

University Education in Nigeria for Global Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship Development Job Creation and Wealth Generation: which Role for the Guidance Counsellor?

Grace Omejevwe Akpochafo

Department of Guidance and Counselling, Delta State University, Abraka

E-mail address: omejevwe@yahoo.com

Abstract

Global competitiveness demands new ways of living, communicating and interacting. In the new world order international system of stratification has come to be based not on “who owns what” but on who knows what. Nigerian universities up to the 1970s produced graduates that could compete with graduates from other countries. Today, the story is different as university graduates cannot defend their degrees nor compete internationally. Many are considered half-baked and unemployable thus leading to large scale unemployment. Entrepreneurship education is being introduced in the Universities as a means of finding solution to the unemployment problem. In this regard the guidance counsellor has a number of roles to play. This paper maintains the stance that the counsellor liaising with university authorities, various occupational organization and small scale industrialists can counsel university students about entrepreneurial options, (career guidance) invite successful entrepreneurs to talk to students about their businesses, use bibliotherapeutic techniques and field trips among others to create entrepreneurial spirit in the students.

Keywords: Global competitiveness, entrepreneurship development, job creation, wealth generation and guidance counsellor.

1. Introduction

Nigeria has no business being a poor country especially by virtue of its position as the 6th oil producing nation in the world. Rather than revel in her wealth, she wallows in abject poverty. The poor constitute about 70% of the Nigeria population and the youths are largely unemployed in spite of her abundant natural resources. This situation lends credence to emeagwali’s postulation that “human resource, not natural resources, is the basis for the economy of the 21st century. (Emeagwali, 2000)”. This argument is in consonance with Onokerhoraye (2011) who stressed that the new international system of stratification has come to be based not on “who owns what” but on “who knows what.” Unfortunately, Nigerian governments at all tiers, are yet to appreciate the importance of human capital development as education is not on their front burners. For instance, Nigeria is one of the E-9 countries, that is world’s high population countries with high incidence of illiteracy. Others are Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico and Pakistan (Obanya, 2002).

Illiterate adults are about 48% of Nigeria’s 80 million adults and about 10.5 million children are out-of-school. The consequences of illiteracy and lack of saleable skills of graduates include low levels of living and inability to afford the minimum amount of food, clothing, shelter and so on. A population that shares these characteristics cannot be a major participant in the new economic order. Yet Nigeria wants to be one of the 20 leading economies by the year 2020. The new economic order forces global competitiveness on all developed, developing and the under developed nations. The question is what is the fate of Nigeria in the new scheme of things? Can her citizens compete advantageously in the new world of interconnections? How can her citizens be made to benefit from the new order? What are the handicaps and what is the way forward? These are some of the issues this paper discusses.

2. New World Order and its Demands

Global competitiveness arose as a result of a phenomenal development referred to as globalisation or what Lagarde (2012) termed “the new world of interconnections”. This development compels a new way of living, of communicating and of interacting. To Lagarde, it is a great paradox of our age for on the one hand, the world gets bigger, with so many people and places sharing the fruits of knowledge and prosperity; and on the other hand, the world gets smaller with so many people and places crossing paths and sharing destinies. She concludes the description by saying that the world is more “closely-knit” than ever before and that “we are all dependent on one another more than ever before”.

As global observers and as participants we know that people travel more freely across borders either as tourists, workers, students, conferees, diplomats and what have you. World trade has increased and Nigerian crude oil and agricultural products like cocoa, cassava and cotton are taken to distant lands while Japanese, Taiwan, Malaysian and Korean technological products find large lucrative markets in Africa and Nigeria. Lagarde (2012)

says about 900 million tourists travelled between countries in 2010, the world records over 200 million migrant workers and foreigners make up between a fifth and a quarter of the professional workforce in countries like Australia, Canada and Switzerland. It is common knowledge that a large percentage of qualified Nigerian professionals are in the United Kingdom, the United States of America (USA), the Middle East and South Africa, to mention but a few.

Undoubtedly, the new world order generates a world of new opportunities as well as grave challenges and uncertainties thus making survival tougher and more demanding. Globalisation compels new ways of thinking, new ways of behaving and of doing things; we are bound to behave as new global citizens for a sneeze in the east forces the west to listen and a rumble in the west has its implications for the east. We are truly in a global village and that is why the North Korean's threat over nuclear weapons forced reactions from the west especially Britain and the U.S.A while the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria attracted warnings from western powers to their citizens in Nigeria. Globalisation demands that we watch out for each other and watch each other; we must watch our actions and be sensitive to how these actions affect others, both far and near.

In the new order, the knowledgeable who are able to explore and exploit global resources and use their knowledge to advantage will benefit more than those with poor and irrelevant knowledge; the former will be active and prosperous while the latter will be passive and poverty ridden.

3. University Education in Nigeria

If Nigeria is to become an active and fruitful participant in global competitiveness, her universities must produce better materials that can stand their own anywhere. Nigerian universities up to the 1970s could stand their own and their products competed favourably with western and American university graduates. The early Nigerian universities produced Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, John Pepper Clark, many seasoned administrators, intellectuals, diplomats and professionals. Today, the situation is different as many Nigerian university graduates can hardly articulate their ideas nor defend the degrees they have. Many are considered unemployable. (Dabalén, Oni and Adekola, 2001) and are branded as "half-baked graduates (Ade-Ajayi, 2002). There is this interesting story in the *Vanguard* of August 19, 2012 on page 18. The British General Medical Council (BMC) was reported to have barred medical graduates from nine Nigerian universities from obtaining licences to practice in the United Kingdom. They include Ambrose Ali University, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, University of Jos, University of Nigeria, University of PortHarcourt, Igbinedion University and the University of Benin. Those not listed may really not be better just that they were fortunate to have escaped scrutiny. Such poorly rated universities cannot provide the desired catalyst for national development. Saint, Harnett and Strassner (2003) argued that education in general and higher education in particular are fundamental to the construction of a knowledge economy and society. This is where Nigerian universities fail the nation and their graduates.

4. The Way Forward

Nigerian universities must begin a renewing process that can make its graduates compete favourably in the global market. The certificates awarded by them must be accepted internationally and not relegated to the background. To achieve this, quality staff must be recruited, facilities must be upgraded, infrastructure provided, teaching and research accorded the attention they deserve. The students being admitted must be properly sifted to ensure that only the best are admitted instead of using quota and federal characters as the practice allows mediocre to gain admission while merit suffers.

Lecturers must seek international relevance by partnering with colleagues in other countries, attending international conferences and publishing in world renowned journals. The practice where some Nigerian professors have not left the Nigerian shore once, have no computers and publish only in local journals can at best make them local professors. In the words of Okecha (2008), "the publication of Oyoyo papers in Oyoyo journals by Oyoyo academics to become Oyoyo professors is a damning indictment of the Nigerian university system". To this writer, Oyoyo can be replaced with the word "fraudulent". The graduates produced by them cannot compete internationally nor find employment in the international marketplace.

As a way of ensuring that Nigerian graduates are gainfully employed and generate wealth for themselves, entrepreneurial education has been suggested to go alongside the normal academic pursuit. Okebukola (2012) defined it as "an offering which tools learners with knowledge skills an attitude to be an innovator, opener of a new market, creator of a new brand and a producer. Many Nigerian universities have bought into the idea and have established entrepreneurial development centres. Over 72% of Nigerian universities have adopted or adapted from the guide provided by the National Universities Commission (Okebukola, 2012). Such universities include Covenant University, Pan African University, University of Ibadan, University of Ilorin, Olabisi Onabanjo University, to mention but a few. These entrepreneurial centres equip the students so that, on graduation, they can set up their own small and medium enterprises (SMEs) which contribute significantly to

gross domestic product (GDP). Such enterprises help reduce unemployment, generate wealth, raise standard of living, curb crime rate, generate employment for others and raise self-esteem.

5. The Role of the Guidance Counsellor

Guidance according to Shertzer and Stone (1976) is a process of helping the individual to understand himself and his world. The world refers to the environment in which the individual lives. As the world of work is changing the role of the counsellor cannot be overemphasized. With reference to entrepreneurial education and job creation, the counsellors are in a better position to make the students realize that they have to create opportunities of work for themselves. Obi (2011) cited Barki and Mukhopadhyay (2007) suggested a paradigm shift in the provision of guidance and counselling services as a panacea to the changes in the work place. The situation had been that graduates on leaving school seek white-collar jobs. These days, there are no jobs and there is high rate of unemployment which has become globalized. The youths in tertiary institutions are supposed to have in their minds, as they leave schools, how they can create jobs for themselves. The counsellor has a great role to play here by encouraging the spirit and culture of entrepreneurship in university graduates.

The universities should endeavour to establish counselling centres which is in line with Nigeria's Minister of Education's pronouncement that there should be counselling in all departments in tertiary institutions. These centres should be manned by competent counsellors who are to drive entrepreneurial spirit into the students. Counsellors are to liaise with entrepreneurial centres in the various institutions, so that students develop new ways of thinking, new ways of doing things and acquire the mindset for entrepreneurship development. If universities are to deliver the right skills expected of students in the labour market and to develop entrepreneurial abilities, the counsellor becomes crucial in providing needed guidance. No doubt counsellors with all their skills like genuiness, motivation, time management, listening, silence, empathy, rapport, creativity, questioning can assist in trying to spur entrepreneurial spirit in university students. Counsellors can assist students to make appropriate decisions on the type of entrepreneurship area they can venture into. This is in line with Obiunu and Okoh (2011) who believe that entrepreneurial skills can be enhanced through guidance services.

The guidance programme is made up of cluster of services which are used to guide students. These services include Orientation Service, Information Service, Appraisal Service, Educational Service, Vocational Service, Personal Social Service, Referral Service, Counselling Service and Follow-up Service. For example Appraisal services are services provided by counsellors to enable the counsellor understand his client and the client understands himself knowing his assets, liabilities, potentials, abilities through test and non-test techniques. When students have a good understanding of themselves they are able to make worthwhile decisions and here lies the crucial factor in entrepreneurship development. When a student understands himself he knows the entrepreneurial areas to go into. Orientation service is another service provided by counsellors. This is an induction programme normally provided to expose fresh students to their school environment. During this programme, talks should be slated relating to entrepreneurship development. According to Oghounu (2011) the orientation service can provide the motivation necessary for students to internalize the virtues and values in enterprise and sustainable development. These services, if well provided in the Universities could create entrepreneurial spirit in students. The counsellor can employ other techniques to foster entrepreneurial spirit in students like group discussion, workshop, role playing, seminars, symposia among stakeholders and at the end students will benefit from such exercises.

The counsellor using the social learning theory which teaches that individuals learn by observation, modelling and imitation can invite successful entrepreneurs to deliver lectures to students in different areas. These persons act as role models they might want to imitate. This, no doubt will help to motivate students and create entrepreneurship spirit in them. Such successful entrepreneurs include Dangote, Ibru family, Mike Adenuga Jnr. of Globacom and local entrepreneurs within their community. This gives students the opportunity of interacting with the entrepreneurs which will go a long way to spurring them into trying to carve out a niche for themselves.

Telling students stories of successful entrepreneurs who started in humble ways but today are giants in the business world can indeed motivate them. We can talk of Steve Jobs who started business in his garage; Bill Gates who according to Babalola (2011) dropped out of Harvard University to begin the Microsoft Computer Software Company with Allen; King Camp Gillette formed the American Safety Razor Company with Nickerson and these became big businesses. The counsellor can also use bibliotherapy which is a technique in vocational service by giving them books on successful entrepreneurs to read. After reading, there should be group discussions on the books and how they can acquire some thoughts and implement them to become wealthy people and creators of wealth. Such biographies and auto-biographies are good stimulants to the development of entrepreneurial spirit.

Field trip is another technique of widening the individual's horizon about the world of work. Counsellors, university authorities, departments can organize field trips to different industrial locations to create awareness in students of how they can create and grow business for themselves. This will also give them the opportunity to

discuss with different entrepreneurs about their initial fears, anxieties, teething problems, finance, management and other related issues. This no doubt will give them the knowledge on how they can start small business of their own after graduation.

In various Nigeria Universities, we have different clubs e.g Man-no-war, Cadet, Drug, Free club, Red Cross and so on. The counsellor can use them as platforms to introduce the students to entrepreneurship. The counsellor can go further to forming entrepreneurship clubs where small and medium entrepreneurs are discussed. The counsellor can introduce entrepreneurship club among the students and other individuals of the university community. This will help to create entrepreneurship consciousness among students and culture.

The counsellor can liaise with entrepreneurship centres in the other universities to look for business opportunities like sand dredging, block moulding, running of cyber-cafes, manufacturing of sachet and bottled water, fast food in university premises, soap making, tie and dye and so on that can be attractive to the students.

Another role as suggested by Amuseghen, Tayo-Olajubudu (2000) is to organize intra and inter faculty business plan competitions. The dividend of such competitions is that it will help to inculcate the spirit of entrepreneurship in the students.

6. Recommendations

From the aforesaid, for counsellors' role to be very effective, the following have to be put in place.

- Employ competent counsellors and re-training those that have graduated to acquire entrepreneurship skills and ideas.
- The universities have to establish and enriched entrepreneurship centres.
- Adequate monitoring of the courses taught at the entrepreneurship centres to make sure they comply with NUC guidelines.
- Moreover, the universities should make a course in guidance and counselling compulsory for all students. This will make the students have an awareness of counselling which will help them to face challenges as entrepreneurs.
- Artisans can be employed in the centres so that students can learn from their skills.

7. Conclusion

The paper examined the role of the counsellor in repositioning University education in Nigeria for global competitiveness and entrepreneurship development. The army of the unemployed has become very large and people are giving thoughts to the idea of entrepreneurship education. This paradigm shift means that instead of graduates chasing virtually non-existent white collar jobs they should think of creating jobs and generating wealth for themselves. The roles of the guidance counsellor in actualizing entrepreneurship pursuits is the focus of this paper. We need entrepreneurship education for university products to be more focused and be gainfully self-employed. How the counsellor can facilitate the achievement of this goal is discussed and recommendations made. It is hoped that if universities allow and support the counsellor, a new dawn may come.

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