ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PREPAREDNESS FOR SELF-EMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA.

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Abstract

Entrepreneurial education in Nigeria Universities is aimed at curbing unpreparedness for self-employment amongst students before graduation from higher education institutions in Nigeria, particularly the universities. The need for entrepreneurial education is considered as a necessity. However, it is most appropriate to ascertain from graduating university students' perspectives the extent to which preparedness for self-employment has achieved. This effort could also enable the understanding of present level of awareness and preparedness of graduating students for a self-propelled career and working life. Moreover, decline in preparedness for self-employment is likely to become the norm if commitment to the ideals of the entrepreneurial programmes is belittled. More so, students' preference for quick-solutions in-lieu of the rigours and dignity of labour may have implication for the tackling of graduate unemployment through a more rigorous effort of setting up new businesses. In examining the entrepreneurial curriculum, the content and methodology for delivery were considered paramount in this regard., A four-point scale Likert-type questionnaire on the variables of policy awareness, adequacy of curriculum content cum delivery and preparedness for jobs that are entrepreneurial and self- paid in nature with a focus on graduating students from public and privately owned universities in Osun State were administered with 220 structured questionnaire. Findings revealed a low level of awareness and preparedness for jobs that are entrepreneurial and self-paid in nature among graduating students from public universities in Osun State, south west, Nigeria and that there is negative significant relationship between exposure to entrepreneurial education and students' preparedness for self-employment and finally, recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

Keywords: entrepreneurial education, curriculum, students' self-employment preparedness, Nigeria.

Introduction

The introduction of entrepreneurship studies as a General Studies (GST) in the universities in the country resulted from the Federal Government of Nigeria policy directive, as pronounced by the then Minister of Education in the year 2006 at the 53rd National Council on Education meeting held at Calabar (NUC 2018). The expectation is that the introduction of the entrepreneurship policy should engender self-paid job intentions amongst the graduates and ultimately leading to self-reliance and with possibility of aiding a reduction in graduate unemployment particularly in the economy. Essentially, the policy is intended to be actualized through a pragmatic curriculum such that the policy will in due course engender job intentions that are entrepreneurial and self-paid in nature with a focus on fresh Nigerian university graduates. However, the efficacy of the curriculum for this entrepreneurial education is to be dissected. In examining the entrepreneurial curriculum, the content and methodology for curriculum content delivery are paramount in this regard.

The curriculum for entrepreneurial education may be recognised to be important and having impact distinctly from that of education in the various disciplines. However, the entrepreneurial curriculum needs to address the general perceptions of entrepreneurship vis-à-vis paid employment. Most importantly the entrepreneurial curriculum in terms of content and delivery must sufficiently address entrepreneurial concepts and practical entrepreneurial skills that are necessary to enhance the graduates' pursuit of self-paid job. Although the pursuit of self paid job forms the focal point of entrepreneurial curriculum; yet attention must be given to how these interests are contextualized in terms of content and the methodology of delivery. Entrepreneurial education curriculum (content/delivery) serves as a deliberate effort by the university authorities aimed at enabling student's capacity to be an active participant in the labour market as being self- employed. The important role of university education and particularly entrepreneurial education, as a veritable means for the development of an individual for self-reliance in the immediate community and nation at large, is noteworthy. (FRN-NPE 2014)

The preparedness of students for self-employment, is big prerequisite for the anticipated growth in the number of self-reliant graduates. It is, therefore, needful to have a proper understanding the extent entrepreneurial education programme may be assisting students become prepared to setup businesses. In the university education system, where the total development of the individual student is carried out through the curricular (academic), co-curricular (quasi-academic) and extra- curricular (non-academic) programmes. On one hand, the curricular programme has to do with the delivery of curriculum content that involves direct classroom, laboratory and studio interaction between the students and the course faculty members as facilitators. The prime target is for the course facilitators to enable

learners' acquisition of specific academic-based knowledge and skills necessary for their future earnings and socio-economic survival. On the other hand co- curricular activities do not necessarily involve direct classroom, laboratory or studio-interactions rather these are other quasi-academic events like fieldtrips, excursions, academic symposia etc, necessary for wholesome and practical learning experiences of the students. The third aspect, extra-curricular activities are meant to help the physical, social and psychomotor development and perhaps, emotional intelligence of students. These will further contribute to their physical, emotional and social development, thus making them suitable for future self-reliant life.

Educational institutions are established to equip students with skills necessary to direct the affairs of man's society in the nearest future. Enueme, & Onyene (2010) submit that the development of any nation largely depends on youths' population generally and university students in particular. The concept of Entrepreneurship education for university students remained relevant in enhancing the catching up process in the ever-widening knowledge-gap, either between industries and the academia and vice-versa. Precisely, knowledge production has fundamentally changed Nguyen VM, Delle Palme C, Pentz B, Vandergoot CS, Krueger CC, Young N, Cooke SJ (2021). Presently, socially distributed, application-oriented, knowledge is in vogue. It is trans-disciplinary, and subject to multiple accountabilities (Nguyen et al., 2021). The new realm is practical application of knowledge to existential issues (Nowotny H, Scott P, Gibbons M, 2003; Albert, Gabrielle & Elden 2010; Akhuemonkhan, I. A, Raimi, L and Sofoluwe, A. O 2013). Proponents of practical application of knowledge opined that knowledge is now centred and built on essentially different circumstances, moving away from the strict division of disciplines in the ivory tower of science, hence multi-disciplinary courses are emerging. As a result of this, universities are exposed to a shift in their earlier focus on the relationship between science and the economy; bringing with it many challenges, but also new opportunities to create and diffuse new knowledge through new technologies. Factors generating change in European higher education pointing to the need for pragmatic knowledge (Kwiek, 2013). In the whole of these, borderless education
– one of the consequences of the globalisation and digital transformation – has been a key enabler for the paradigm shift in knowledge creation.

As knowledge becomes more socially available and penetrating to segments of the society that were neglected or hitherto unreached due largely to the emergence of the social media technologies, no single university, and indeed the higher education sector as a whole, can any longer claim to be the supreme repository of, and discovery agent for, knowledge (Albert, Gabrielle & Elden 2010; Kwiek, 2012). Physical communication and travel boundaries have been broken down and altered between countries and continents, the global expansion

of the sources of information and knowledge. Even the developed economy without stressing much the issue of funding gaps, the academia has not fully kept up speed with these developments in the alternative communication channels, academic discoveries, and teaching processes, (Etzkowitz et al., 2012; Gallo 2018). There was a call for new approach to leadership and communication in the tertiary institutions. In the attempt to properly situate these issues, and while investigating this trend (Kwiek, 2013; Gallo 2018) examined the effects of higher education entrepreneurship, within the paradigm of scientific discovery, which is characterised by the domination of theoretical and experimental science, a divisionary taxonomy of disciplines. Using knowledge to a profitable end is the new paradigm, as it has been that universities were supported by public and private funding that is conditioned by the quality and extent of research and publications. Excellence has been viewed through the lens of peer review processes and particularly through the prism of publication in high-impact journals. This is now being challenged, (Okebukola, 2006; Kwiek, 2013; Amadiaoha 2018)

There is a growing societal demand for universities to take up the role of translating and communicating knowledge to wider audiences. As Gallo (2018) had solicited, that universities be active in developing ideas that are suitable for solving man's problems of transnational mobility. In transmitting higher education within and outside tertiary institutions, Universities, therefore, are increasingly impelled to enhance students' capacity through focus upon problem- centred approach. This is accomplished through academic interactions that cut across disciplinary boundaries and promote trans-disciplinarity. And the essence is to discover, exploit and share knowledge in new ways. Hence, sourcing for knowledge, partnerships for learning, multi-disciplinary interventions and other related efforts to discover, exploit and share knowledge in new ways are festering. Similarly, there is a growing societal demand for universities to take up the role of translating and communicating knowledge to wider audiences in the UK, and perhaps other countries that perceive universities as having an essential mission to stimulate and facilitate learning that results in graduates with cutting-edge, discipline-specific knowledge and broad social and transversal skills (Kwiek, 2013). Tying different sources of information and knowledge together into a dynamic and open learning environment requires also interdisciplinary and flexibility in knowledge packaging, (Etzkowitz 2012). These developments are stimulating the spread of innovation and skills for business start-ups in the developed climes (Kwiek, 2013)

In Africa, about 60 per cent of the 200 million youth population are unemployed (Aganga. 2013). In some other sub-Saharan African countries, like Sierra Leone, specifically 70 per cent of the youth population, many of them being fresh graduates, were unemployed (UNDP 2021). The problem is still severe in the

present time even among graduate youths that in theory should possess more skills sought by employers to gain a competitive advantage (ILO 2013; Msigwa & Kipesha 2013). Thus, the competition for jobs among graduates has become intense, as the traditional education system is no longer a passport for graduates to secure employment in the twenty-first century (Nabi & Walmsley 2006). This stark reality has a damaging consequence on the economic development of the country and the personal development of youths in general (ILO 2015). To this end, the Government of Sierra Leone has in the context of Agenda for Change, which is in line with its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP II), implemented a new legislation for youth-friendly initiatives that are focused on creating an environment that is conducive to youth employment, development, entrepreneurship and empowerment.

Entrepreneurship, Curriculum, and Graduates' Self-employment

In a study (Ofili., 2014), titled; Challenges Facing Entrepreneurship in Nigeria- that adopted a descriptive survey design, it was revealed that promoting entrepreneurial education should be through direct teaching in universities and other tertiary institutions and that appropriate curriculum is required. Much earlier, Ogundowole, (2002), in a similar study: Alternative Structures for Enhanced In- depth Specialized Knowledge in Higher Institutions, stressed that curriculum content and delivery must seek a departure from the tradition chalk-talk approach to a more pragmatic content delivery. However, in a recent study, statistical significance between Entrepreneurship Education and how it influences entrepreneurial intention among university students in Kenya, the Spearman's rho correlation coefficient was mostly applied as the variables in question were categorical (measurable on either nominal or ordinal scale of measurement). Using the Spearman's rho correlation coefficient, the value of correlation coefficient was found significant at *P=0.01* significance level (with double asterisk) and the value of correlation coefficient is significant at *P= 0.05* significance level, so, the curriculum is a significant factor in the determination of entrepreneurial intention. The data was further analysed and it revealed that entrepreneurial intention of students could be influenced by the curriculum offered in the course of study of the respondents. A cross tabulations in SPSS for Entrepreneurship Curriculum to test whether it was too theoretical too practical and its effect on inculcating entrepreneurial intention on selected entrepreneurship students who enrolled in entrepreneurship class. The relationship was found to be statistically significant. Using the Chi-Square (x^2) test statistic, it was revealed that the t =0.607, and the respective probability value (P-Value) in the asymptotic significance column is 0.023 which is less than the significance level, 0.05 or 5%, This means that there is 0% chance to find the expected and the observed in association, (or a larger) degree of association between the variables if they are

perfectly independent in the population and so the rule of inference was that this relationship was statistically significant. Therefore, Entrepreneurship Curriculum was found to be too theoretical and lacks practical application.

In another study, Olokundun, Ibidunni, Falola, Salau, Oyafunke-Omoniyi, (2018), had differed in approach, but not far from the earlier findings. The goal of their study according to Olodokun, et.al, (2018) was to examine the influence of the contents of an entrepreneurship curriculum as it relates to the entrepreneurial development of university students in Nigeria. It was a descriptive research, adopting a quantitative content analysis followed by qualitative thematic analysis to examine the data collected through a survey. The instrument consisted of semi structured interviews conducted on entrepreneurship educators in a selected university in Nigeria. Results from the analysis showed that most educators opined that majority of the students in the selected university are able to develop critical thinking abilities and business idea generation competencies.

However, the results also showed that the educators were of the opinion that most students are not able to develop the confidence, commitment, and drive for the achievement of entrepreneurial goals and aspirations upon completion of their programmes. The study of Olodokun, et.al, (2018), concluded that entrepreneurship curricula in Nigerian universities be reviewed to motivate the development of entrepreneurial mindset and action. Though the study was not able to establish a nexus between curriculum and entrepreneurial intention, it however, recommended that real-life scenarios be incorporated into the curriculum delivery mechanism. Evidence from literature suggests that engagement of resource persons and the incorporation of practical works and activities would motivate learners, perhaps, ensure the development of entrepreneurial skills which also drive the commitment required for students to engage in entrepreneurship after graduation.

Essentially, entrepreneurial education is expected to incorporate all the aspects of curriculum; while the curricular content may be concerned with intellectual and skill-development, the co-curricular and extra-curricular may be concerned with the other areas of the human personality development for survival in self-paid jobs. However, the awareness and perception of students on the efficacy of these curricular interplay in the programmes in the public universities have not received commensurate attention in Nigeria despite the obvious need of students to be prepared for the inherent uncertainties in the Nigerian labour market.

Therefore, the paper investigated entrepreneurial education curriculum and university students' preparedness for self-employment. Specifically, the study sought to;

i. determine graduating students' level of awareness of the adequacy of entrepreneurial education curriculum in terms of the content and method of delivery.

ii. investigate the extent to which entrepreneurial education programmes in Nigerian universities aided graduating students' preparedness for self- employment, and;

iii. examine the relationship between entrepreneurial education curriculum in Nigerian universities and students preparedness for self-employment.

Research Questions

The research was guided by the following questions;

i. what is the graduating students' level of awareness of the adequacy of entrepreneurial education curriculum in terms of the content and delivery?

ii. to what extent have entrepreneurial education programmes in Nigerian universities aided graduating students' preparedness for self-employment? **Hypothesis**

H_0: there is no significant relationship between entrepreneurial education curriculum in Nigerian universities and students preparedness for self- employment.

Methodology

A survey research design was adopted for the study. The respondents were sourced through a multistage sampling procedure. At the first stage; the choice of institutions used was based on a purposive sampling of universities cutting across three ownership types (federal, state and privately-owned) universities in Osun State, Nigeria. At the second stage three universities emerged from where respondents were drawn, as indicated in Table 1. Finally, a stratified sample selection of graduating first degree students yielded a sample size of 220 respondents used for the study.

Table 1: Sample of Universities and Respondents Selected for the Study

	Physical Location of the University	Ownership Type	Samples
1.	Obafemi Awolowo University – OAU Ile-Ife	Federal	105
2.	Osun State University, Osogbo	State	75
3.	Redeemer's University, Ede	Private	40
	Total Respondents		220

A four-point scale Likert-type questionnaire on graduating students 'preparedness for entrepreneurship was administered to the 220 respondents as indicated in Table1 who were sampled for the study.

Findings of the Study

Table 2: Research Questions 1: what is the graduating students' level of awareness on the adequacy of entrepreneurial education curriculum in terms of the content and delivery?

S/N	Awareness on Curriculum Adequacy	VH (%)	H (%)	M (%)	L (%)	VL (%)	x	Decision
1	The entrepreneurial curriculum suffices for students proper learning of entrepreneurship	9(4.5)	21(10.5)	40(20.0)	50(25.0)	80(40.0)	0.13	VLL
2	Am certain of the provisions of entrepreneurial curriculum and it's suitability on purpose	12(6.0)	19(9.5)	41(20.5)	49(24.5)	79(38.5)	0.27	VLL
3	We do not know what to expect in the course on entrepreneurship & inherent possibilities	76(38.0)	54(27.0)	30 (15.0)	46(18.4)	44(17.5)	3.63	HL
4	Entrepreneurial curriculum was well facilitated and useful in aiding my skills acquisitions	29(14.5)	31(15.5)	52(26.0)	46(23.0)	42(21.0)	2.13	ML
5	The classes were well attended, very interactive enough and may be beneficial to all students	17(8.5)	33(16.5)	43(21.5)	57(28.5)	50(25.0)	0.18	VLL

Very High Level (4.01–5.00), High Level (3.01–4.00), Moderate Level (2.01– 3.00), Low Level (1.01–2.00), Very Low Level (0.01–1.00)

The outcome on the items dealing with graduating students' level of awareness of the adequacy of entrepreneurial education curriculum in terms of the content and delivery as in Table 2; indicated that respondents had a very low level of awareness. Specifically, the notion that curriculum suffices for students' proper learning of entrepreneurship had a mean response of (mean = 0.13) indicating a very low-level of awareness. Again, respondents were not certain of the provisions of entrepreneurial curriculum and its suitability for the practical purpose of engendering entrepreneurship amongst graduating students (mean =

0.27), a mean response considered to point to a very low-level of awareness of the provisions of the entrepreneurial curriculum; particularly on the uncertainty of the provisions of entrepreneurship curriculum and the inherent possibilities; these views amongst respondents with mean value of (3.63) indicated that there is high level of poor awareness. The items that centred on the awareness based on the mode of curriculum delivery as a veritable means of entrepreneurial knowledge transfer had a mean value of 0.18; hence indicating that the awareness is still poor, hence preparation of graduating students for self reliance and self-paid working life, may not be guaranteed and affirmed by, Kwiek, 2013; Ofili., 2014 Gallo 2018; that entrepreneurship curriculum and how it influences entrepreneurial intention among university students.

Table 3: Research Questions 2: to what extent have entrepreneurial education programmes in Nigeria universities aided graduating students' preparedness for self-employment?

S/N	Orientation & Quality Assurance	VH (%)	H (%)	M (%)	L (%)	VL (%)	x	Decision
1	Through the entrepreneurial education it will be possible to set-up my own business	21(10.5)	39(19.5)	60(30.0)	51(25.5)	49(28.5)	0.18	VLE
2	Entrepreneurial education equipped us with relevant skills to take up self-paid job	23(17.2)	27(22.4)	46(24.0)	54(18.4)	50(17.9)	0.17	VLE
3	Am certain, that entrepreneurial education suitably creates self reliance for students	29(11.6)	31(13.0)	45(18.0)	54 (21.4)	41(36.0	1.83	LE
4	To the best of my knowledge the objectives of the programme will be	32(16.8)	50(24.0)	58(22.4)	49(19.1)	11(17.2)	2.21	ME

	achieved							
5	Virtually all the participants can attest to the efficacy of the entrepreneurial programme	27(10.8)	33(13.2)	41(13.0.)	59 (23.6)	50(36.0)	0.82	VLE

***Very High extent (4.01–5.00), High extent (3.01–4.00), Moderate extent (2.01–3.00),
Low extent (1.01–2.00), Very Low extent (0.01–1.00)**
*x= mean

On the extent to which entrepreneurial education programmes in Nigeria universities aided graduating students' preparedness for self-employment as indicated in Table 3; the respondents' views were to a very low extent considered; the curriculum content and delivery relevant for graduating students' preparedness to set-up a business; with a mean value of; 0.18 indicating a very low extent; graduating students' participation and acquisition of relevant skills,
0.17 indicating a very low extent; while the usefulness or suitability of preparation of graduating students to pursue a self-paid job had a mean value of
1.83 also indicating low extent. However, regarding whether the objective of the programme will be achieved eventually, the mean value (2.21) was to a moderate extent (not necessarily high nor low).
Again, the extent to which graduating students could view the efficacy of entrepreneurial programme presently in enabling preparedness for students was to a very low extent 0.82. significantly, the participants could not attest to the efficacy of the entrepreneurial programme in aiding the possibilities of setting up own business, this then suggests that the curriculum content and mode of delivery need to be revisited. Thus, buttressing the views of Ogundowole, (2002) as well as Olodokun, et.al, (2018) that entrepreneurship curricula in Nigerian universities should be reviewed to motivate the development of entrepreneurial mindset and action.

Entrepreneurial education curriculum in Nigeria universities as a correlate of students preparedness for self-employment.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing the relationship between entrepreneurial education curriculum and students preparedness for self-employment.

Variables	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	1	2	
1. **Entrepreneurial education curriculum**		1.71	.94	-		
2. **Preparedness for self-employment**	200	1.88	.88	.69*	.91**	-

*P<.05, **P<.01

The result on Table 4 revealed that, there was a significant positive relationship between entrepreneurial education curriculum and students' preparedness for self-employment (r = 0.69, P < 0.05). This result implied that an increase in entrepreneurial education curriculum could lead to a corresponding increase in the number of students' preparedness for self-employment, in the study (vice versa). Therefore, the stated null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted. Though the relationship between entrepreneurial education curriculum and students preparedness for self-employment is positive and moderately strong (69%), it also indicated that about 31% of some aspects of the students' preparedness for self-employment could not be explained on the account of entrepreneurial education curriculum alone. However, this is clearly a very major contributor to the expected reduction in the search for elusive paid employment amongst graduates. This ensures that the expected phenomenal decrease in the incidences of graduate unemployment be achieved in due course, retooling the curriculum content and how it is delivered remained the most feasible, among other options. It is necessary therefore, to state that government meant well by introducing the policy, nonetheless, it remains an area that deserves better attention.

So, enhancing students' preparedness for self-employment education through an improved curriculum for a better facilitated entrepreneurial education will reduce the psychological trauma of the unemployed being exacerbated by the society, thus, getting them connected to appropriate information about the available economic opportunities.

Conclusion

The study was essentially a spotlight on entrepreneurial education which was intended to be actualized through a pragmatic curriculum such that the policy will in due course engender self-paid employment. However, as the efficacy of curriculum delivery in the entrepreneurial education was dissected, it was evident that a holistic view of how to be successful in the world of work as self-employed

was not being achieved. Particularly, in adjudging the programme in terms of how beneficial the curriculum content and delivery had enabled students' preparedness for entrepreneurial star-ups these were not found to be positive. So, the well being of the individual students and the enrichment of the quality of their academic and entrepreneurial outputs may be fully achieved in due course.

Recommendations

From the findings it is hereby recommended that:

i. university management should expedite actions in enhancing particularly the graduating students' level of awareness of the provisions of entrepreneurial education curriculum and how it concerns them in the long run;

ii. the observed low level of perception on the extent to which entrepreneurial education programmes in Nigeria universities could be aiding graduating students' preparedness for self-employment, is noteworthy and shows clearly that a lot needed to be done in this regard by universities and relevant stakeholders;

iii. as the relationship between entrepreneurial education curriculum and students' preparedness for self-employment remains positive and strong it becomes necessary to make the curriculum content and mode of delivery more pragmatic and relevant to the graduating students' need;

iv. having found the usefulness of entrepreneurial education in the preparation of graduating students for self-employment, it may be necessary to carry out further study on other factors that support government's effort in curbing the menace of graduate unemployment and over dependence on elusive white-collar job.

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