that entrepreneurship curriculum should be more proactive, practical oriented and give rooms for new initiative and creativity among students. Yaku-bu and Hussani (2011) called for better entrepreneurship education. Akpomi (2009) suggested new entrepreneurship education model that will run through all the student years in the university. Amuseghan and Tayo-Olajubutu (2009) also called for the review of existing curricula.

CONCLUSION

Appropriate university curriculum would lead to entrepreneurship development in Nigeria. A theoretically based entrepreneurship course as presently taught in many universities would not produce the much needed competent graduate entrepreneurs that could start their own business and create job opportunities, exploit resources and contribute meaningfully to the economic development of the nation. Hence, adequately and properly formulated curriculum on entrepreneurship education could lead to

emergence of entrepreneurs that are dynamic and progressive. It would be of greater economic advantage if entrepreneurship development could be given priority in Nigerian universities through formulation of relevant curriculum that is all inclusive and practically oriented. Efforts targeted at such paradigm shift should include all relevant stakeholders to formulate the curriculum while institutions provide adequately equipped skill acquisition centres and well trained instructors to facilitate the process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study showed that improved curriculum on entrepreneurship development would produce graduates with adequate entrepreneurial skills. Based on these findings, it is recommended that all universities should include entrepreneurship courses in their curriculum with priority on practical demonstration of what the students have learnt as follows:

- The university curriculum should be reformed to accommodate skill acquisitions that promote graduate entrepreneurial empowerment and development.
- The curriculum should also encourage collaboration between small business entrepreneurs and schools for exploration and research on how to achieve entrepreneurship development.
- The curriculum contents that provide decentralised and coordinated learning structures would enhance student-exchange programmes and skills acquisition within the university.
- Government should promulgate relevant laws that would make it compulsory for all students to be entrepreneurially trained before graduating from the university and also sanction any university contravenes the law.
- Designing and implementing the new practical oriented curriculum should be all inclusive and flexible as it is, it is now obvious that universities could not do it all alone. There is now the need to involve successful entrepreneurs around and other stakeholders in mentoring the students so as to complement the efforts of the university authorities.
- The model should include self-regulation, self-efficacy and entrepreneurship orienta-

- tion including internship, blended learning, simulation and business games as reinforcements.
- The NUC and Federal Ministry of Education should ensure total compliance of Nigerian universities to the improved and practically oriented entrepreneurship curriculum.

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