

IMBEDDING SOME PROGRAMMES INTO THE CONTEMPORARY ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION (EE) IN NIGERIAN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS (HEIs) FOR REALISING VISION 2020

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Abstract

Nigeria is repositioning herself to rub shoulders with the world's great 20 economies (G20) by 2020. To achieve this objective, this research is considering introducing three programs into the EE taught at Nigerian HEIs. Firstly, creating centres for job creation where students can learn practical business incubation experience at all HEIs throughout the country to be called "Employability Centres". Secondly, involving adjunct teachers selected from among the experienced, practicing and successful entrepreneurs to share their experiences with our students on campus. Thirdly, introducing undergraduate and graduate degrees to broaden and deepen the students' understanding of the concept of 'entrepreneurship'. The first two programs are to enrich the contemporary EE programs so that graduating students acquire experiences, skills and knowledge on business incubation, etc. The later is discussed as in making entrepreneurship a lifelong program to equip the students with the attitudes, skills, knowledge, creativeness, innovativeness, etc aimed at fostering self-reliance; so as to realise vision 2020.

Introduction

No meaningful economic development can be achieved without attaining some considerable educational standards. Gillis 1999 asserted that "today, more than ever in human history, the wealth or poverty of nations depend on the quality of their higher education. Those with more repertoires of skills and a greater capacity for learning can look forward to lifetimes of unprecedented economic fulfilment. But in the coming decade, the poorly educated face little better than desperation". To this effect, the need for Nigeria to gallantly venture into reforms to incorporate changes that will foster entrepreneurship development through the teaching of a robust entrepreneurship education is a worthwhile idea (Akpomi 2009). Several literatures indicate that there exists a strong relationship between socio-economic development and programs of entrepreneurship education in the HEIs (Henry, Hall &Leitch, 2003; Friedrich &Visser, 2005; ACS, Arenius, Hay &Minniti, 2004; Gouws, 2002) and many others hold similar views. Hannon (2004) maintained that statistics from the United State of America shows that business start ups by graduates who obtained entrepreneurial skills and knowledge accounts to about 6 to 8percent of national Gross Domestic Products (GDP).

To this end, HEIs in the G20s to which Nigeria aspires to belong by 2020 have been saddled by their governments the responsibility of enhancing economic and social development. According to NESTA, (2008) cited in (Lloyd- Reason, Mumby-Crote and Sear 2009) in the UK, HEIs have increasingly become more involved in the regional economic and social development. Matlay (2005) is of the opinion that entrepreneurship education ensures development of entrepreneurship within the society thus; it addresses socio-economic and political challenges. This is most probable when individuals have become self reliant; and self reliance is one of the notable pathways to national development (Bako, Mohammed &Maisamari, 2010). In the light of the above, it is paramount that

Nigeria embraces the entrepreneurship programs that are capable of boosting the entrepreneurship propensity with a view to positioning the country towards actualising its vision of 20, 2020. Hence, involving the adjunct teachers, creating centres for employability, and establishing graduate and undergraduate level degrees in skill acquisition will be steps in the right direction for improving the quality and status of entrepreneurship education the students may receive. With this, the objective of having Nigeria among the G20 by 2020 will finally be achieved as a considerable number of HEI graduates will be self employed, and our gross domestic product (GDP) will significantly increase to meet up with the Federal government's GDP forecast of \$900 billion by the year 2020, and our national income (NI) will equally increase. We may probably have an abundance of goods to export. Hence, the targeted per capita income of \$4000/annum by the year 2020 may be actualised.

Vision 2020 and its Objectives

A vision is a clear mental picture of the future which must represent a significant improvement on the current state (NV2020/NSC 2008). According to the Encarta Dictionary (2006), a vision is far sightedness: the ability to anticipate possible future events and developments.

Vision 2020 is a government strategy initiated via the instrumentality of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) with the objective of integrating and consolidating the nation's socio-economic reforms (Egwakhe and Osabuohien, 2009). Nigeria is envisaging that by the year 2020, it will find itself as one of the G20. Thus the use of the phrase: "vision 20, 2020". This vision is stated as: "By the year 2020, Nigeria will be one of the 20 largest economies in the world and be able to consolidate its leadership role in Africa and established itself as a significant player in the global economic and political arena" (NV2020/NSC 2008, CBN, 2006 and Soludo, 2007). Some parameters though not exhaustible, were found imperative to ensure economic development if Nigeria is to attain this overarching goal of reaching the top 20 economies by year 2020. These are: Polity; macro-economy, infrastructure, education, health and agriculture (Soludo 2007). Taking a look at these parameters, economic development remains their focal point and because of the strong relationship between entrepreneurship and development, entrepreneurship is found to play a vital role in achieving this vision even sooner than 2020. In their research, Luthje and Franke (2002) concluded that entrepreneurship is quite relevant in achieving economic growth through significant job creation. This is equally evident in the role of entrepreneurship in achieving and maintaining open and modern economies which became the major focus of both developed and developing countries (Wennekers and Thurrik, 1999; Garavan and O'Conneide 1994).

Concepts of Entrepreneurship Education

An entrepreneur according to Zimmerer and Scarborough (2005) is a person who creates a new business in an environment full of risk and uncertainties for the purpose of maximizing profit and growth through the identification of significant opportunities and gathering the necessary resources to work on them. Entrepreneurship on the other hand has been defined by Rwigema and Venter (2004) as the "process of conceptualizing, organising, launching and through innovation nurturing a business opportunity into a potentially high growth venture in a complex and unstable environment." Bako, Mohammed and Maisamari (2010) assert that the knowhow for businesses incubation must be taught as businesses are incubated and managed in an environment full of complexities. Entrepreneurship Education is defined by Alberti, Sciascia and Poli (2004) as the structured formal conveyance of entrepreneurial competencies. Entrepreneurship Education is equally defined as the effort put at changing the skills, values, attitudes and knowledge an individual originally possess to those ones

which will foster the incubation and subsequent maintenance of business venture (Bako, Mohammed and Maisamari 2010).

Philosophy of Contemporary EE in Nigerian HEIs

Considering the rate of unemployment and graduates high interest in government work as opposed to self reliance, one discovers that the current EE taught at the Nigeria HEIs have not succeeded with its objectives. The overall objectives of the EE program is building in the minds of the youth the interest in becoming self reliant after graduation by directing their attitudes and behaviours, to self employment (Daily Trust 2007). The EE is also to equip students with the requisite skills, experiences and capabilities for the smooth incubation and running of their businesses on graduating from the school. However, the contemporary EE programs in Nigerian HEIs fall quite short of actualizing these objectives.

In the Nigerian HEIs, the EE programs currently are the inclusion of entrepreneurship as a module taught to students at various levels of their degree programs and across many disciplines, and the industrial attachment which students under go to acquire hands-on experiences. Students who were taught entrepreneurship as module end up reading general business which has no significant impact on entrepreneurship propensity (Hostager and Decker, 1999; Gupta, 1992; Chen, Greene and Crick, 1998; Luthje and Franke 2002). The later on the other hand cannot guarantee students gaining the requisite experiences. EE program have to be a lifelong program for it to guarantee students gaining the required skills and experiences. Besides, the students cannot gain any experience as to how the business they are attached to; was incubated, nursed and came of that age. One of the achievements of the HEIs in EE is the spread of the course to cover up to non business schools. EE is valuable to all students including those students who are not business or management oriented (Smith, Collins and Hannon 2006; Hays and Sidlow 2008).

Befitting EE for Achieving Vision 2020

Many countries particularly the G20s have empowered their HEIs to pick up the responsibility of achieving social and economic development of at least the region they belong to through the policy of job creation programs (Henry, Hill and Leitch 2003). “Economic growth of a country will hinge on their ability to create new jobs through entrepreneurship and that successful entrepreneurship in turn, requires well-trained aspiring entrepreneurs willing to take the helm of venture creation” (Marilyn 1995), cited in Bako, Mohammed and Maisamari 2010. For instance, in UK a good number of Universities have already introduced impressive programs of entrepreneurship (Gibb 2008), cited in Bako, Mohammed and Maisamari 2010). In USA, about 5-8 million new jobs were created by small and medium scale enterprises between 1987 and 1992 (Naisbitt, 1994). In related study, over 4million new jobs created from late 80s to mid 90s were by companies with less than 20 workers (Meek and Linder, 1994). To top it all, Harrell, 1992 related that if not for the contributions of the successful entrepreneurs, the American economy would have been in a serious predicament. These literatures have emphasised on the strong relationship between entrepreneurship and economic development of a nation.

In the light of the above, and in order that the vision 2020 objectives are achieved through the contributions of the Nigeria HEIs, three EE programs have to be put in place. These are:

1. Establishment of “Employability Centres” right on campuses of the HEIs throughout the country;
2. Employing the services of adjunct teachers (practicing entrepreneurs); and

3. Introducing undergraduate and graduate level degree programs in entrepreneurship education at all the Universities that do not operate one.

As a matter of fact, establishing the Employability Centres at our HEIs will go a long way in aiding the process of development. The introduction of the employability centres and the adjunct teacher programs are to be considered short term measures to make a quick intervention towards speeding the process of realising the vision 2020. These centres if established will be vested with the responsibility of liaising with Financial Institutions for the purpose of financing Small and Medium Scale Enterprises. Interestingly enough, in line with her philosophy and objective of promoting self-reliance and entrepreneurship, which are in line with the achievement of vision 2020, the Nigerian government has at one time or the other established several financial institutions to finance individuals and groups of individuals with business ideas. Notable among these financial institutions are National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND), National Industrial Development Bank (NIDB), National Agricultural credit Bank (NACB), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), etc.

How Employability Centres (EC) and the Adjunct Teachers could Play their Roles

The EC is to be instituted on the campuses of all our HEIs but as a start, it can be done first in some few Universities. This centre is preferably better managed by adjunct teachers who have vast experiences in incubating and running businesses. The adjuncts will teach students the knowhow of incubating a business from the scratch. Each student or group of some four or five students will be asked to make a feasible business proposal or plan before graduating. Such plans will carefully be monitored and graded by the adjunct teachers in conjunction with the department to which the students belong. In this manner, all departments that ran entrepreneurship courses will be liaising with the centre to provide them with adjunct teachers and to coordinate the activities to which have do with EE in their department.

The Centre should also work hand in hand with the sponsors of SMES in Nigeria; like NERFUND, NIDB, NACB, NDE mentioned earlier. In this regards, any student whose business plan is found to be feasible by the centre can be forwarded for sponsorship by these financial institutions with very negligible lending interest rates depending on the industry he intends to venture into. National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND) is generic in its sponsorship, but if your business is agricultural in nature e.g. cattle rearing, cotton farming, Fish farming, etc, National Agricultural Credit Bank (NACB) should sponsor such proposal. If it is for assorted commodities or trading, National Industrial Development Bank (NIDB) should take the challenge of funding such proposals. National Directorate for Employment (NDE) should be concerned with vocational trade businesses e.g. automobile mechanics and assembling workshop, computer centres, plumbing and housing electrification services, etc. If this is put in place for just five years, Universities and other institutions would graduate a good number of students who will be job providers and not job seekers. With this, our GDP will shoot up and as a consequence, Nigeria will be producing more than it may require. The excess products could be exported to earn foreign income. In this way, our National Income (NI) will rise and our per capita income will boost up, hence our vision 2020 could be achieved in 2015.

Undergraduate and Graduate Level in Entrepreneurship Programs

In Nigeria, very few universities offer undergraduate and graduate level programs in Entrepreneurship. At this rate, we have a long way to go before we could understand the concept of entrepreneurship thoroughly. The undergraduate and the graduate level programs in entrepreneurship

are to be introduced as long term plan for realising the vision. In Malaysia, entrepreneurship degree programme was introduced at the universities to turn out graduates with strong entrepreneurial skills and knowledge as it is believed that entrepreneurship is a catalyst to spur the economic growth of a country (Abidin and Baker 2004). Entrepreneurship should be a lifelong program, hence, the need to bring in degree programs to educate potential entrepreneurs about entrepreneurship (Ronstadt 1987) cited in Abidin and Baker 2004.

Conclusion

As a matter of exigency, the government should look inwards and give directives to those concerned within the schools system to establish such centres. Again the idea of the adjunct teacher who has hands-on experience should not to be neglected as they play important role in educating the potential entrepreneurs on the campus. These two programs will go a long way in enriching the whole entrepreneurship programs currently going on in our HEIs throughout Nigeria and will serve as short term measure to actualise vision 2020, while, the basic degree and the graduate programs will serve as a long term measure towards the realisation of vision 2020.

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