

Full Length Research Paper

Spinning off an entrepreneurship culture among Nigerian University Students: Prospects and challenges

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The re-engineering of the Nigerian economy in the presence of available resources and business opportunities has attracted serious attention in recent times. The colonial mentality in the first generation of graduates in Nigeria, which was deep-rooted in the Golden Fleece and certificate frenzy, influenced the limited spirit of entrepreneurship. Among the dead and surviving industries in Nigeria, the captains of these industries are semi-literate entrepreneurs. This paper adopts a case study of the Nigerian university system in re-positioning the economic development and entrepreneurial drive for job creation, wealth creation and global competitiveness of Nigerian youths/graduates. The main thrust of the paper is the emphasis on the marriage between theories and practical which the research and development centres in the universities should serve as technological incubators and entrepreneurship drive. The introduction of entrepreneurship education as a compulsory course in the Nigerian university system is seen as a measure to address the problem of graduate unemployment and strategically position the economy for leadership in Africa. It is recommended that the Nigerian ecosystem must be harnessed before meaningful entrepreneurship development can take place. The paper concludes that curriculum review, sensitization, advocacy and mobilization of support for entrepreneurship education, programme focus and funding together with the political will and stability of the government should be provided for entrepreneurship culture and development.

Key words: Spinning off, entrepreneurship, strategies, cultures, incubators.

INTRODUCTION

It is a common experience that about 80% of the graduates from Nigerian universities find it very difficult to get employment every year. This is partly due to the curricula of the universities and other tertiary institutions, which lay emphasis on training for white-collar jobs. For example, current national and regional policy thrusts like the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) have been sensitizing the youths by emphasizing on poverty eradication, employment-generation and wealth-creation as well as public-private partnership. Accordingly, a number of initiatives like the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and the

establishment of Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) have been introduced (Okojie, 2008; Osibanjo, 2006). However, the situation remains unchanged. One of the possible causes is that this initiative in Nigeria addresses only the output end of capacity development solving problem. In addressing the input end, therefore, a complementary approach is required. Besides, even the educational system that addresses the output end either lays more emphasis on content and knowledge acquisition for its sake or just stresses the inquiry-discovery model of teaching and learning. In developed economies or industrializing economies, for example, the education system emphasizes the trail of inquiry-discovery-application in teaching and students to perceive problems (including societal problems) as challenges and opportunities that can be turned into goods and services of commercial value (Giwa, 2000; Adeyemi, 2006).

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One of such approaches for achieving this in Nigeria is teaching and research at entrepreneurship and innovation centres by universities and other tertiary institutions and the promoting of universities-private sector collaboration. This will involve developing the capacity of staff and students in entrepreneurship and innovation, engaging in outreach activities with small and medium enterprises through such interventions as business incubators. Training of entrepreneurs and conducting researches and consultancies by small business development centres in universities are considered inevitable for patenting entrepreneurial, industrial and economic growth in Nigeria. This is the approach being adopted by the National Universities Commission (NUC) through its directive to all universities in Nigeria to establishment the centres for entrepreneurship and linkage programmes.

THE NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM AND THE NEW CHALLENGE

There is apparent economic depression in the midst of our so-called oil boom in Nigeria. What is the way out of this economic problem? It is an established fact that no nation can rise above the level of her education. Hence, it is hoped that education, particularly tertiary education, can provide the answer to Nigeria's economic puzzle. No wonder why the National Policy on Education (1977) states that education has been adopted as an instrument per excellence for development in Nigeria. The problem with Nigerian educational programmes, however, is that there is too much emphasis laid on the value of the certificate rather than the holder himself. In other words, undergraduates struggle hard to attain the Golden Fleece which is the certificate rather than the knowledge and skills which would make them self-reliant. This certificate frenzy is probably not unconnected to the colonial influence that handed down a lot of theoretical disciplines through our educational programmes which lay much emphasis on theories rather than a combination of theories and practical with emphasis on skills acquisition (Okojie, 2008).

Hence it is hoped, and rightly too, that, in the first place, government should encourage a diversification of the economy through adequate support for private establishments and practical acquisition of skills in higher institutions. Then, education should be refined with a view to creating and enhancing the supply of entrepreneurship initiatives and activities. The best way to do this is to create the spirit and culture of entrepreneurship in the youths through educational programmes in higher institutions. Before 1993, the federal and state governments monopolized the establishment of universities. But the promulgation of Decree 9 of 1993 made provision for the establishment of private universities in Nigeria. This opportunity has created a way for the private individuals and sector to contribute their quotas to the development of the country through the establishment of universities. The total number of approved universities in Nigeria has

since risen to 93 (made up of 27 federal, 32 state government and 34 privately-owned universities) as at January, 2008. Today, the Nigerian university system has:

- i.) 16 universities of technology.
- ii.) 3 universities of agriculture.
- iii.) 1 defense academy.
- iv.) 1 Open University.
- v.) 1 university of petroleum resources.
- vi.) 2 universities of education.
- vii.) 71 conventional universities.

In order to accomplish the policy thrusts of the Federal Government of Nigeria targeting the universities for spinning off entrepreneurship spirit and culture, a Presidential Committee on the introduction and implementation of entrepreneurship education in all tertiary institutions was set up with the strategies of:

- i.) Curriculum review.
- ii.) Promotion of the development and sustenance of entrepreneurship centres and centres of excellence.
- iii.) Promotion of science, technology and innovation by providing incentives for students and lecturers.
- iv.) Sensitization, advocacy and mobilization of support for entrepreneurship education.
- v.) Programme focus.
- vi.) Funding.

The strategies highlighted above are aimed at achieving both national and international goals geared towards making the products of Nigerian universities nationally relevant and internationally competitive.

Apart from the entrepreneurship curriculum, there are other specific activities which can be carried out with a view to creating an entrepreneurship culture in Nigerian universities. Some of these are highlighted below.

Establishment of entrepreneurship development centres

The federal government in collaboration with the National Universities Commission (NUC) has given directive that all Nigerian Universities must establish entrepreneurship development centres, latest by 2007/2008 session. This is a bold step in the right direction. In fact, a draft entrepreneurship curriculum has been designed for full implementation as part of university programmes. Also, Centres for Entrepreneurship Development and Knowledge Transfer are to be established through clear directive from the NUC. A venture capital fund can be put in place to support the programmes and activities of the centres. Better still, the centres could be made self-sustaining if internally generated revenue (IGR) activities are transferred to them.

Establishment of small and medium scale establishment resources centres

Nigerian universities would do well to establish SME re-

source centres such as well equipped libraries, technology centres, cybercafé and other facilities where entrepreneurship networking can be coordinated.

Establishment of some clubs

This would involve organizing SME clubs among students, potential retirees and other members of the university community who are interested in entrepreneurship culture in Nigerian Universities. SME clubs can be started by sending out questionnaire to promote interest among respondents.

Organizing business plan competitions

It is advisable for university authorities to organize intra- and inter-faculty business plan competitions. This could be determined by business experts, entrepreneurs, investors or lecturers. From the knowledge gained from such competitions, it is hoped that it will go a long way in instilling the spirit of entrepreneurship in the participants.

Networking events

It is not only good but necessary to organize networking events such as workshops, seminars, symposia, lectures and so on, among stakeholders, where cross-fertilization of ideas could take place. For example, the NUC, NDDC, NNPC and other stakeholders could brainstorm on 'alternative fuel for Nigerians' use'.

Identifying entrepreneurship opportunities

It is the function of university authorities through the EDCs to scan the environment for business opportunities. For example, research into the use of coal for alternative fuel; the recycling of waste, the alternative generation of electricity through waste and solar power could provide worthwhile entrepreneurship opportunities.

Role model interactions and mentoring

A lot of successful entrepreneurs in various fields abound in Nigeria. It behooves the university authorities to organize lectures to be delivered by these role models. Such guest lecturers like Mary Akande of Glo Mobile, Raymond Dokpesi of DAAR Communications, Razaq Thomas Okoya of Eleganza, Akintunde Ayeni of Yemkem International Centre for Alternative Therapy, to mention a few, will automatically motivate and challenge staff and students toward entrepreneurship projects.

Industrial visits and excursions

Visits and excursions could be organized by departmental associations. Whereas the Association of Mass Communication Students could visit African Independent

Television (AIT), Medical Students Association could visit PZ Pharmaceutical Company, and so on.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMME IN SELECTED NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

The university of Ibadan experience

The Programme for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (PEI) is an outgrowth of the recommendations of the activities of the University of Ibadan's committee on the promotion of university-private sector collaboration. This committee organized two workshops: the first in 2003 and the second in 2004. These workshops recommended that the University should establish a Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (CEI) to coordinate the University's research results and business activities aimed at promoting university-private sector collaboration as well as teaching and research in entrepreneurship innovation in the university. Prior to obtaining approval of all the relevant organs of the University to establish the CEI, the Committee obtained approval to establish the PEI as its precursor.

The functions of the PEI are:

- i.) Curriculum development in entrepreneurship and innovation.
- ii.) Co-ordination of teaching and research in entrepreneurship and innovation.
- iii.) Promotion of links with the private sector through research, consultancy, training as building networks and alliances.
- iv.) Development of appropriate approaches for promoting innovation among entrepreneurs, particularly small business and students.
- v.) Development of modalities for promoting linkage with government including building appropriate institutional and legal framework for enhancing university-private sector collaboration in the country.
- vi.) Development of appropriate networks with relevant entities national and internationally.
- vii.) Assisting in bringing to life the University Of Ibadan School Of Business.
- viii.) Provision of real-life experience in teaching and research to the proposed University of Ibadan School of Business once it comes on stream.
- ix.) Co-ordinating university-private sector collaboration activities, generally.

Its governance structure stipulates the establishment of a governing board chaired by the Vice-Chancellor or his representative and a Vice-Chair appointed from the private sector based on his/her personal recognition. The day-to-day management of the PEI is to be handled by a management board. The Vice-Chancellor has approved the constitution of the first governing board of the PEI.

The PEI proposes to start a business incubator using the

immediate materials from its immediate environment of small businesses. The programme when it grows to the CEI will be a major component and platform in the take-off of the new University of Ibadan School of Business (UISB). Indeed, it forms the hub of the wheel around which its private sector focus will revolve. The establishment of the UISB has just been approved, in principle by the University of Ibadan Governing Council. The UISB will have a strong private sector focus. The UISB will have three main flanks of programmes;

- i.) Degree-awarding programmes.
- ii.) Executive Development programmes.
- iii.) Business-oriented research and development programmes.

With the CEI, the UISB hopes to develop networks of Small Business Development Centres in the south-west geopolitical zone of the country. It is also proposed to form networks with other universities in the zone and other parts of the country to promote job and wealth-creation through small businesses in the country. This is where we need the support of the private sector in idea-generation as to how we can fulfill this vision as well funding through research and other grants as well as consultancies.

Tai Solarin University of Education experience

The objectives of the centre, through the various courses designed and approved by the National University Commission (NUC) are to:

- i.) Make the students master at least one vocation that can guarantee self-reliance.
- ii.) Equip the students with the needed knowledge to make them successful entrepreneurs.
- iii.) Create in the students the necessary awareness, understanding and appreciation of Nigerian culture and politics and hence guarantee responsible citizenship.
- iv.) Provide the students the opportunity to acquire necessary knowledge in English Language that will make them highly proficient in communication skills for their present and future academic pursuit and the world of work.
- v.) Inculcate in the students, knowledge of the modern information communication and technology (ICT) that will enable them to interact effectively with their immediate and distant environment.
- vi.) Develop in the student's ability to observe and study the environment to which they belong and hence be able to adjust accordingly.

Adekunle Ajasin University Experience

Precisely on 18th June, 2007 the Committee for Centre for Entrepreneurship and Linkage Programmes (CELP) for Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, was set up by the Vice-Chancellor with the following terms of reference:

- i.) To fashion out the modalities for setting up a Career/Entrepreneurship Centre where students can be counseled and guided on the right career to follow after their graduation.
- ii.) To design students-work-study programme and entrepreneurship scheme as appropriate.
- iii.) To exploit how best to tap from government assistance to universities in setting up Career Centre/Entrepreneurship Centre.
- iv.) To make recommendations on any other related matters.

The information below is provided to enable the University community and others know more about what the CELP stands for and what it does.

The centre: The CELP is an arm of the University that promotes university-private sector collaboration, teaching and research in entrepreneurship and innovation, and the direct relevance of the university to its environment and society at large. It seeks to complement the efforts of the government in promoting private sector-led growth as envisioned in national and continental policies and initiatives, such as the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), National Programme on the Eradication of Poverty (NAPEP), and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), among others.

Our vision: To be leaders in positively transforming society through entrepreneurship and innovation.

Our mission: To unlock the entrepreneurial ideas, in students, staff and operators of small and medium enterprises, through training and other interventions, to enable them develop sustainable enterprises by utilizing mutually rewarding partnership with the private sector, policy-makers and non-government organizations committed to economic growth, poverty alleviation and sustainable development.

Core competencies: Building human capital; unlocking ideas in people through training, research and consultancy; developing a portfolio of relevant competencies and; creating innovation through product-prototyping and process improvement.

Goal: The goal of the CELP is to institutionalize the development of entrepreneurship and innovation through teaching research, networking and advocacy, as well as collaboration with the private sector and government.

The functions of the centre: The Centre's main functions are as follows:

- i.) Curriculum development in entrepreneurship and innovation.

- ii.) Co-ordination of teaching and research in entrepreneurship and other linkages.
- iii.) Promotion of linkages with the private sector through research, consultancy, training and building networks and alliances.
- iv.) Development of appropriate approaches for promoting innovation among entrepreneurs particularly of small business and students.
- v.) Development of modalities for promoting linkage with government, including building appropriate institution and legal frameworks for enhancing university private sector collaboration in Nigeria.

How we perform our functions: We seek to accomplish our mandate by;

- i.) Training students, staff and entrepreneurs through workshops, seminars and lecturers in face-to-face and distance learning mode, including university-listed courses that are practical and evidence-based.
- ii.) Using a combination of academic and private-sector-based instructors in teaching and in attaching trainer to experienced mentor for guidance and experienced-sharing.
- iii.) Organizing research and innovation as well as similar fairs and competitions for promoting entrepreneurship and innovation at different levels.
- iv.) Conducting relevant research and consultancies to determine appropriate intervention, including establishment of business and technology incubators and small business development centers as well as using other knowledge-transfer approaches.
- v.) Networking with others in performing our functions, including the building of development centers as emergence of appropriate legal and industrial frameworks and a conducive environment for the development of entrepreneurship and innovation.

CAREER GUIDANCE FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMME IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

It is generally observed that for an individual to have a fulfilled life, the type of entrepreneurship activity he engages in, has an important role to play. This therefore calls for the need to employ career guidance in guiding students into various entrepreneurial activities, especially in a situation that demands for matching students with the demands of their prospective ecosystem. An appropriate career guidance and choice, changes one's life forever. It is a way that leads to a healthier and better future for students. It helps them to become better individuals, parents, workers and citizens later in life.

However, as observed by Oluwole (2003), it is sad that even today in Nigeria, there still exists among students, confusion and ignorance about entrepreneurial activities, careers and choices. Many University graduates, according to him, confessed that they were ignorant of programme they went in for at the University. This implies

therefore, that such students' choice of programme had either been based on trial and error, or on the advice of ill-informed relations and acquaintance. This observation further stresses the dire need for career guidance, to providing the fundamental information to students on the relationship between university education and economic realities, and the implications of their disciplines and economic realities for their future careers, self-reliance and development.

Developmental theorists like Ginzberg et al. (1951), were of the opinion that career development involved series of decision that take place over a period of time. It is implied thus that, if the Nigerian youths are helped in their entrepreneurship plans at the tertiary level, that will turn the economic fortunes of the country. This therefore emphasizes the need for career guidance at all levels of education, starting from primary to tertiary institutions.

It is particularly noted that in Nigeria today, there is a high rate of unemployment. According to Yakubu (2000), gone are the days, when in Nigeria, education used to be a guarantee for any type of jobs. It has now become a story that in the days of old, all categories of graduates; from the university, secondary and even primary schools had the opportunity to have access to any type of job among a pool that was begging for selection. For this reason, at that point in time, there was never a need for career guidance, since the Nigerian labour market was largely virgin land to be explored. However, based on the recent development where there is shortage of employment, there is need for proper guidance of students by professional guidance counselors. Career guidance is needed to provide students with realistic explorative entrepreneurship opportunities that could lead to an increasingly comprehensive knowledge of self and current world of market competitiveness. In other words, career guidance is needed to intimate students with the economic situation and opportunities, education, training, opportunities, advancement, and other benefits, for sustainable self-reliance, and self-worth, among the youths, both in the environment where they are, or in larger society. It is believed therefore that, when students are provided with appropriate career guidance based on their capabilities, aptitudes, interests and needs, they are likely to achieve and live fulfilled lives and contribute meaningfully to the development of their country in all spheres of life.

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES AND FUNDING OF ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

If Nigerian Universities are to perform optimally their intervention role in salvaging the never-do-well economy of the nation through entrepreneurship activities, according to Oluwole (2003), then it becomes necessary that there should be a special fund arrangement such as risk fund or venture capital. This is to provide funds at concessionary rates to entrepreneurship development cen-

tres of University, for them to be able to fund research results and innovations, so that such could be carried out to meaningful conclusion.

For this purpose, three categories of funding are suggested:

- i.) Seed money from the university authority to the EDC. Possibly, this should not be less than 10% of the entire project cost.
- ii.) Fund from government agencies or establishments such as National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), National Agriculture, Cooperative and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB) and so on.
- iii.) Private sector financials, such as micro finance institutions, commercial banks, philanthropists, NGOs and so on.

To safeguard the result of such funding, patenting and protection of intellectual properties of individual researchers must be given priority attention piracy and plagiarizing must not be allowed to jeopardize the innovative, reward and, if possible, equity for the researchers on the commercialization of their findings. NBTI should also be supported by government to assist researchers towards the commercialization of their research and development findings.

To ensure the water-tight safeguard and monitor of the entire project, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) would act as the regulatory body for the finance whereas the National University Commission would oversee the activities at the University.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION PROMOTION IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

Research and innovations are indispensable vehicles of entrepreneurship development (Anao, 2002). Entrepreneurs are repeatedly monitoring windows of opportunity. These windows are continuously opening and closing as a result, research results and strategic planning are required to ensure successful operation. Schumpeter (19-34) identifies the entrepreneur's challenge as discovering and implementing new ideas. He asserts that innovation is a unique feature which separates entrepreneurs from managers. The innovation process can be categorized into four basic types according to Kuratko and Hodgetts (2004). These are: invention, extension, duplication and synthesis. Novel products or services are 'inventions', and the application of a current concept to a different application is an 'extension'. An improvement to an already existing concept is a 'duplication' and forming a new application from existing concepts is 'synthesis'. Thus if universities would attain its goal of entrepreneurship culture and development, priority attention has to be given to the promotion of research and innovation. In striving to achi-

eve this, the things that need to be taken into consideration include; critical elements such as, central re-search facility, standard library, funding, consultancy e.t.c.; availability of required infrastructure for research such as founding, polymer electronics e.t.c.; critical issues in market driven research and finally promoting industry-university collaboration. It is a welcome development to inspire entrepreneurship spirit and culture among the youths through entrepreneurship programmes in Nigerian universities. However, it must be emphasized that to trans-form the business ideas and convert the research results to commercial values needs to be sustained and promoted to full entrepreneurial operations. Also, management of growth should be seriously considered. Churchill and Lewis (1992) categorize the entrepreneur's growth into the five stages of existence; survival, success, take off, and maturity. Therefore, the entrepreneur must aspire to move from each stage to the next, otherwise, he will remain at a stage where he is comfortable with the level of activity.

Having analyzed the determinants or elements of promoting research and innovation in Nigerian universities for entrepreneurial values, it is recommended, according to Okojie (2008) that:

- i.) Central research unit, under the office of the Vice-Chancellor should be established in all universities.
- ii.) The centre will be the meeting point for training and importing skills in research, development and production.
- iii.) The centre will perform the function of designing concepts.
- iv.) Fund should be made available for the running of the centre.
- v.) There must be a multi-disciplinary centre for harnessing all the involvements of relevant bodies within the university system.
- vi.) The EDC building should be dedicated centrally to the promotion of research and development.
- vii.) The NBTI should have offices or be present at the research centres.
- viii.) Intellectual property rights unit should be established in each university.
- ix.) Effort should be made by universities to increase allocation for research and development.
- x.) There should be a dedicated professional central committee to evaluate research proposals in each university.
- xi.) Patenting research findings should be considered as an avenue to getting promoted.
- xii.) ETF should create awareness on the types of fund available for research and development so that researchers can assess funds.
- xiii.) The EDC should serve as a link between different researchers.
- xiv.) There must be a stipulated time frame for research projects.
- xv.) Graduate students must be sponsored to attend conferences, seminars, workshop, symposia etc.

Table 1. A model for strategic activities and interventions.

Units/Strategies	Activities/Inventions
Curriculum development and teaching	
A. Curriculum Development	i.) Review of different sample curricula in Entrepreneurship and Innovation. ii.) Development of curriculum in Basic Entrepreneurship and Innovation. iii.) Obtaining approval of curriculum from relevant University Committee and Authority. iv.) Periodic review, updating and expansion of curriculum. v.) Design of short-term training programmes in entrepreneurship and innovation based on market research or client demand.
B. Teaching and Training Programme	i.) Organising workshops annually to sensitize 200 level students in Entrepreneurship and Innovation ii.) Evaluating workshop and use result for workshop improvement and screening of students to determine participants in the basic elective course in entrepreneurship and innovation. iii.) Teaching the elective course to students at their penultimate year. iv.) Implementing short-term training programme. v.) Organizing Annual Student Business Plan Competition.
Business incubation, research and development	
A. Business incubator	i.) Conducting needs assessment and marketing research studies to determine appropriate stage of intervention as and when needed in collaboration with marketing. ii.) Implementing identified interventions through establishment of Business Incubators and small Business Development Centres and Business Incubators. iii.) Providing hands-on experiences to students through attachments, consultancies in Small Business Development Centres and Business Incubators.
B. Research and development	i.) Inventorying of existing staff and student innovations and breakthroughs. ii.) Promoting continuous development of innovation and breakthroughs by staff and students. iii.) Facilitating patenting and commercializing identified innovation and breakthroughs. iv.) Development cases for use of students and others in collaborations with Curriculum Development and Teaching. v.) Mounting of short-term training programmes for small business in collaboration with Curricula Development and Teaching. vi.) Organizing the Annual University Innovation Day in collaboration with relevant units of the university.
Marketing, policy and strategy planning	
A. Marketing	i.) Conducting environment scanning and market studies in collaboration with Business Incubators, Research and Development. ii.) Designing new products and services in collaboration with other units. iii.) Designing and implementing approaches and framework for promoting external relations and fund generation. iv.) Organizing Alumni Homecoming.
B. Policy and strategic planning	i.) Coordinating university-private sector collaboration ii.) Designing and implementing institutional and legal frameworks for promoting university-private sector collaboration through networking policy, advocacy and policy interventions iii.) Meeting with and visiting relevant national and international entries to develop linkage and networks. iv.) Signing Memoranda of Understanding on linkage and networks. v.) Implementing linkage and networks. vi.) Facilitating passage or legislation on universities-private sector collaboration.
C. General Administration	i.) Organizing meeting, brain-storming activities for planning and implementation activities. ii.) Providing resources and logistic support for implementation activities. iii.) Evaluating unit and individual performance. iv.) Proving feedback on evaluation. v.) Linkage with relevant agencies of the university to develop modalities for establishing a viable university school of business. vi.) Implementing the School of Business design. vii.) Motivating and facilitating external relations and fund-raising activities.

Efforts of government at providing opportunities for entrepreneurship graduates in Nigeria

Especially since the 1980s, unemployment has continued to remain one of the most cancerous socio-economic problems inhibiting the progress of Nigeria, as a nation. Unemployment is apparently one of the major causes of social vices such as armed robbery, destitution, prostitution, political thugery and so on. With the labour force of approximately 3 million people annually moving into the labour market, unemployment of persons of 15 years and above was put at 3.8% and youth unemployment estimated at 5.0%, as at 2006 (Osibanjo, 2006).

To stem the tide of poverty, unemployment and vices in Nigeria therefore, the federal government has adopted some multi-sectoral approaches in the past. They include the following:

- 1970 - 1980; sectoral allocation of credit.
- 1980; concessionary allocation to the agricultural sector.
- 1972; National Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank was established.
- 1977; Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme Fund (ACGSF) was established.
- 1977; Rural Banking Programme was inaugurated.
- 1989; People's Bank of Nigeria was established to provide loan for people engaged in small scale business.
- 1990 - Community Banking Concept was inaugurated to promote economic activities in rural areas.
- 1994 - Poverty Alleviation Development Committee was established.
- 1999 - National Poverty Eradication Council was established.
- 2001 - National Poverty Eradication Programme was inaugurated.

Other agencies established to alleviate or cushion the effects of unemployment and poverty includes National Directorate of Employment (NDR), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI), FSP, River Basins Development Authorities and so on.

Government's recent focus is on sustainable micro-financing. The government uses this as a strategy for empowering poor entrepreneurs to be self-employed and contribute meaningfully to productive life and an improved economy. Micro-finance has been adopted as one of the anchors for economic growth in realizing the vision of Nigeria as becoming one of the twenty largest economy in the world by year 2020.

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES, ACTIVITIES AND INTERVENTIONS FOR NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

Going by global entrepreneurial competitiveness, there is the need to suggest a workable model that reflects the ecosystem of a particular society (Oluwole, 2003; Osibanjo, 2006; Okojie, 2008). Consequently, the Nigerian university environment can support the following strategic acti-

vities and interventions. If all Nigerian universities can practice the following suggested model, it will spin off the expected entrepreneurial spirit and culture and the desirable results (Table 1).

Table 1 shows recommended strategies, activities and interventions for Nigerian universities. These have been thoroughly worked out after due considerations of the ecosystem and business opportunities as well as policy thrusts of the Federal Government of Nigeria. It is hoped that the core activities of the programme, which are based on curriculum development and teaching, business incubation and research development, marketing policy and strategy planning and general administration are *sine qua non* to a successful introduction and implementation of an entrepreneurship programme not only in Nigeria but also in African universities.

Conclusion

The economic situation of Nigeria needs re-engineering in order to strategically reposition Nigeria as the leader of Africa. The current industrial decay and the subsequent unemployment crisis among the graduates of the Nigerian universities have been traced to the theory-oriented university programmes and certificate frenzy coupled with the colonial mentality of Golden Fleece. In its practical approach to redress the seemingly unrealistic educational curricula of the university educational system in solving the economic problems in Nigeria, the Federal Government feels the need to promote the collaborative efforts of the town and gown in Nigeria. Realising the important role of the higher educational system as an instrument of creating wealth, business opportunities, and economic development and global market competitiveness, the Federal Government directed all the higher institutions in Nigeria to establish Centres for Entrepreneurship and Linkage Programmes in collaboration with Research and Development Centres and Science and Technology Incubation Centres, using the advantage of promotion of network activities. This paper recommends curriculum review, sensitization, advocacy and mobilization of support for entrepreneurship education, programme focus and funding together with the political will and stability of the government in order to achieve the goals and the policy thrusts of the Federal Government of Nigeria.

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