OPTIMIZING ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES AS A PANACEA FOR THE CRISIS OF GRADUATE UNEMPLOYMENT

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Abstract
Graduate unemployment is one of the major economic crises facing the Nigerian state. The malaise has been exacerbated by the recent descent into economic recession. This paper x-rays, theoretically and empirically, the level of entrepreneurship education acquired in Nigerian universities, the strategies adopted and presents suggestions on how entrepreneurship education can be primed to serve as panacea for the graduate unemployment crisis. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population consisted of 550 2014/2015 Business Education graduates of three state universities offering business education programme in south west geo-political zone of Nigeria (Ekiti state University, Ado-Ekiti, Olabisi Onabanjo University Ago-iwoye Ogun state and Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu-Ode Ogun State). No sample was drawn; the entire population was studied. The instrument was a structured questionnaire, subjected to face and content validation by experts in entrepreneurship education and measurement and evaluation. The test for reliability yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.88 using Kuder Richdson formular. The findings revealed that most Business Education programmes offer only theoretical aspects of entrepreneurship, to the neglect of the practical aspects. The study also identified strategies which can enhance entrepreneurship education’s potentialities as an instrument of employment generation. The study recommended that experimental learning, involving case studies and simulation exercises, should be embedded into the entrepreneurship education curricula if the programme is to achieve its objective of alleviating unemployment and accelerating national development.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurship educations, national development, Nigerian universities, graduate unemployment.

Introduction
The epidemic of graduate unemployment is gradually escalating throughout Nigeria. Even as thousand wander the length and breadth of the country in search of elusive white collar jobs, the universities continue to churn out millions of graduates annually, albeit with little hope of productive career engagement. Little wonder, therefore, that news reports consistently indicate that the ranks of militants, kidnappers
and internet fraudsters are filled with hordes of intelligent graduates unable to find rewarding legitimate employment. According to Udu and Agu (2005) unemployment is a phenomenon in which people competent and willing to work are unable to find suitable paid employment. Hornby in Asogwa and Dim (2016) also define unemployment as the number of the people not having a job; the number of people without job; the state of not having a job.

Unemployment is a universal concern. International Labour Organization (ILO) in Adesina (2013) reports that the unemployment rate of United States of America (USA) for example has increased from five percent in 2007 to nine percent in 2011. Spain has increased from 8.6 percent from 4.8 to 21.52 percent, the United Kingdom 5.3 to 8.1 percent. The rate in Ireland currently stands at 14.3 percent from 4.8 percent; Latvia from 5.4 percent to 16.5 percent; Greece from 8.07 percent to 18.4 percent and Italy from 6.7 percent to 8.3 percent. The average for the Euro zone is 10.7 percent. Even within the African continent, unemployment has been rising. In South Africa, Africa’s second largest economy, it stands at 25 percent. In Botswana, it is 17.5 percent. Egypt is at 11.8 percent, Kenya, 11.7 percent and Namibia at 51 percent. Nigeria’s rate increased to 23.9 percent in 2011 compared to 21.1 percent in 2010 and 19.7 percent in 2009.

For Nigeria, the unemployment situation has become a conundrum. A few years ago, when the Dangote industries Limited, DIL, announced its intention to recruit 100 drivers to man its newly acquired state-of-the-art trucks in the scheme tagged Executive Truck Drivers Programme, about 13,000 young Nigerians turned up for the interview. Although, National Diploma was the qualification required, out of the 13,000 applicants, six were Ph.D. holders, 704 had Master’s degrees, while over 8,400 had bachelor degree (Emeh 2014). The Nigerian government has not exactly been folding its arms, having introduced programmes like YouWin and Subsidy Investment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) in efforts to alleviate the situation. Those attempts however, only scorched the snake of unemployment, without killing it.

Tony Elumilu, former Group managing Director United Bank for Africa attributed the apparent intractability of the unemployment crisis to the fact that most of the graduates are unemployable because of the deficiency in the country’s educational system. He claimed that entrepreneurial training was lacking in our universities’ curricula. He advocated for new curricula nourished with vocational and entrepreneurship skills offerings (Emeh, 2014).

It was on this premise that the in 2007, the National universities commission (NUC), on the instruction of the National Council on Education, directed universities in the country to mount entrepreneurship education programmes for all students, irrespective of discipline, the objectives being to reduce unemployment and boost the nation’s economy. Osuala (2009) defines Entrepreneurship Education as a specialized
training given to impart skills, ideas, managerial abilities and capabilities for self- rather than paid-employment.

Entrepreneurship education seeks to provide students (especially in higher institution) with the knowledge, skills and motivation for entrepreneurial studies in varieties of settings. Osuala (2009) maintains that entrepreneurship education is offered at all levels of schooling from primary or secondary schools through graduates programmes and conclude that the students will acquire the necessary skills and knowledge while in school. In another perspective, Oduwaiye in Banabo and Ndiomu (2011) describes entrepreneurship education as education which assists students to develop positive attitudes, innovation and skills for self reliance rather than depending on the government for employment. This will in-turn produce graduates with self confidence and capabilities for independent thought to discover new information leading to economic development.

Ezeemi (2005) identifies strategies that can promote entrepreneurship education as follows: Engaging business educators who are competent and qualified, involvement in industrial training exercise, excursion to various Entrepreneurs in the areas, organization of workshop/seminars, adoption of good instructional methods and appointment of entrepreneur counselors. Okoro (2008) opines that for a teacher to effectively impart entrepreneurship skills, he must be hard working, self-disciplined, highly knowledgeable, skillful and capable of making informed decisions.

Oludare (2015) confirmes that entrepreneurship contributes immensely towards creating new jobs, wealth creation, poverty reductions and income generation for both government and individuals. The author states further that entrepreneurship education encourages the growth of new and existing business and provides the skills for optimally exploiting the different sectors. The author opines that entrepreneurship education is an avenue for discovering knowledge, acquiring human and social skills that are relevant for facilitating development and change. Okoye, Iloanya and Udunze (2014) aver that entrepreneurship is the engine for job creation, and diversity and that Nigerians entrepreneurs have a long way to go before they can effectively drive changes in the economy.

Anyadike, Emeh and Ukah (2012) opine that government should make entrepreneurship attractive to people by incorporating it into the curriculum at every level of the educational system and also by utilizing the National Youth Service Corps scheme to educate the youth on the imperative of entrepreneurship education.

**Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study was to identify strategies for optimizing entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities for the amelioration of the unemployment crisis. The specific purposes were to:
1. Identify the level of entrepreneurship education acquired by business education graduates of Nigeria universities
2. Find out the strategies adopted in imparting entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities to alleviate the unemployment crisis among business education graduates
3. Examine how entrepreneurship education can be primed to serve as panacea for the unemployment crisis.

Research Questions
The following research questions guided the study:
1. What is the level of entrepreneurship education in business education graduate of Nigeria universities?
2. What strategies are adopted in imparting entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities to alleviate the unemployment crisis among business education graduates?
3. How can entrepreneurship education be primed to serve as a panacea for the crisis of graduate unemployment among business educators?

Statement of the Problem
The crisis of endemic unemployment constitutes a severe challenge to the Nigerian educational system in general and to Business Education programme in particular. Business education is designed to provide students with the aptitude and attitudes needed to function effectively in the workplace as employees or employers of labour.

Entrepreneurship education reinforces the concerns of business education by inculcating in learners the skills and dispositions needed to function as job creators, idea initiators and industry leaders. The amalgam of business education and entrepreneurship education, therefore, should provide double armour against the menace of unemployment. The current unemployment situation among business educators, however, suggests that this expectation is not being met.

The need to optimize entrepreneurship education as a panacea to the menace of graduate unemployment demands that an investigation be conducted to identify strategies which can most speedily transform the programme into a silver bullet in the war against unemployment, hence the need for this study.

Methods
Quantitative approach using descriptive survey method was adopted for the study. The population comprised 550 2014/2015 business education graduates of the three universities offering Business Education in south-west geo-political zone of Nigeria (Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State...
and Tai-Solarin University of Education, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State). Because of the relatively small size of the population, no sample was drawn; the entire population was studied. Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire. The questionnaire had two sections. The first section sought demographic information about the respondents. This was used in the test of hypothesis. The second section was a four-point Likert-type rating scale designed to provide answers to the research questions. The instrument was face and content validated under the guidance of experts who rated the items in terms of appropriateness for the study. A reliability coefficient of 0.88 was obtained using Kuder Richdson formula (KR-I). The value suggested that the instrument was reliable.

The instrument was administered both manually and electronically. E-mail addresses and telephone numbers of the prospective participants were obtained from school register of past students. Some of the participants returned their completed questionnaire by hand while others returned them through their e-mail addresses. Only 415 of the respondents completed and returned the administered questionnaires. The data collected were analyzed using percentage and mean rating. The decision point was at 2.50. This therefore implies that a mean rating of less than 2.50 is “disagree” while a mean rating greater than or equal to 2.50 is “agree”.

Results
The results of the data analysis are presented below in accordance with their research questions.

Research Question 1
What is the level of entrepreneurship education acquired by Business Education graduates of Nigeria Universities?
Level of entrepreneurship education in Business Education graduates of Nigeria Universities based on teaching and method of assessment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>No of Respondents</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginners/Introductory stage</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate stage</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature/Complete Stage</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to determine the level of entrepreneurship education in Business education graduates of Nigeria based on teaching and assessment methods, respondents were asked to choose the level at which they were taught entrepreneurship education while in school. Out of the 415 respondents who are graduates, 332 representing 80 percent reported that entrepreneurship in Nigeria universities (business education programmes) was taught in Introductory stage while the remaining 83 (20%) viewed that
it was in intermediate stage and none of them believed it has reached its complete or matures stage.

The result showed that a large majority of the respondents acknowledge that entrepreneurship education in Business education programmes of Nigeria Universities was taught at the introductory level. This stems from the perception that almost all the higher institutions in Nigeria that undertook entrepreneurship courses focus mainly on the theoretical aspects of the entrepreneurial programme, neglecting the practical aspects.

**Research Question 2**

What are the strategies adopted in entrepreneurship education to reduce unemployment among the Business education universities graduates?

**Table 2:** Business Education Graduates Responses on the Strategies considered Suitable for Reduction of Graduates Unemployment through Entrepreneurship Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item Statement</th>
<th>No. of Resp.</th>
<th>( \bar{x} )</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Provision of funds by government, financial institutions and NGO to establish entrepreneurial development centre in the higher institutions</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Expose Business Education students to the required business opportunities through entrepreneurship education</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Intensive mass mobilization and enlightenment programmes like seminar, workshops, conferences should be hold in the school premises for students to benefit from such programme</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Regular supply of the information on latest business and economic development</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship education should be practical</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The course should be made mandatory both private and public institutions</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The course should be added to the curriculum of all the institutions courses</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 above revealed that all the items had a mean score above 2.50. The response shows that all the strategies suggested are capable of reducing unemployment among business education universities graduates.

**Research question 3**

In what way can entrepreneurship education contribute to unemployment reduction among business education graduates? (N=415)
Table 3: Business Education Graduates Responses on Entrepreneurship Education’s Potential Contributions towards Alleviation of Unemployment Crisis (N=415)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item Statement</th>
<th>No. of Resp.</th>
<th>$\bar{x}$</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Encourages the growth of new business</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Exploits the creative potential and debt of knowledge within higher education sectors</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entrepreneurship increase in technology transfer between educational establishments and the market place creating improved symmetry</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>It is an avenue for discovery knowledge</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>It enable the recipient stand on their own</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>It discourage mass movement of people from the urban to rural areas</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enables the recipients to develop employability and entrepreneurial skills which will enable them to fit into many sectors of economy</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Provide individuals with relevant self reliance skills</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship education reduced poverty</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 revealed that all the items have their mean score above 2.50. The responses show that entrepreneurship education reduces business education graduates unemployment.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study are organized and discussed according to the research questions answered. The finding on the level of entrepreneurship education undertaken by business education graduates of Nigerian universities showed that only introductory entrepreneurship education is taught in Nigerian universities. This stems from the fact that almost all the tertiary institutions in Nigeria focused mainly on the theoretical aspects of the programme. The findings corroborate Ademiluyi (2007) and Obike (2014) who report that tackling graduate unemployment in Nigeria requires structuring our educational system to emphasise the practical aspects of entrepreneurship development.

Furthermore, several strategies can be adopted in entrepreneurship education to reduce graduate unemployment. The most important of this is that entrepreneurship education should be made compulsory in both private and public higher institutions. Ekankum and Ndiomu (2011) in agreement with this finding, assert that education is a vital vehicle without which no nation can experience growth and development. The authors conclude that job creation by entrepreneurs is only vital if entrepreneurship education is carefully conducted in the school.
The findings also revealed that entrepreneurship education enables its recipient to stand on their own, discourage rural-urban migration, provide individuals with relevant self-reliance skills, reduces poverty among others. In line with the findings of the study, Greblikaite (2012) confirms that entrepreneurship education is directly related to acquisition of entrepreneur knowledge and new innovative skills that contribute significantly to the development of many enterprises. The author asserts that entrepreneurship education has contributed to the creation of 27 million jobs in the United States’ economy between 1980 and 1985.

**Conclusion**

The study evaluated the views of business education graduates who took entrepreneurship as courses in three state universities in South West geopolitical zone of Nigeria. It was found that the teaching and assessment methods used to teach entrepreneurship education were mostly lecture delivery and ends with semester examinations. The majority of the respondents were of the view that for the study of entrepreneurship education in universities to serve its purpose of improving the economic growth of the nation through job creation, the traditional lecture method should be complemented with experimental learning.

The findings revealed that entrepreneurship education is important and particularly has significant effect on reducing business education graduates unemployment. It was revealed that most of unemployed graduates prefer to establish their own business ventures. They are however constrained by both practical experience and financial support. The study concluded that entrepreneurship education involving experimental learning can be an effective tool for job creation.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- The use of experimental learning style that will equip students with the relevant knowledge and skills needed should be made part of the curricular of entrepreneurship education.
- Only teachers with skills and knowledge in the subject areas should be employed, trained and motivated to properly educate the unemployed graduates.
- Lecturers and students in Business Education should partner with industry/guest lecturers in excursion.
- Institutions of higher learning should assess their students who undertake entrepreneurship education as a course based on simulation exercises along side the semester exercise.
References


