

Managing Tertiary Education for Economic Security: The Need to Revisit Graduate Unemployment in Nigeria

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Abstract – Tertiary education plays a key role in the development of any nation. It is a formidable tool for achieving economic buoyancy, social reconstruction, cultural integration and political stability. Ironically, there is a large turnout of graduates from Nigerian tertiary educational institutions yearly, who join the astronomical number of unemployed youths in the labour market. These frustrated unemployed youths take solace in all forms of crimes and social vices such as political thuggery, prostitution, cultism, drug abuse, hostage taking, kidnapping for rituals or ransom, bunkering, willful vandalization of pipelines and all forms of internet fraud. If Nigeria is to forge ahead economically, politically and socially, prominent attention must be given to the problem of graduate unemployment pervading the nation. The tertiary education must be taken out of its present morass. It must be properly managed and made more relevant and functional to nurture and empower the undergraduates with the production abilities, skills and habits that will enhance dignity of labour, desire for wealth creation and self-reliance, by integrating entrepreneurship education into the curriculum of the tertiary education institutions in Nigeria.

Keywords – Tertiary Education, Economic Security, Graduate Unemployment.

INTRODUCTION

Of all the multifarious challenges facing Nigeria today, none is as persistent, virulent, critical and agonizing as the one relating to the challenge of economic recession in the country. Many economic woes pervading Nigeria have been so critical that they continue to re-echo in public debates, lectures, education seminars, conferences, workshops and at various political meetings. Such economic woes have become regular features of various national newspapers and magazines and other media.

The nation is passing through a period of economic uncertainty. The well-orchestrated “oil boom” in the early 1970s had painfully become “oil doom” in the late 1980s. Hitherto, the economy of Nigeria is dependent on income from oil. All the States of the Federation and the Local Governments depend on revenue allocation from the Federal Government to meet all their ever-increasing demands for survival. Ironically the little available revenue accruing to the States and Local Governments must be judiciously spent on other sectors of the economy such as education, healthcare, and provision of infrastructure and maintenance of internal security.

Nigeria is now in the war battle with the global economic recession and hyperinflation resulting to mass unemployment, recruitment and incessant rationalization of policies, ideologies, positions and appointments particularly in the public sector. In some States of the Federation, it has become a daily routine of Government Officials to send students out of institutions for non-payment of school fees and inability of their parents or guardians to pay taxes and levies meant for community development. Moreover, disburdenment of salaries and wages of workers in some public and private establishments is being delayed. While some institutions of higher learning have about two or more months of back-log of staff salaries and allowances to pay due to paucity of fund. As succulently remarked by [1], associated with epileptic funding of institutions is the problem of irregular or non-payment of salaries and emolument of teachers. This has brought a lot of hardship too many Nigerian teachers and has resulted in serious and often protracted instability in this sub-sector, from the incessant strike actions embarked on by the teachers, with serious disruption in the school calendar. This assertion further shows that Nigeria is passing through a period of economic meltdown.

Of all the economic woes besetting the nation in recent times, none is as centrally important as the problem of graduate unemployment. The National

Manpower Board and the Federal Bureau of Statistics declared that about 10.0% of graduates relayed into the labour market annually secured paid employment. Also, 2006 Census figures clearly indicated that more than 80.0% of the youths were unemployed, while about 10.0% were under employed. Also, [2] asserts that “Nigeria has one of the highest unemployment figures in the world and that Nigerian youth are the hardest hit by the menace of unemployment”. It is very disheartening that after 53 years of achieving political independence, Nigeria is yet to attain her optimum level of economic development. The Nigerian government has recognized that unemployment which paves way for poverty and other social vices must be tackled collectively and by all Nigerians. The inevitable need to break away from vicious circle of poverty, infrastructural neglect and economic stagnation has compelled the government to set up the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) to empower the poor and ensure mass participation in the economic development process. The programme seeks to involve communities, cooperative and individuals by enhancing their capacity to become more productive. In spite of the introduction of this lofty programme, the problem of graduate unemployment in Nigeria becomes aggravated as more graduates continue to join the queue of educated and unemployed populace in the labour market.

The factors responsible for graduate unemployment in Nigeria are not far-fetched. The economic recession pervading the nation has compelled many public and private organizations and industrial establishments to place embargo on the recruitment of staff into their critical areas of need. While the epileptic power supply by the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) has made many firms, companies and industrial establishments to either fold up or relocate to the neighbouring West African Countries. Moreover, some concerned individuals attributed the problem of graduate unemployment in Nigeria to some lapses in the curriculum of some tertiary institutions.

According to [3], the skills that many job seekers possess do not match the needs and demands of employers in Nigeria. It has been argued that Nigeria’s education system, with its liberal bias, does not just over supply the labour market with graduates and school leavers, but also does not produce the type of skill demanded informal employment. [4] also remarked that “the University curriculum was in the past oriented towards making graduates suitable only for white – collar jobs. This underscores why millions of our youths and a lot of university graduates roam about the street of the major cities and towns in search of white – collar jobs”.

[5] asserted that the problem of graduate unemployment got to the peak of its badness when employers began to reject and discriminate against graduates of Polytechnics and of University established by the States”. It is no superfluous that some tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria have not directed their programmes to meet the demand of the workforce. Consequently, their products are ill – prepared for the labour market. Most firms, companies, organization and industrial establishments have to retain such products in order to make them acquire the skills and competence required to perform their jobs effectively. This paper is therefore set out to ascertain how tertiary education could be effectively managed for economic security and ameliorating graduate unemployment in Nigeria. The paper specifically focuses on thorough examination of the following thought provoking issues;

- (a) What is tertiary education?
- (b) What are the goal of tertiary education in Nigeria
- (c) What is economic security?
- (d) How can tertiary educational institution in Nigeria ensure economic security through entrepreneurship education?
- (e) How could tertiary education be effectively managed for economic security and job creation in Nigeria today?

All these issues are aptly discussed in this paper as follow:

The concept of Tertiary Education

Tertiary education, often referred to as higher education covers the post-secondary of the national educational system, which is given in Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Technology including such courses that are offered by the Colleges of Education, the Advance Teacher Training Colleges Correspondence Colleges and such institutions allied to them. In [6], Tertiary education is simply defined as “the education given after secondary education in University, Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, Monotechnics including those institution offering correspondence courses”.

The goals of Tertiary Education in Nigeria

The goals of tertiary education in Nigeria, as explicitly stated in the fourth edition of the National policy on Education (2004) are that tertiary education shall be to:

- (a) contributed to national development through high level relevant manpower training;
- (b) develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individuals and society;

- (c) develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;
- (d) acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
- (e) promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
- (f) forge and cement national unity;
- (g) promote national and international understanding and interaction.

The Nigeria tertiary educational institutions are expected to pursue these lofty goals through:

- (a) teaching;
- (b) research and development;
- (c) virile staff development programmes
- (d) generation and dissemination of knowledge;
- (e) a variety of modes of programmes including full-time, part-time, block release, sandwich and so on.
- (f) access to training funds such as those provided by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF)
- (g) Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES)
- (h) maintenance of minimum educational standards through appropriate bodies
- (i) inter-institutional co-operation;
- (j) dedicated services to the community through extra-mural and extension services.

The teaching, research and dissemination of knowledge functions, more than any other, are very crucial to the production of high-level manpower that is vital to the development of Nigeria economy.

The concept of Economic Security

The term “security” according to the Oxford Advance Learner’s Dictionary is the state of being safe and protected from attack, danger or harm, espionage or spying, loss and other crime related activities. Thus, economic security in this paper is simply defined as precaution against attack, danger, harm and espionage of all facets of the economy of a nation, which could retard its level of modernization, resource advancement, and industrialization, scientific and technological progress.

A nation that is economically secured is characterized by better living conditions for all its citizens; production of more nutritious and very sumptuous food for all citizens to eat; surplus material and fiscal resource in reserve; individuals living healthier, happier and more comfortable life; access to sound education and

enlightenment programmes; improved transportation and communication systems; scientific and technological advancement; and gainful employment for all citizens.

Nigeria Tertiary Educational Institution and Assurance of Economic Security through Entrepreneurship Education

The thought provoking issue at this juncture is: “How can tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria ensure economic security through entrepreneurship education?” The answer to this question is not far-fetched. A nation that places high premium on economic security must strive hard to achieve its employment goals.

According to [7] “no nation can achieve its employment goals without emphasis on entrepreneurship development” It is quite expedient and possible to position Nigeria tertiary education institutions to stimulate economic security through the production of entrepreneurial graduates. According to [8] “the neglect of entrepreneurship education is rubbing the nation of the contribution their graduates would have made on the economy. It is therefore socially injurious to look down on its graduates”

Entrepreneurship education, according to [9] is the inculcating in the individual’s entrepreneurial skills, knowledge, attitudes, abilities and competences that would make such individuals live happily and successfully in the society and contribute meaningfully to its development. Also, [10] defined entrepreneurship education as “the process of creating something different with value by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial, psychological and social risks and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction”. From these definitions, it is quite apparent that through entrepreneurship education individuals are nurtured and empowered with the enterprising productive abilities and habits that will enhance dignity of labour and desire for wealth creation.

Entrepreneurship education is a recent programme in Nigerian Tertiary Institution and its relevance is well captured in [6], where it explicitly states that “tertiary education shall make individuals acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable them to be self-reliant and useful members of the society”. Tertiary education equips the individual with relevant knowledge, skills attitudinal orientation required to forge ahead in one’s chosen career in life and contribute to the economic growth of the nation. It is therefore no gainsaying that acquisition of entrepreneurial skills, cognitive development and development of desirable habits and attitudes through entrepreneurship education received in

the tertiary institution, would help the recipients to become effective entrepreneurs who can acquire and coordinate other factors of production such as capital, land and labour and make the best use of them in the creation of utilities, resources and wealth and break the vicious circle of poverty and economic stagnation. Moreover, entrepreneurship education will acquaint the individuals with the world of work and services of the community and develop in them a sense of respect for manual work. The entrepreneurial skills acquired through entrepreneurship education would compel the recipients to set up small-scale businesses such as furniture making, bead making, mat weaving, metal work, electronic and electrical work, textile work, motor repairing, roofing of buildings, carpentry work, bricklaying, bakery, water purification, hotel and catering services, cassava processing, poultry keeping and so on.

Ameliorating the problem of graduate unemployment, through the integration of entrepreneurship into the curriculum of the tertiary institutions in Nigeria is a right step to the assurance of economic security. Such integration according to [9] entails the following procedure steps:

- (a). Formulation of objectives of entrepreneurship education.
- (b). Procurement of physical and materials resources for entrepreneurship education.
- (c). Selection of appropriate curriculum and co-curricular activities.
- (d). Getting teaching and non-teaching staff and resource persons for entrepreneurship education.
- (e). Setting up an inspectoral team for quality control.

Tertiary education contributes significantly to economic security, by drastically reducing the problem of graduate unemployment through entrepreneurship education. It becomes imperative for every tertiary educational institution in Nigeria to entrench entrepreneurship education into its curriculum. Such entrepreneurship education must specifically focus on how to increasingly make the products of these institutions self-employed and generators of employment for others.

Managing Tertiary Education for Economic Security and Job Creation

Before discussing the various ways by which tertiary education in Nigeria can be effectively managed for economic security and job creation, it is considered necessary to have a cursory look at the concept of educational management. [11] defined educational

management as “the process of utilizing appropriate materials in such a way to promote effectively the development of human qualities. It includes all those techniques and procedures employed in operating the educational organizations in accordance with established policies”. Also, [12] defined educational management as the identification, organization and coordination of human, material, physical and fiscal resources, as well as other available education programmes using them judiciously towards the attainment of objectives of education. From these definitions, it is obvious that educational management embraces such management functions such as planning, directing, financing, supervising, monitoring, inspecting and evaluating.

A model depicting the management of tertiary education for economic security and job creation in Nigeria is depicted in figure 1. As indicated in the figure, to ensure proper management of tertiary education for economic security and job creation, the following procedural steps can be embraced.

Step 1: Identification of goals of Tertiary Education and Entrepreneurship Education.

The first indispensable step in the effective management of tertiary education for economic security and job creation is a clear identification of the goals of the tertiary education and entrepreneurship education. The objectives of entrepreneurship education as explicitly stated in the National Policy on Education are to:

- (a). provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advance craft and technical levels;
- (b). provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agriculture, commercial and economic development;
- (c). give training and impart the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self-reliant economically;
- (d). acquire the knowledge, skills and technical concept needed to practice as an entrepreneur;
- (e). inculcate the attitudinal changes and behaviour that are production oriented such as consciousness of the world of work and dignity of labour;
- (f). enable students take advantage of the various government economic policies on poverty eradication, wealth creation, employment generation and access to micro-finance institutions;
- (g). ensure maximally satisfactory self-employment.

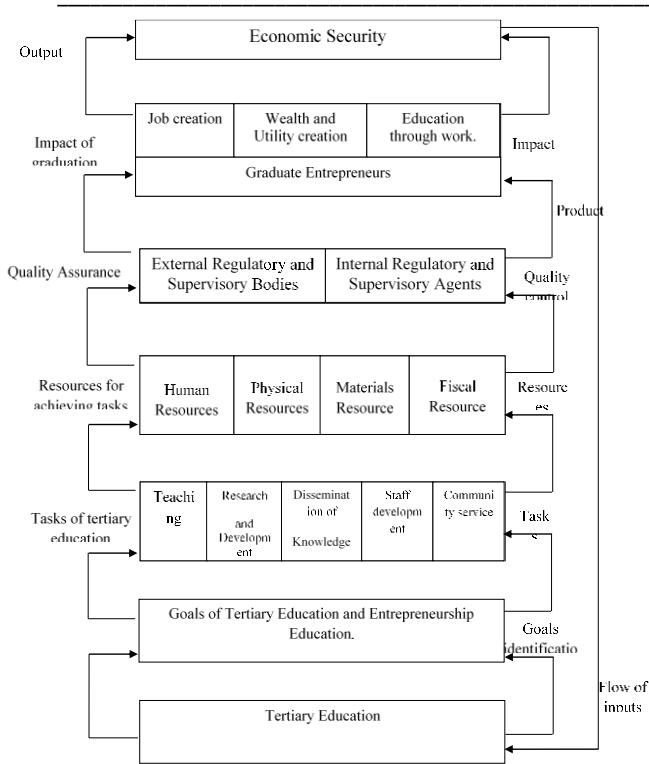


Figure 1: A model of management of tertiary education for economic security and job creation. (Designed by the author of the paper)
Step 2: Identifying the Specific Functions of the Tertiary Institution.

The specific tasks of the tertiary institutions must be clearly identified. These include teaching, research and development, dissemination of knowledge, mounting staff development programmes and active involvement in community services.

Step 3: Identification, Procuring, Organizing and Coordinating Resources for Job Performance

In ensuring effective management of tertiary education for economic security and job creation, prominent attention must be given to the identification, procurement, organization and coordination of the required resources for effective training of the students. These resources include human, physical, materials and fiscal resources. The following issues must be critically examined.

- (a). Availability and adequacy of the required human, physical, material and financial resources, for the proper execution of the programmes of the tertiary institutions.
- (b). The various sources of these resources.
- (c). Modalities for organizing the resources into Faculties, Directorates, Schools, Departments

and Units for proper utilization and coordination.

- (d). The specific areas of the institutional administration to be delegated to the staff and students.
- (e). The control measures to be set up in assessing the achievement of objectives of the tertiary institutions.

Step 4: Quality Control

Effective management of the tertiary education for economic security and job creation entails regular monitoring and supervision of the programmes of the institutions, by the External and Internal Supervisory and Regulatory Bodies. The National Universities Commission (NUC). National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and National Commission for College of Education (NCCE), must embark on the quality control of the programmes of the institutions, by carrying out regularly their oversight function which include;

- (a). Laying down and reviewing periodically the minimum standards for the tertiary institutions;
- (b). accreditation of academic programmes including entrepreneurship education;
- (c). monitoring of academic programmes and available infrastructural facilities in the institutions.
- (d). ensuring parity in educational programmes through external moderation systems;
- (e). Streamline admission of students into various programmes in the institutions.
- (f). Setting up guidelines for establishment and mounting new programmes.

Step 5: The product and their impact on the economy

The management devices would enable the students in the tertiary institutions to acquire adequate knowledge, skills, dexterities, character and desirable values that would make them efficient graduate entrepreneurs, who can acquire and utilize appropriate factors of production in the creation of jobs, utilities and wealth, which will further strengthen the economic security of the nation.

CONCLUSION

Effective management of tertiary education for economic security in Nigeria could be accomplished, if all the stakeholders in the tertiary education sector brace up to the challenge of integrating a viable, functional and relevant entrepreneurship education into the curriculum of the tertiary educational institutions, with the sole aim of ameliorating the problem of graduate unemployment.

[13], affirmed that, “managing problems of unemployment in Nigeria among graduates and other categories of people require robust, comprehensive and practical oriented entrepreneurship education”. Management of tertiary education for economic security in Nigeria would remain an onerous and herculean task to achieve, if the products of the tertiary institutions take solace in all forms of social vices and criminal activities due to their joblessness.

It is highly imperative to make curriculum of tertiary educational institution in Nigeria more functional relevant and pragmatic with built-in-job training programmes that will make the students acquire appropriate entrepreneurial skills needed for self-employment, job and wealth creation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to manage tertiary education for economic security, through entrepreneurship education, the following recommendations are made:

All the stakeholders in the tertiary education sector must brace up to the challenge of maintaining economic security in Nigeria, rather than fleeing to foreign lands in search of greener pastures. Entrepreneurship education specifically aimed at job and wealth creation should be included in the curricular across disciplines in Nigeria tertiary educational institutions. All courses on entrepreneurship education should be made compulsory electives for all students.

The Supervisory and Regulatory Bodies Namely, The National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE); and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) must be properly strengthened and empowered in their monitoring and quality control functions to ensure that entrepreneurship education meets the needs, desires, expectations and aspiration of the students. The stakeholders should fund the tertiary institutions effectively. The funds allocated should be prudently spent and areas of wastage must be curtailed. Also, their sources of Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) must be periodically appraised with a view to improving them.

The Federal, State and Local Governments in Nigeria should endeavour to widen their industrial base, diversify their economy and productive sector to enable more absorption of graduates into gainful employment. This device will make tertiary education more attractive, pleasurable and meaningful to Nigerian students. Nigerian economy will be more secured, when the tertiary education is effectively funded and properly managed and the products are gainfully employed.

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