Full Length Research Paper

Developing and implementing entrepreneurship curriculum in Nigerian library and information science programmes

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This paper proposes a theoretical approach to the development and implementation of an entrepreneurship curriculum in LIS. It observes that the introduction of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities following a Presidential directive in 2004 was a laudable step even as facilities for skills acquisition are generally lacking in most institutions. Following the laudable intentions of the general studies entrepreneurship course, stakeholders in LIS have also seen a need for tailor-fit entrepreneurship studies in the field, which led recently to the proposal for a course known as Infopreneurship to be included in undergraduate LIS education. To train LIS students in entrepreneurship requires the development of a comprehensive but dynamic curriculum that responds to changing needs in the field. The implementation of this curriculum will enable beneficiaries to be self-employed by carrying out such entrepreneurial activities like abstracting, indexing, publishing, database development and management, collection management, knowledge management, organization of knowledge, current awareness services, staff recruitment and development, conduct of researches, bibliographic and metadata searching, journals and book business, materials conservation and preservation, generation of ideas, etc. The implementation of the curriculum requires students to have the right mindset for entrepreneurial skills acquisition; LIS programmes need to have qualified and experienced staff to teach the course(s); need to have facilities for students to acquire hands-on experience both in their departments and places of IT and SIWES; need to create and promote entrepreneurship awareness, knowledge of how to access existing markets, funding, etc is also required by students. It is recommended finally that to make entrepreneurship attractive, government ought to create favourable environment in terms of infrastructure provision, funding and regulating interest rates on bank loans, etc.

Key words: Entrepreneurship Studies, Library and Information Science, Curriculum, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Curriculum is the totality of the content of an area of study to be imparted to its intended learners. In its simplistic definition, the Websters Universal Dictionary and Thesaurus (2007: 135) views curriculum as “a
prescribed course of study.” The definition of curriculum is made more elaborate and professional by Wasagu (2000) who views it as the whole spectrum of content, resources, materials and method of teaching by which the objectives of education are accomplished. In the words of Tanner and Tanner (1980: 15), curriculum is: The planned guided learning experiences and intended learning outcomes formulated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experiences under the auspices of the school for the learners’ continuous and willful growth in personal social competence. Lunenburg (2011) summarized curriculum experts’ conceptions and definitions of the topic as the content of what is to be learned, the learning experiences, the behavioural objectives to be achieved, by bringing about the desired behaviours in the learners, the plan for instruction, and the non-technical approach, which include the aesthetic, pluralistic/diverse, spiritual, etc aspects of curriculum. Having gone through an entrepreneurship curriculum, therefore, it is expected that the beneficiaries would be entrepreneurially inclined. Entrepreneurship can be viewed as the activity(ies) and/or area(s) of study, which enable(s) the recipient to be self-employed at the first level, and at other level(s), to be an employer of labour also. Entrepreneurship education, according to Oduwaiye (2014:3) “is aimed at equipping students with entrepreneurial skills, attitudes and competencies in order to be job providers and not job seekers.”

Entrepreneurship curriculum in library and information science, therefore, is the total package of the content, activities, approaches, etc used in imparting entrepreneurship skills to library and information science students so that on graduation, they become job creators rather than wait hopelessly in an already saturated economy, both public and private, where employment opportunities are already oversubscribed. Entrepreneurship studies in the Nigerian university system are a recent phenomenon. It dates back to 2004 when President Obasanjo gave a presidential directive for its introduction (Anene and Imam, 2011: 3). The directive was informed by two reasons. The first was to stem the disturbing spiral rise in graduate unemployment, which it was hoped that with entrepreneurship education, Nigerian graduates would become self-employed, and become even employers of labour. The second reason was the desire of the then government to make Nigeria one of the leading twenty economies of the world by 2020. It was the belief of the then President that entrepreneurship education for Nigerian undergraduates was one of the strategies for achieving this (Bamkole, 2007). The National Universities Commission (NUC) set out to implement the Presidential directive immediately, and by 2004 during its Workshop on the Review of Benchmark and Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) for Nigerian Universities, GST 311: Introduction to Entrepreneurial Skills, was brought in as a Two-credits unit compulsory General Studies course to be offered by all undergraduate students, regardless of their fields of study. The BMAS document for undergraduate courses in Nigerian universities was released in 2007 (NUC, 2007). The course outline of GST 311 is as follows:

1. Introduction to entrepreneurship and new venture creation.
2. Entrepreneurship in theory and practice.
3. The opportunity, forms of business, staffing, marketing and new ventures.
4. Determining capital requirements, raising capital.
5. Financial planning and management.
7. Feasibility studies.
8. Innovation.
9. Legal issues, insurance and environmental considerations.
10. Possible business opportunities in Nigeria.

The plan of the NUC is that GST 311 be taught by lecturers who are knowledgeable in the requisite areas such as those in business administration, management, economics and related areas. Every university is expected to have an entrepreneurship centre, staffed with artisans, where each undergraduate is expected to acquire two or three out of those offered in the centre. The skills in a typical university entrepreneurship centre would include tye-and-dye, pot making, tailoring (fashion designing), fruit canning, table water production, cloth weaving, soap and detergent production, fish farming, poultry farming, snail farming, food processing, bread/cake making, interior and exterior designing, printing/publishing, wood/ metal work, automobile and other repairs, refrigeration, electrical works, restaurant business, forex trading, recharge card printing, private school business, etc (Oduwaiye, 2014). An important dimension which many people overlook is that idea generation is one of the products or services on offer in entrepreneurship activities. This is acknowledged by Seikkula-Leino (2011) that entrepreneurship “can also include the generation of ideas.” The World Agroforestry Centre (2014:5 identified “a good idea (as) the basis of a successful venture (because) business originates from generated ideas.” On its part, Action Coach (2016) identified twelve essential characteristics of an entrepreneur, one of which is a passion for learning either on his own or from the idea of others. In addition to each

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university’s entrepreneurship centre, zonal entrepreneurship centres, which are expected to be better equipped and have more comprehensive trades were to be established too. Students from universities in each zone would go to these zonal centres to acquire further skills in the trades they had learnt in their universities’ centres if they so desired.

All Nigerian universities now offer GST 311 at least theoretically, with very few having entrepreneurship centres where students can learn practical skills. Even among those with entrepreneurship centres, not all are equipped for the acquisition of practical skills. The zonal centres that were proposed have also not taken off. This position is supported by Dantani and Ibrahim (2014: 280) who observed that the paucity of qualified instructors/teachers, instructional equipment/materials and well equipped laboratories are capable of frustrating entrepreneurial education in Nigeria. Borrowing from the general entrepreneurship studies course, and desiring to develop a tailor-fit programme for students of library and information science, Departments of Library and Information Science in Nigerian universities, have also come up with LIS-related entrepreneurial courses. A look at the course descriptions of the about 25 approved LIS programmes in Nigerian universities indicates that entrepreneurship courses peculiar to the field are hardly offered presently, apart from the general studies course. Among the few LIS departments offering entrepreneurship courses, are those at the University of Ilorin; Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; Babcock University, Ilishan, etc. The University of Ilorin LIS programme, for example, offers LIS 402: Entrepreneurship in Information.

In its justification for offering this course, the LIS Programme stated that it is intended to circumvent unemployment of librarians in the public and private sectors, thus, encouraging their graduates to be self-employed and to create employment for others as well (University of Ilorin, 2014). The course content of LIS 402 is as follows:

1. Options, openings and possibilities for self-employment, employment creation.
2. Requirements for establishing and managing enterprises.
3. Business plan project.
4. Introduction to small business start-up.
5. Identifying information business opportunities.
6. Lobbying, advocacy and fund raising for development of libraries and information centres.
7. Branding and marketing for changing the image of libraries.

However, in most of the twenty-five approved LIS Programmes in Nigerian Universities, there are a number of business-related courses, which are aimed at attuning students’ minds towards possible self-employment upon graduation. In the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, for example, courses like LIS 220: Business Information Systems and Services; LIBS 321: Marketing of Libraries and Information Centres; LIS 323: Financial Management in Libraries and Information Centres; and LIBS 414: Publishing and Advertising are offered. In the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, LIS 448: Library Marketing and Public Relations is offered. At the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi, the LIS Programme offers 513: Library and Information Consultancy and LIS 523: Marketing of Library and Information Services. In the LIS Programme at the University of Abuja, such courses include LIS 302: Introduction to Publishing, LIS 408: Marketing Library and Information Services, LIS 409: Library and Information Consultancy, and LIS 411: Revenue Generation in Libraries and Information Centres. There is no doubting the growing awareness and need for entrepreneurship courses in Library and Information Science. This has led to increased literature in the area, for example, Igbeka (2008) and Issa et al. (2014) are among those that have produced materials in the field. This awareness has also been made possible by hosting of many conferences, workshops, etc, for example, the National Association of Library and Information Science Educators (NALISE) Conference on Entrepreneurship Education in Library and Information Science Programmes held at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria between 8th to 12th November, 2011.

Other examples are the National Workshop on "Entrepreneurship in Librarianship", which was organized by the Librarians’ Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) at Kuchukau in Nasarawa State between 29th July and 2nd August, 2013, and the Second International Conference of the School of Technology Education, Federal University of Technology, Minna with the theme: Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Science and Technology Education for Self-Reliance held between 12th to 15th October, 2014, among others. In furtherance of the need to entrench entrepreneurial studies in LIS curriculum at the undergraduate level, some experts who were invited by the NUC to review the existing Benchmark and Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) and come up with a new one that would meet modern realities proposed for the inclusion of a course to be known as Infopreneurship, among several other new courses that were proposed. The proposed content of Infopreneurship subject to final approval by the NUC will contain such essential aspects as:

1. Concept of Infopreneurship.
2. Need for Infopreneurship skills.
5. Establishing and Managing Revenue Generating Activities.
Developing and implementing a realistic entrepreneurship curriculum in LIS

The first step in developing and implementing an entrepreneurship curriculum in Librarianship is to have a curriculum, of which most LIS Departments have viable ones, at least in business related areas. However, the success or failure of these curricula in terms of whether the students internalize the values they are expected to imbibe with regard to entrepreneurship depends more on the implementation of such curricula. This is why implementation attracts more focus than development of LIS entrepreneurship curriculum in what follows below. This is even as the two are an integral part of each other. A good entrepreneurship curriculum should be comprehensive and dynamic to be responsive to changing needs in LIS. This is what the proposed course, Infopreneurship seeks to be. The content of entrepreneurship education would include but not restricted to abstracting, indexing, publishing, database development and management, collection management, organization of knowledge, current awareness services, staff recruitment and development, conduct of researches, book and journal business, material conservation and preservation, and above all, generating ideas to solve the information needs of those who patronize such services. While some of these topics can be planned for and taught in LIS entrepreneurial course, it is better to adopt the Finish approach in which, according to Seikkula Leino (2011), “entrepreneurship education is not seen as a subject, but will be integrated thematically into other subject areas.” Using the Finish Approach, every academic programme integrates entrepreneurship into its course content, unlike the current Nigerian approach where it is taught as a General Studies course for all undergraduate students. The Finish approach is preferred because every area of librarianship has the potential for entrepreneurship, therefore, it (entrepreneurship) should be emphasized as a general feature by all course lecturers to underscore its significance and versatility.

It is a fundamental requirement that the students offering entrepreneurial skills courses inculcate and develop the right mindset towards entrepreneurship as well as imbibe the innovative spirit. Some students currently offering the General Studies Entrepreneurship merely see it as a requirement for graduation and not a means for developing their interest in entrepreneurship. The students from the outset should be convinced that they need it, they can do it, and require to hold on tenaciously to its principles, and savour the desire to be successful entrepreneurs notwithstanding likely obstacles on their path. Acknowledging the significance of the above, Bamkole (2007) advised that for students to be adequately prepared to face the challenges of venturing, it is important to counsel them to adopt attitudinal re-orientation towards self-employment and self-reliance. It requires too that entrepreneurship studies should instill in the students self-confidence and capacity for independent thought, especially LIS students and graduates who have to work with a big reservoir of information to which they have access, and which they can use for their own economic development as well as that of the society (Emetaron and Obunadike, 2008). It is important to change the orientation and attitude of the recipients of entrepreneurial education because some basic attitudes and skills are required, which according to Oduwaiye (2014) with reference to Aig’ Imoukhuede (1988) and Okada (2000) include proper disposition and profound capacity for positive thinking to be able to make timely and informed decisions. They should be articulate, focused and progressive ideas generators as well as being receptive to new ideas to be able to engender creativity and innovativeness. They should be achievement oriented and be able to translate into practical reality what has been conceived. Other requirements are self-confidence, courage and ability to take calculated risks. They require also to be enterprising, resilient and insightful. They further require being judicious in the utilization of resources, in addition to being conscientious and hardworking.

In imparting entrepreneurial skills in students, there is need to have qualified people who can handle both theoretical and practical aspects. These, preferably should be people who themselves have served as consultants or entrepreneurs, and whose consulting or entrepreneurship activities have kept them in touch with the business world. LIS Departments can also bring in entrepreneurs, for example, the Managing Director of Havillah Books, to give talks on their experiences in terms of how they started, their doggedness in the face of obstacles, and how they have been able to weather the storm. Reference is made to Havillah Books because they are one of the most successful in book vending in Nigeria. Since much of information and library services revolve around ICTs, there is the need for LIS laboratories with full Internet connectivity, as well as other enabling facilities with which students can have hands-on experience. These laboratories should be made accessible to students for sufficient number of hours in a day, and if possible 24/7. One other way of gaining practical experience is through participating in the activities of Entrepreneurship in Action and Us (ENACTUS), which until October, 2012 was known as students in Free Enterprise (SIFE). Enactus is “a global non-profit and community of students, academics and business leaders committed to using the power of entrepreneurial action to transform lives (Enactus Nigeria, 2014).

Enactus is present in many countries of the world including Nigeria where their services are made available
to students in many campuses of higher institutions of learning.

Students are made to develop creative projects, with which they can enter into national and international competitions. Those with successful projects are assisted to develop them. Generally, Enactus encourages organizations to provide students the opportunities to develop leadership teamwork and communication skills through learning, practising by hands on experience and teaching the principles of free enterprise, which would impact on the lives of the ordinary people. The winners of the 2016 National ENACTUS Competition were students from Kaduna Polytechnic, Kaduna. It is important too to create and promote entrepreneurship awareness in LIS students and make them know the opportunities that exist in terms of the activities they can engage in, how to write viable business plans, the market(s) available and the regulations guiding operations in them as well as how to maximize the benefits of operating in them. This can also touch on how to overcome likely obstacles, including risk-taking.

Another important aspect of implementing the curriculum in entrepreneurship education is to let the students know about existing market linkages and how to promote such linkages. For example, a student who is interested in book vending and journal subscription business upon graduation should have the contacts of local and overseas books and journals vendors and publishers that he/she would have beneficial relationship with for his/her intended business.

It is important too that students should know about the sources from which they can access funding (loans, etc) with which to start the businesses they intend going into. These include banks, cooperative societies, family and friends, as well as own or personal capital. Students should be made to know about the dangers of sole ownership of business side by side with the benefits of joint ownership or partnership. The advantages of the latter include access to equity, sharing of risks, and the advantage(s) of working with the ideas of two or more persons, which Bamkole (2007) calls “leveraging on the knowledge of one another.” At this stage, students can also be taught how to write viable business proposals and plans. Government policy can help greatly in the development and implementation of a viable entrepreneurship curriculum. This is because the position of the government can help keep those that have taken to entrepreneurship to remain in the business, thus, attracting new entrants from among graduating students. For example, the government ought to provide the appropriate infrastructure like telecommunications and power for ICT-based and other businesses. Government’s policy of patronizing local entrepreneurs and compelling multinational and international bodies in Nigeria to do the same will go a long way in assisting the growth of local entrepreneurs. It is helpful to local entrepreneurs for the government to control the interest on bank loans and put in place favourable tax regimes, among other measures to help local businesses to thrive and develop.

CONCLUSION

The idea of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities came as a Presidential directive in 2004 to the National Universities Commission (2007) which subsequently made it a compulsory Two-Credit General Studies course that was implemented in all Nigerian universities from 2007. The desire for it stemmed from the need to produce graduates who are not only self-employed but are also capable of creating jobs for others. It was additionally felt by the then government of President Olusegun Obasanjo that together with strong ICT base, entrepreneurship education was capable of launching Nigeria into one of the biggest twenty economies of the world in the near future. It is now about ten years that entrepreneurship education has been embraced as a compulsory General Studies course in all Nigerian universities with varying levels of successes. In most of the universities, this course is still taught only theoretically. In the few ones where there exist entrepreneurship centres, they are not well resourced with the requisite facilities and artisans to implement the acquisition of skills by students. This is not to talk of the non-emergence of the proposed zonal entrepreneurship centres, which are supposed to be better equipped than the centres in individual universities.

The success or failure in the implementation of entrepreneurship course so far, in Nigerian universities notwithstanding, the idea behind its introduction is laudable. It is for this same reason that LIS Departments in our universities are incorporating business-related courses into their curricula. This is to the extent that very shortly the NUC will come up with infopreneurship, which will be a core course for all LIS undergraduates. It is important too that ICT facilities and other requisite facilities to enhance the teaching of entrepreneurship courses, should be provided in LIS departments, as well as assigning knowledgeable and experienced lecturers to handle it (them). It is important also that students acquire enough hands-on experiences in the course of the curriculum implementation, which would also include IT and SIWES requirements before graduation so that they can have a foundation upon which to build, should they choose to be self-reliant. The government also has important role(s) to play in providing the right environment for the development and implementation of an entrepreneurial curriculum in LIS in particular and generally in the entire Nigerian university system.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.
REFERENCES


