

Transforming Nigerian Economy through Integrative Entrepreneurial Curricular Offerings in Nigerian Higher Education

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Abstract

Nigerian education has an important role to play in addressing the high rate of poverty, crime, youth and graduate unemployment. Education policy makers must find ways of incorporating entrepreneurship into the school curricula especially in the higher education sector. Engaging the youth in their dreams as they steer their own innovations could help reduce unemployment, as well as in helping to address the crime rate in many Nigerian cities.

This paper calls for a paradigm shift in the curricular dispensation of Nigerian educational offerings that inculcates entrepreneurship in nation's educational offerings. It calls for an attitude change that fosters entrepreneurial skills among learners where skill building and innovation become anchored in most subject offerings. It proffers recommendations that could be articulated when underpinning entrepreneurship into curriculum.

Introduction

Nigeria is not alone in trying to find solutions to the high unemployment rate of graduates from institution of higher learning. Chinese Government, according to Zhou and Xu (2012) has adopted policy initiatives to put emphasis on entrepreneurship education and have since launched pilot program in nine prestigious Chinese Universities aimed at addressing the issues of massive graduate unemployment.

Entrepreneurship was introduced by the United States in the 1940's, a concept now adopted and integrated in many countries. It has since then become one of the global strategies of promoting job creation. National transformation through entrepreneurship education targets the root causes of job creation and proffers solutions that innovators could pursue in alleviating joblessness. A communiqué from the Centennial Global Business Summit (2011) indicate that effective educational reform addresses the root causes of problems via disruptive innovation of entrepreneurship. The Summit defined entrepreneurship as "the pursuit of opportunities, regardless of resources one controls." Sexton and Bowman-Upton (1991) indicate that entrepreneurship is the perception or recognition of an opportunity and the desire to exploit such opportunity for personal gains. Marriotti (2007) on the other hand observes that an entrepreneur is one who recognizes an opportunity to start a business that other people may not have noticed. Lansing (2011) observes that entrepreneurship as a life skill encompasses traditional and small business startup, but also address creativity, innovation, intrapreneurship (also known as corporate entrepreneurship) and social entrepreneurship concepts of all career prep areas.

The teaching of entrepreneurship as noted by Duening and Sherill (2006) has greatly been impeded by the lack of agreement on its basic concepts. Entrepreneurship according to the authors was widely believed to result from unique set of character traits which could lead to misconception of what entrepreneurship is really about.

Nigeria at 52 still lags behind many developing nations in indigenous industrialization. Such anomaly drives Nigeria's appetite in imported goods and services. Nigeria has invested enough in educational sectors that saw a growth in new generational universities. Nigeria has not benefitted from these Universities whose standards lag below other industrial nations. No Nigerian University made it into the elite club of "100 best World Universities." Nigeria's so called research institutions have not helped Nigeria's industries in job creation, inventions, patenting, and failed in honing its graduates into skillful employees of the 21st Century.

Little has changed over the first inception of the Nigerian education expect producing jobless graduates with little to offer the community upon graduation. This paper calls for a paradigm shift in the curricular dispensation of Nigerian educational offerings that inculcates entrepreneurship in most of the educational offerings within the institution of higher learning. There must be an attitude change in the new educational offerings that will foster the attitude of entrepreneurship among learners where skill building and innovation are anchored in the all subject offerings. The new paradigm could help create entrepreneurship culture in a New Nigeria that will help produce real home grown innovators capable of steering the Nation into an economic growth, job creation, employers and not employees of future Nigeria.

This paper assumes that entrepreneurship could be embedded sublimely or overtly across the curricular offerings. Most Nigerians are farmers or engage themselves in small business undertakings. Entrepreneurism will bring an attitude change among students that will help identify and motivate potential entrepreneurs.

The Problem

Nigerian graduate unemployment is high and continues to rise. Nigeria educational policies are rosy on its looks but lack merit of implementation. It is worthy of noting that many Nigerian conferences are held, papers presented on penitent

issues only to evaporate some months later. People only think of short-term financial profit or other sublimed benefits that would accrue thereof. Nigerian's endemic corruption still stifle creative ideas where program mandates are given to the less qualified to the detriment of the National growth. The lack of cooperative spirit and self centered egoism works strongly against the cooperative nature needed to steer the Nation into an economic power house.

Infusing entrepreneurship into curricular offerings is well documented across American Educational curricula. Students from the kindergarten through universities develop skills for the greater good of the Nation. Nigeria could surely benefit from many proven American models of entrepreneurship. Students are motivated to discover individual talents and competencies. Students learn skills, and competencies of launching successful business outside college. Mrs. Fields launched "Mrs. Fields Cookies in Pal Alto, California while in College, a business she turned into a franchise and sold for a whopping 300,000,000 million US dollars. Jim Gates dropped out of Harvard University to create the ubiquitous Microsoft and the list goes long. Nigeria has home grown entrepreneurs such as Dangote Cement Industries, Innoson Group Industries, and many prominent musicians that are surely a starting point for Nigeria.

Nigeria could mirror such success stories by creating an entrepreneurial awareness among Nigerian students where entrepreneurship is infused into the curricular offerings. Students will learn across the curriculum which as Zimmerer and Scarborough (2008) put it:

Colleges and universities have discovered that entrepreneurship is an extremely popular course of study. Disillusioned with corporate America's downsized job offerings and less promised career paths, a rapidly growing number of students see owning a business as an attractive career option. Today more than 2,100 colleges and universities offer courses in entrepreneurship and small business to some 200,000 students.

Entrepreneurial integrated curriculum will help the Nigerian students in their entrepreneurship journey that will include: preparation, investigation, transformation, incubation, illumination, verification, and implementation.

Preparation

Failure in many occasions becomes an ingredient of success. The Wright brothers failed severally in their attempt to develop a flying machine. Today their innovative efforts gave the world flying machines of varying capacities. The nation's failure is a preparation for a new Nigeria. Preparation is the new mind set, thinking to engage Nigerians honestly in an entrepreneurial education. All these may include enrolling in schools and colleges, modifying the nation's curricula, providing hand-on training in our curricula, liaising with industries to provide training, and working on collaborative projects. Students ought to be confronted with societal problems that are abundant in Nigeria such as in energy, health, environmental, food preservation, and list is endless. Nigerian students ought to be challenged and they will be capable in rising to the challenges of their times. The students will then acquire entrepreneurial skills, acquiring obvious abilities such as: drive, mental ability, human relations, communications, technical knowledge, decision making, and conceptual knowledge.

Investigation

The Nigerian student will learn to develop understanding of problems, challenges, and other abstractions as they arise. A Nigerian student after learning about tools of agriculture goes beyond theory and investigates how to improve the hoes or machetes. No wonder these tools remain morbid of development ever since ages. No Nigerian University has developed a technology or patent to improve Nigerian farming instruments. This phenomenon could be replicated in many fields from mathematics to religion. Teachers have to be retrained to acquire competencies in entrepreneurial curriculum development.

Transformation

As knowledge is ubiquitous, the student is undaunted with vast information that needed to be sifted and separated into similarities and differences. There is a need converge similar information such as in geometry and industrial calibrations. A student who buys a sachet of pure water should be able to prove that the quantity is actually what it says or may be the impact of plastic wrap-wastes when not appropriately disposed on the environment. Such convergent thinking could lead to developing a recycling mechanism of the plastics. Business ideas are products of problems solving. Divergent thinking ought to be instilled among the students where differences help stimulate innovative ideas. This involves developing differences into purposeful ideas or could be used in improving existing products.

Incubation

Students should be allowed to nurture some kind of dream. This means that what the student has nurtured might not be realizable in short time but could augur well later in one's life. Cornel Sanders floated his fried chicken well after his retirement, as he pursued a dream he had while young. Incubation offers the innovator a chance to dream- the so called loafing period. They came as subconscious moments as on sleeps, dreams, or plays. Such dreams or entrepreneurial events should not be neglected.

Illumination

At some point, the dreaming gives way to a spontaneous breakthrough. Such a breakthrough could happen on the same day or even years thereafter after its conceptualization. Its suddenness could be deceiving as one forgets the inertia or the time it took to actualize such entrepreneurial event.

Verification

Entrepreneurs use this modality to test their dreams. This involves production of prototypes, testing to see the performance of their dream. It is a very significant stage as the success or failure could encourage or discourage the innovator in continuing the entrepreneurial journey.

Implementation

This stage transforms the idea into reality. A good result of the verification process could spur commercial production of the new created idea or event. Entrepreneurs are “doers” as they work harder than others to make their dream a reality. Successful entrepreneurs have the ability to take their creative ideas into new products turning them into reality.

Need for entrepreneurial education in Nigeria

Higher education according to Downs (2011) plays a central role in the development and prosperity of local economies and may offer a competitive advantage to each country in terms of developing and sustaining knowledge economy. The overall aim is to produce graduates who are capable to adapt to ever demanding and competitive world economy.

It becomes imperative to inculcate entrepreneurial education into Nigerian curricula especially at the entry level of colleges and universities. It could help spur some of the students into venturing into entrepreneurship as students and well beyond graduation. Students who are grounded in entrepreneurial skills could be self-employed or employers in their own capacity, a trend that could help stem the staggering tide of unemployment.

The nation at large could benefit from the economic contributions of entrepreneurial infused curricular with job creation, employment potential, as well as tax revenue due to government. The gross domestic product (GDP) of the nation will be impacted positively, and Nigeria’s image will improve. Engaging the youth in their dreams as they steer their own innovations could help in job development Nigerian unemployed.

There could be a rise in new patents, copy rights, and trademarks as new innovations manifest across the nation. Living standards could be improved and national image enhanced as “Made in Nigeria” products become exported to other nations.

Discussion

Entrepreneurship according to Sexton and Bowman-Upton (1991) is the perception or recognition of an opportunity and the desire to exploit that opportunity for personal gain. The successful entrepreneur, accordingly, combines the opportunity and the desire with the ability to manage growth and change. Entrepreneurs have a great role to play in the society as they set careful eyes on trends and consumer needs and appetites. Allen (1999) notes that the most successful entrepreneurs affect the lives of people, the ways things are done, and the choices people make. Allen notes equally that entrepreneurship is about passion, about doing what one loves. It encompasses equally creativity, innovation, and change. These attributes when inculcated in the curriculum could help challenge Nigerian learners into innovation.

Implication to Education

Entrepreneurial education approach to the Nigeria curricula will have implications on how curricula to schools and higher institutions are written and delivered. It will imply the retraining of teachers on how the curricula are dispensed and delivered to learners. A collaboration between schools/colleges and industries are needed to help start a generation of would be entrepreneurs as well as innovators. The will power of policy makers and full support of government will be needed to help start and nurture entrepreneurial infused curricula. A new studies that could evaluate the success of the entrepreneurial education should show areas of improvement where the need be.

Recommendations

It is recommended that some aspects of entrepreneurship be included across Nigerian curricula to help nurture innovation among learners.

Educators and facilitators of learning activities should receive training on entrepreneurship to able to guide learners accordingly.

Schools should be encouraged to establish entrepreneurial incubators where students could learn and showcase what they have learnt.

Conclusion

Nigeria education has an important role to play in addressing the high rate of poverty, crime, youth and graduate

unemployment. Education policy makers must find ways of incorporating entrepreneurship into the school curricula. Raptopoulos (2010) notes as follows:

Successful entrepreneurs are not only out of business school; there are students of biology, education, and English. All students should have the opportunity to decide if entrepreneurship is something they might want to have in their future.

It might no longer suffice to study entrepreneurship in isolation as innovation, as well as entrepreneurship has to be radically infused in schools to help nurture new generational innovators who might be able to contribute to national economy upon graduation without depending to be employed. The idea is to graduate potential employers of abundant labor market. It is equally a means of addressing some of the socio-economic anomalies that have bedeviled Nigeria.

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