

Role of the State in Managing Entrepreneurial Tertiary Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

The role of the state in managing entrepreneurial tertiary education in Nigeria was discussed in recognition of the national mandate to the state (government) to participate prominently in managing educational programmes at tertiary education in the country for manpower generation and economic development. It is here argued that if the state has such an indispensable mandate, it must participate actively in addressing the current issue of entrepreneurial education that has become the public expectation on tertiary education for every of her undergraduate and graduates. Documentary evidences revealed some specific areas of state actions and its inhibitions. Hence, curriculum redesigning, creation of enabling environment, effective management, enlightenment programmes, opportunities for credit facilities, adequate funding, purposeful government action and a holistic approach to entrepreneurial issues as soon as they arise, and cooperation with stakeholders, were recommended as specific roles of the government to ensure that graduates of tertiary education in this era of pervading unemployment acquire skills for self-employment and self-reliance.

Key words: role, state, managing, entrepreneurial, tertiary education.

Introduction

A perusal of the provisions of the goals of tertiary education as enshrined in the National Policy on Education (NPE) reveals that the state (government) is to participate prominently in managing educational programmes at tertiary level of education in the country for manpower generation and for sustainable economic development. The management of programmes run at tertiary institutions (whether state or federal institutions) shall grow out of the life and social ethos of the state, which they serve (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). This by implication means that the state as the machinery that controls the affairs of the country is to participate in managing programmes of national importance at tertiary level of education, which are designed to contribute to the improvement of societal demand and standard.

The pathetic challenges of the present global economic meltdown and the perennial unemployment situation in addition to the purported government non-holistic approach to issues bordering on tertiary institutions in the country are observed to have rendered some of our tertiary education graduates vulnerable to idleness, hunger and restiveness. These issues raise doubts on how self-reliance and self-employment can be realistically attained by tertiary institutions in the country. A programme of national concern offered in tertiary institutions, at state or federal tertiary institutions without dichotomy, that can give meaning to lives of graduates will not only be in place, but fully encouraged with the government actively participating in its management.

It is along this consideration that this paper seeks to proffer answers to three pertinent questions: What is the rationale for the state managing entrepreneurial tertiary education? What constitutes the sphere of state action in managing entrepreneurial tertiary education? And, what are inhibitions to managing entrepreneurial tertiary education by the state?

Tertiary institutions and the roles

The role of tertiary institutions is defined in terms of their objectives. These institutions are the Nigerian universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, or monotechnics with the role to: contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training; develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society; develop the intellectual capacity of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments; acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society; promote and encourage scholarship and community service; forge and cement national unity; and promote national and international understanding and interaction (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

The policy document states that tertiary institutions shall pursue these goals through: teaching; research and development; virile staff development programme; generation and dissemination of knowledge; a variety of modes of programmes including full-time, part-time, block-release, day-release, sandwich, etc; access to training funds such as those provided by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF); Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES); maintenance of the minimum standards through appropriate agencies; inter-institutional co-operation; dedicated services to the community through extra-mural and extension services. In pursuance of its goals, all

teachers in tertiary institutions shall be required to undergo training in the methods and techniques of teaching (Federal Republic of Education, 2004). These well-articulated and laudable measures if adopted could add meaningful impact to the standard and quality of tertiary education programmes and products in the country.

The objectives portray tertiary institutions as a learning economy where different modes of knowledge – know what, know why and know who, can be identified. The knowledge of know what (facts and information), know why (principles and laws) necessary to reduce trial and error, know how (the skills and capability to do something, skills that are traditionally acquired within the workplace) and finally know who (information about who knows how to do what and the social capability to establish relationships to special groups in order to draw on their expertise). Each of these different forms of learning employs different channels of information exchange. In the case of know what and why, formal learning in tertiary institutions is the normal channel. Know how depends on practical experience through apprenticeship, and network of relationships with industrial and commercial partners. Finally, know who is learned from social interactions daily.

Another dimension of the doubt about tertiary institutions (the learning economy) is the way knowledge is transferred from one group to another to create learning systems without the conscious participation of the state. Tertiary institutions are to inculcate the knowledge of the appropriate skills and competencies required of the workforce. The inevitable priority of tertiary institutions will be to ensure that education and training systems produce people with the flexibility to respond to stronger changing circumstances alongside specific skills and competencies required by the economy. Tertiary institutions can play a key role in the development of the cultural and political determinants of socio-economic success. The state is challenged to enhance the entrepreneurial management of tertiary institutions including their faculty and students, so that they can play significantly in the development of network of entrepreneurial engagement.

Rationale for managing entrepreneurial tertiary education

There has been a growing body of academic research on the relevance of tertiary institutions. Tertiary institutions have for long been important component for economic and workforce growth and development. It is characterized by academic programme offerings, faculty engagement and consultation, and professional development and support for small businesses (Goddard, Charles, Pike, Potts and Bradley, 1994).

In this context, the rationale for managing entrepreneurial tertiary education according to National Universities Commission (NUC) in Nwangwu (2007) is that the current Nigerian education is faulty. There is a mismatch between what the Nigerian economy requires and what students study in institutions of higher learning. The tertiary institutions turn out to the labour market graduates who lack basic skills, who are un-enterprising, unemployable and unprepared for work; who lack entrepreneurial, problem solving and decision making skill, inadequate technical skills as exhibited by their inability to appropriately apply acquired knowledge to the workplace, ignorance in the use of instrument/equipment, due to inadequate practical experiences, minimal comprehension of problems and low solution proffer ability.

The public expectations on tertiary institutions for human capital development for a self-sustaining economy are ever increasing on daily basis. With the current financial meltdown coupled with ravaging unemployment situation in the Nigerian economy, it appears, doubtful whether tertiary institutions on itself can actually meet up this public demand and expectation. In this instance, there is the need to enhance quality human capital development in certificate and degree programmes, workshops and seminars, technical and administrative assistance and resource referral in entrepreneurship offered by tertiary institutions in order to turn out self-sustaining and self-reliant outputs of the system.

To be fulfilling, it is also expected that these institutions will admit students and place them in internships, co-ops, and part-time employment programmes of continuing and professional development to enhance their skills and knowledge, embedding international businesses by targeted training programmes and research links providing a gateway to the broader and international knowledge base for small and medium enterprises, and providing analysis and leadership within civic society.

The fact that expectations on tertiary institutions are rising can be traced to the fundamental shifts in the organization of production and the related regulation of the economy in the processes of localization and globalization. Effective entrepreneurial tertiary education management will lead to economic and workforce development processes which requires that institutions of higher education have an understanding of these dynamics.

There is the need therefore to embrace, support and sustain technological programmes offered in tertiary institutions if they are to maintain employment and growth. There is also the corresponding need to develop and implement policies and practices in these tertiary institutions for support and promotion of research and development, innovation and technology transfer. Not only will intervention and support from the state, for tertiary entrepreneurial education programmes become more important to economic and workforce success, there has to be a qualitative shift in policy choice by the state towards nascent entrepreneurship and innovation, and to

providing a more sophisticated environment for mobile capital so as to maximize value added research and development and other high status jobs in the national economy (Wright, Birley and Mossey, 2004).

The position here is that our economy can work through the effective tertiary institutions backed up by the state, which are uniquely positioned to provide technical, skills, and knowledge capital assets within the global economy. Higher education provides the elements central to entrepreneurial endeavours. Such include human capital elements as the 3 C's namely: Concepts, Competence and Connections (Kanter, 1995). The location of tertiary institutions is a powerful facilitator of the processes - concepts links to research, competence links to teaching and connections links to the transfer to and from people and networks grown out of institutions. These assets can grow out of tertiary institutions where they offer innovative assets, innovative capabilities, production capabilities, quality skill, learning, networking and collaboration (Kanter, 1995). Tertiary institutions' policy shifts, has needed to be innovative and entrepreneurial in nature, drawing on a wider network of resources, negotiating and building alliance with state.

Sphere of state action in managing entrepreneurial tertiary education

The need to have a profound national economies has had implication for state management of entrepreneurial tertiary education for economic and workforce growth and development. To overcome the rigidities inherent in achieving the roles of tertiary education, state action is indispensable for tertiary institutions development; the state must not play a positive role and cannot act as a passive spectator because tertiary institutions exist as its own invention.

The state must recognize the need to embrace, support and sustain technology (through inventions and innovations) if they are to maintain employment and growth in the economy. The state must also develop and implement policies and practices in the support and promotion of research and development, innovation and technology transfer. The challenge to the state is to find ways in which the global economy can be networked through her tertiary institutions by unlocking those resources that are favourable to entrepreneurial tertiary education. According to Jhingan (2008), the sphere of state action is therefore very vast and all pervading and includes changes in:

- **Institutional framework**

The expectation is that tertiary institutions are to create a climate for entrepreneurship. The climate creation depends on establishing social institutions, which make possible objectively the exercise of independent individual enterprises and the maturation and development of personalities whose dominant orientation is in the direction of productivity, working and creating integration.

To realize this state must be able to adopt series of political and educational acts, which include the modification of the tertiary institutions, the protection of property rights efficiently and the maintenance of law and order within the country. The establishment of financial institutions, which collect savings and canalize them for entrepreneurial activities in tertiary institutions, is indispensable. This requires the state to adopt such measures and fiscal policies, which encourage the growth of entrepreneurship in higher education.

Entrepreneurial tertiary education can be effectively managed by the state introducing changes in institutional framework and increased capital formation or as a result of technological changes. The state can associate effort with reward/incentive system, expand the scope of entrepreneurship through curriculum design in schools and the freedom to seize opportunities it offers. People through this process will seize new opportunities, which will in turn further change the institutions.

The new opportunities may come through new inventions, improvements in communications, which may open new opportunities for trade, investing new capital or offering new chances of employment. Such new opportunities bring about changes in innovations. These changes are gradual and perceptible, and are initiated by innovators, the new men, who endeavour to break with the past and mould the old institutional framework into a new setting.

Similarly contact with outsiders may be instrumental in weakening an established pattern of society. The state can do a lot by introducing reforms in the field of education, by maintaining law and order, by providing improved public utility services, by fostering new industries towards improved tertiary institutions.

- **Influencing the level of investment, social and economic overheads in tertiary institutions**

The provision of social and economic overheads for tertiary institutions is the responsibility of the state; the private sector economy cannot meaningfully embark on this. The state should see the need to provide such basic services like electricity, gas, well-equipped laboratories, and transport, telecommunications that encourage entrepreneurship education. The state should formulate a plan for the development of the essential services on a priority basis.

- **Development of appropriate technologies in various fields**

Apart from providing economic overheads for tertiary education, the state should help in evolving appropriate technologies in various fields, which may be in keeping with the factor endowments of tertiary institutions. Through the effort of the state, tertiary institutions may benefit from the vast of fund of knowledge in the field of technology of the advanced countries and modify and adapt the techniques of the latter according to their social, economic and technical absorption capacity and requirements. Facilities to finance such techniques and the supply of raw materials and wider markets which come from the state will further help in increasing the supply of entrepreneurs. The provision of the entire social, economic and technological institutions will push even the latent entrepreneurship education in the right direction.

- **Quality education**

Investment in human capital is highly possible through quality education. Entrepreneurial education in higher institutions is not possible without quality education. To start a national development programme while leaving the population of lecturers with obsolete ideas seems to meet futility. To developed entrepreneurial education in tertiary education the quality of labour is more important. It is by investing in them that their productivity can be increased.

It is through quality tertiary education that the state can increase the effective labour supply and hence the productive capacity of the nation. An entrepreneurial tertiary education has to be varied and wide. Investment in such a vast and diverse field as entrepreneurial education is only possible through the aegis of the state in updating and sustaining the teaching manpower in the system and by attracting new ones into the system.

Entrepreneurial tertiary education necessitates the setting up of scientific, technological, managerial, research and training institutes. There is also the need to establish an entrepreneurship development institute for every tertiary institution. Such an institute will include a wide spectrum of entrepreneurial and related-activities for the selection, development and training of students for entrepreneurship.

- **Development of appropriate personality and motivation**

McClelland in Jhingan (2008) has propounded a theory of the Achieving Society based on his researches that entrepreneurship ultimately depends on motivation. It is the need for achievement; the sense of doing and getting things done that promotes entrepreneurship. Thus motivations, abilities and congenial environment all combine to promote entrepreneurship. Since entrepreneurial motivations and abilities are long run sociological problems, it is better to make the political, social and economic environment congenial for the growth of entrepreneurship in tertiary education. The political climate must be disposed to development of political will, attitude and interest conducive to give a holistic attention to issues of entrepreneurial tertiary education.

- **Engagement of tertiary institutions with economic development**

The state may seek to increase the engagement of tertiary institutions with economic development. Tertiary institutions need to be supported with a strong research base, attracting students from outside, to add to the local stock of human capital. The state can aid institutions to attracting inward investment and possibly embedding that investment through training and research links.

With research-based institutions, certain departments, programmes and research activities could have strong national and international linkages that can provide gateway for local firms and students to the wider world. With the right form of incentives in terms of institution's assessment procedures and leadership development programmes, it might be possible to ensure that the appropriate signals are reached and embedded into the programme of individual institutions.

The establishment of such a development programme for individual engaged in institution interface would be a further small positive step towards its improved management. Furthermore, this interface would allow for an entrepreneurial development system to be created that would be institutional in scope and systematic in approach (Lyons, 2003).

Inhibitions to state effectiveness in managing entrepreneurial tertiary education

An atmosphere inimical to inventions, experiment, innovation and change can inhibit the efforts of the state at managing entrepreneurial tertiary education. This includes: the social system, which denies opportunities for creative faculties; the forces of custom; the rigidity of status and the distrust of new ideas and of the exercise of intellectual curiosity.

- **Social system**

The social system is characterized by the aggregation of conflicting interests and behaviour patterns. Traditional

attitudes discourage the full utilization of human resources. People prefer traditional trades and professions rather than venture in new trades. According to Hagen in Jhingan (2008), there is a feeling of repugnance toward work that soils one's hands, in developing economies. Youths are more enthusiastic searching for scarce government job rather than being creative and adventurous Nwangwu (2007).

Thus, the value system minimizes the importance of inventions, innovations and change, economic incentives, material rewards, independence and rational calculation. It inhibits the development and acceptance of new ideas and objectives. In short, the cultural value system within many poor countries is not favourable to economic achievement. Nwangwu (2007), describes it this way, Nigerian value system has been that of youths transiting from school to work to earn a living. This practice leads to high state of unemployment. The age long tradition of students is usually to look down on such courses as vocational and technical education, which can equip them with the skills with which to be self-reliant.

- **Monopolistic tendencies of big business houses**

There exist a few entrepreneurs in the economy who tend to become monopolistic and quasi-monopolistic. They develop personal relationship with the state official, enjoy a privilege position, and receive preferential treatment. Thus, they found individual business empire inhibiting the growth of fresh entrepreneurship tertiary education within this country.

- **Technological backwardness**

Entrepreneurship education is hindered by technological backwardness in developing states. Such states do not possess the necessary technical know-how and capital to evolve their own techniques, which may be output increasing and labour absorbing. Mostly they have to depend on imported capital-intensive techniques, which do not fit in their factor endowments. This reduces output per man and products are also of sub-standard quality.

- **Lack of infrastructure**

Technological backwardness manifests in lack of infrastructure in developing states, which add to the risk and uncertainty of new entrepreneurship education. Such states lack properly developed means of transport and communications – information and communication technologies, cheap and regular power supply, availability of sufficient raw materials, trained labour, well-developed funding base, and machines and tools.

On the other hand, Hoselitz (1952) identifies that a number of economic, social and administrative resistances have added up to out-moded techniques over output-increasing techniques (EDCC, January 1954). So far as the process of innovating is concerned, Professor Henry Wallich opines, one can hardly say that in less developed countries 'innovation' is its most characteristic feature (Schumpeter, 1943). The process is better described perhaps as one of assimilation. No one would deny that to organize a new industry in a less developed country is an act of entrepreneurial initiative. But, it is evidently very different from the original process of innovation (Aggarwal, 2004). Thus the entrepreneur plays a secondary role in developing countries due to various economic, social, and administrative obstacles noted above.

- **Poor management of training scheme**

The management of students industrial training scheme that was designed to enable them acquire practical skills through industrial attachment have been plagued by poor funding, poor commitment and poor management by monitoring and supervising agencies. Thus, students' activities and the school curriculum and industrial production practices and placement fall short of industries (Nwangwu, 2007).

Summary/Conclusions

This study has very succinctly discussed tertiary institutions and the objectives. It also considered the rationale, spheres of state action and inhibitions to managing entrepreneurial tertiary education. State efforts are varied and pervading, and permeate the pertinent areas of making conscious changes in institutional framework, influencing the level of investment, social and economic overheads, setting up of training institutes for manpower development, development of appropriate personality and motivations, and engagement of tertiary institutions with economic development.

However, the expected state actions appear to be inhibited by the social system characterized by conflicting demands and behavioural pressures, lack of political will and interests of the state to address holistically entrepreneurial tertiary education, monopolistic tendencies of big business houses, technological backwardness, lack of infrastructure facilities culminating in lack of information and communication technologies, cheap and regular power supply, unavailability of sufficient raw materials, poorly trained labour, poor funding base, lack of machines and tools, and poor management.

It is argued that private enterprise alone is unable to solve the action required to fulfill entrepreneurial tertiary education because it does not exist alone in the economy. State action is indispensable for the development of entrepreneurial tertiary education in the institutions it created. This would enhance production of outputs that are self-employed and self-reliant for the overall interest of sustainable development in Nigeria.

Recommendations

It is hereby recommended that:

1. The state should be concerned with the redesigning of tertiary education curriculum to be practical oriented. The students would gain more the expected experiences; skills and appropriate attitudes that will enable them perform well in businesses through practice.
2. The state should create enabling environment for entrepreneurial tertiary education through the provision of instrument, equipment, tools, and machines relevant to the field of entrepreneurship.
3. The state should ensure effective management of tertiary institutions. There should be commitment and dedication to the monitoring and supervising of programmes even where there is no financial benefit attached to such exercise.
4. The state should sponsor enlightenment campaign programme to reawakening the interest of parents and students, to discourage neglect for the courses and to correct the wrong psychology towards those studying technical and vocational courses in school.
5. The state should offer financial incentives to under-graduates studying entrepreneurial education and sponsor banks credit facilities to graduates wishing to establish small-scale business enterprises.
6. The state should provide quality lecturers and adequate personnel who are knowledgeable in entrepreneurship education to tertiary institutions.
7. The state should adequately commit funds to tertiary institutions for the training and retraining of lecturers, procurement of machines, tools and other facilities for entrepreneurial training and quality manpower development.
8. The state should regularly involve in the monitoring and supervision of educational policy making and implementation to stimulate encourage for entrepreneurial tertiary education.
9. The state should adopt effective means through which issues affecting tertiary entrepreneurial education could be handled holistically and solutions reached.
10. The state entrepreneurship development institutes should be reorganized to work in partnership with tertiary institutions offering courses in entrepreneurship at all levels. This would enhance the selection, development, training and production of more entrepreneurs that are needed to accelerate industrial enterprise, stimulate self-employment, diversify the ownership of business and expand economic activities in the economy (Eze 2007).

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