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COUNSELLING IMPLICATIONS OF TEACHING ECONOMICS THROUGH SERVICE LEARNING INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY TO ENHANCE ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILLS

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It is evident that Nigerian Government is making drastic and pronounced efforts at stemming the tide of unemployment via means such as change and innovation in the curriculum. However, it appears that there is no adequate instructional intervention to develop appropriate knowledge, attitudes and skills in learners for knowledge economy in the schools. Students are restricted to classroom instruction with little or no participation which has resulted in rote learning and memorisation and their attendant effects on learning outcomes. This paper, therefore, explored service learning instructional strategy that is outdoor and activity-based as a means of promoting entrepreneurship skills through effective teaching of economics for alleviating unemployment in Nigeria and its counselling implications. The following were also discussed in the paper: Economics, entrepreneurship, importance of an entrepreneur, characteristics of entrepreneur, economic view of unemployment, causes of unemployment, and counselling implications of effective teaching of economics for boosting entrepreneurship skills for alleviating unemployment. Some recommendations were made such as Economics teachers should employ service learning instructional strategy for effective teaching of Economics, universities should expose Economics students to service learning, and collaborate with industries; management is encouraged to organise on-the-job pedagogical training for Economics lecturers without a teaching qualification, and continuous professional development on innovative instructional strategies for all. Parents are counselled to encourage their ward(s) on the need to discover their entrepreneurial skills and make good use of them to be self-reliant, among others. All these will help to produce graduates that will be relevant beyond 21st century.

Keywords: Economics, service learning, professional development, pedagogical training, collaboration,

Introduction

Today's world demands people with the capacity for solving personal and social problems. The complexity of modern living, occasioned by rapid industrialisation and technological innovations, demands skills in problem solving as individual and groups strive to understand their circumstances and give their life better meaning. The human struggle for improved standard of living sometimes results in competition and crises at various levels of human interaction. Educators are strategically placed to equip children and youths with knowledge and competencies required to face challenges associated with these complexities by preparing them as change agents. Nigeria's philosophy of education is etched on the development of individual into sound and effective citizen while fully integrating him or her into the community (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2013). Economics is particularly tailored towards this end. One of the goals of Economics is to prepare citizens for useful living in the society, which will enable the nations to achieve their national philosophy of building free and democratic society (FRN, 2013). Economics is a subject that occupies a centre-stage in actualising this compelling demand of functional education.

There have been several attempts at promoting good quality education in Nigeria. The country is going through excruciating pains occasioned by acute graduates unemployment and under-employment with its dire consequences such as poverty, insecurity, corruption, election violence, kidnapping, Boko haram insurgency and other socio-political and economic problems, without education being able to rise to the occasion (Sangoleye, 2016; Sekema, 2004). The problems which government hopes to solve through education have remained with us largely because Nigerian educational system, particularly, university education, has not been able to adequately meet societal expectations (Obanya, 2016; Okebukola, 2010).

This no doubt, underscores the then President Goodluck Jonathan’s government’s commitment in transformation agenda in Human Capital Development Policies. Likewise, President Muhammad Buhari’s “change agenda” put education as a priority. Little wonder, the revised National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013: 43) stated that “...teacher education shall continue to be emphasised in educational planning and development”. This has made the subject of teacher effectiveness a perennial one in educational discourse, since the quality of education at any level is highly dependent on the quality and dedication of the teachers (Obanya, 2016; Adu & Galloway, 2015). Hence, there is the need for effective teaching by universities lecturers in various fields of studies such as Economics, Geography, Physics, Chemistry, English and so on, to promote entrepreneurship skills to alleviate the problem of unemployment among youths.

Having discussed the state of the nation and education as a means of preparing youths for knowledge economy, this paper looked at how effective teaching of Economics through service learning instructional strategy can serve as an education intervention to ameliorate graduates unemployment and the counselling implications of Economics as an entrepreneurship booster for alleviating unemployment

Nigeria’s Employment Crisis and Nigeria Education

Unemployment is a major problem in Nigeria, which is associated with failure of the government to absorb her teeming youths into the stream of her workforce. It has culminated in the present state of the nation, manifested in various forms of insecurity such as corruption, indiscipline, prostitution, dishonesty, religious intolerance, Boko-haram insurgency and conflicts among others. The state of the nation’s unemployment between January 2014 and July 2016 is depicted in Figure 1.

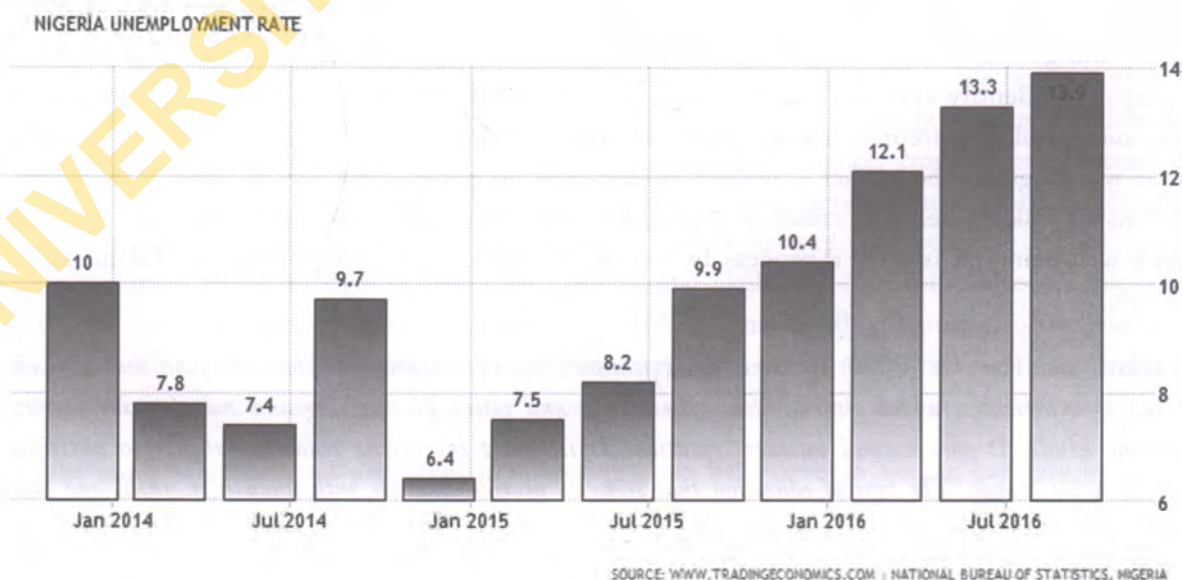


Figure 1: Nigeria Unemployment Rate between January 2013 and July 2016

Figure 1 shows that Nigeria's employment crisis worsened in the third quarter of 2016, with unemployment rate rising from 10.0 in 2014 to 13.9 per cent in 2016. Youth unemployment was at the highest level since 2014, as the number of unemployed rose by 5.2 percent (The National Bureau of Statistics, (NBS), 2016). The NBS computations were based on the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) (2004) definition, which described unemployment as the population of persons aged 15–64 who, during the reference period, were available for work, actively seeking for work, but were unable to find work. Consequently, the unemployed Nigerian population were those who were actively looking for work, but could either not find work, absolutely did nothing at all for at least 20 hours, or did something but not for up to 20 hours in a week during the reference period.

Meanwhile, research findings revealed factors that accounted for the high rate of unemployment in Nigeria. It was affirmed by scholars that tertiary education curriculum has been geared towards stereotyped goals and jobs without equipping youths with knowledge-driven market and saleable skills (Sangoleye, 2016; Akpan & Etor, 2013). Every year, many graduates come out from the tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria with little or nothing to contribute to the society. They disdained acquisition of skills, thinking that the time spent on such is wasted and opting for quick money (Akpan & Etor, 2013). The years of corruption, civil war, military rule and mismanagement have hindered economic growth of the country. Nigeria, which is the biggest black nation in the world, ought to have a very strong economy capable of employing almost all employable citizens, but the unemployment rate in Nigeria is alarming. The present situation of Nigeria's economy calls for Nigerians to embrace creativity and innovation to respond and harness opportunities that create values for self, organisations, community, society and the nation at large.

Concept of Entrepreneurship Education

A massive overhaul of the curricula was undertaken in 2004 which modernised the curriculum and made it more socially relevant with a slant on entrepreneurial education (Okebukola, 2010). The implementation was slow and confronted with a lot of challenges. For instance, entrepreneurial education is included as one of the General Studies courses at the University of Ibadan. However, to achieve overall objectives of entrepreneurship education, it must be handled as interdisciplinary to foster entrepreneurship culture among students.

Entrepreneurship emanated from the word entrepreneur, a French word meaning “between taker or go between” and generated into one who can undertake risk. Entrepreneurship is the willingness and ability of a person to identify and seek out business ideal or investment opportunities, establish and run the venture successfully. Entrepreneurship occurs when an individual develops a new business or an idea or a unique way of giving the market a product or service by adopting a new way of utilising resources under conditions of risk. It helps in creating wealth, self-direction, satisfying career and also adds value to society's well-being. It is also, a process by which individual pursue opportunities (Salami as cited in Sangoleye, 2016).

Olorundare and Kayode (2004) defined entrepreneurship education as: *That education that is made up of all kinds of experiences, which gives students the ability and vision of accessing and transforming opportunities of different kinds. It goes beyond business creation. It is about increasing students' ability to anticipate and respond to social change. The type of education that seeks to provide students with knowledge, skill, and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of setting. It thus empowers students to develop and use their innate creative skills to take initiatives, responsibilities and risks (p.167).*

Kyro (1998) asserted that entrepreneurship education deals with three main components: self-oriented, internal and external entrepreneurship. Self-oriented entrepreneurship refers to an individual's self-oriented behaviour. Self-oriented entrepreneurship is the basis for developing internal and external entrepreneurship; internal entrepreneurship deals with entrepreneurial and enterprising behaviour, while external entrepreneurship deals with doing business (Remes, 2004). Basically, an entrepreneurship education is the type of education that sharpens people's mindset and also provides the skills and knowledge required for developing an entrepreneurial culture for economic development and sustainable communities.

Entrepreneurship skills are inborn and learned traits which are essential for individuals who wish to take entrepreneurial challenges. These include: agility, business consciousness, courage, dynamism, enterprise, hardwork, initiative, judgement, knowledge of the market, leadership, risk takings, organising ability, responsibility, among others (Olorundare & Kayode, 2004; Remes, 2004). The entrepreneur is seen as an actor, innovator or a developer of technology. An entrepreneur is an individual who in a bid to survive makes profit from his/her own business.

Characteristics of an Entrepreneur

Simply put, entrepreneur demonstrates the following attributes among others: An entrepreneur

- is passionate, risk taking and relentless in his/her pursuit of goals.
- organises, directs, motivates and guides people around him to achieve their goals.
- maintains a high level of emotional stability in the face of difficulties and takes decisions without the consent of others.
- possesses the ability to successfully manage crises through adequate motivation and efficient communication networking.
- does not believe in fate but in him/herself.
- is morally sound, upright, highly intelligent and prudent in spending.
- is hardworking, resourceful, painstaking and articulate. (Osuntoyi, 2015; Akpan & Etor, 2013).

Teaching of Economics to Enhance Entrepreneurship Skills

Economics is a subject that enables students to develop prediction of their economic world at an early age which progresses through the educational process, develops into attitudes and opinions about economics as a course of study. Economics in line with entrepreneurship does not only serve the purpose of enabling individuals to secure white collar jobs but is also for development of human competence which enables one acquire technical, entrepreneurial and vocational skills for self-reliance, employment generation and wealth creation. In another vein, promoting entrepreneurship skills through the teaching of Economics is one of the means of improving human development index of countries. This could be properly managed through acquisition of knowledge, competence, abilities and skills that will enhance economic security, create wealth and promote employment generation (Adeyemi, 2010). Osuntoyi (2015) in a study corroborated the reports on entrepreneurship education that those who acquired entrepreneurship education while in school aimed very high and started at higher level when they got to the world of work.

Meanwhile, many concepts and principles in economics can help develop human capacity by equipping teeming school leavers in search of employment with entrepreneurship skills that are capable of reducing growing unemployment rate. Some of these concepts and principles may sound common and simple, but in reality, they are ideas that must not be undermined by any serious-minded person who is ardent in self-actualisation and contributing to the national economic growth. Acquiring entrepreneurship skills requires

understanding a number of concepts such as sustainable production, sustainable consumption, environmental sustainability, competitive advantage, and savings, among others. Entrepreneurship education can therefore, be enhanced through teaching of Economics to reduce unemployment because Economics is expected to develop in the recipients the needed skills for self-reliance. However, entrepreneurship in Economics lessons should be taught experientially, creatively, adaptively and should be participatory. Also, industrial visits, collaboration/consultation with practising entrepreneurs should be included in instruction delivery (Osuntoyi, 2015; Olorunmola & Agbede, 2012; Lopez, 2009).

Teaching of Economics and Service-learning Instructional Strategy

Teaching of Economics is criticised as being overly formalistic and narrowly theoretical (Colander & Mcgoldrick, 2009; Watts & Becker, 2008). This has resulted in graduates who do not translate the knowledge acquired to deal with concrete 'real world' problems (Colander & Mcgoldrick, 2009). Economics teaching is also characterised with 'talk and chalk' which is expository approach called 'blackboard economics' by Nobel Prize recipient Ronald Coase in 1970, with minimal or no effective learning (Watts & Becker, 2008). The effects appear to have resulted into students' dissatisfaction on the relevance of the theory taught to real life, poor performance, and loss of interest on the subject (Gbadamosi, 2016; Feigenbaum, 2013; Onger, 2009). One of the approaches suggested to solve the problems has been service learning.

Service learning is an experiential pedagogy that, through critical reflection, enables students to integrate their study of Economics in the classroom with service activities in their communities (Lopez, 2009; Watts & Becker, 2008). They emphasised that carefully constructed service-learning activities which require students to think and act as an Economist, would work in ways that take into account real world complexities, which will benefit actual communities. Key component of a service-learning experience include economic content from the classroom, meaningful service activities in the community and critical reflection activities that support classroom learning and community service goals.

Service-learning is an effective teaching model to enhance students' learning when they engage in service-learning themselves and witness service-learning in action (Gbadamosi, 2014; Lopez, 2009; Mitchell, Trotter & Gelmon, 2005). The second rationale for service-learning derives from Noddings' ethic of care (1998) that, teachers guided by an ethic of care are not limited to student development as measured only by intellectual growth. These educators also recognised that the students need education in order to be successful and contributing members of the society. For this reason, an ethic of care aims to extend the role of education beyond the cognitive to include the affective, with the hope of educating students to be acceptable persons (Noddings, 1998). Becker and Watts (2001) encouraged professors to move away from standard "chalk and talk" lecture techniques to more participative learning techniques. Indeed, they encouraged Economics teachers to allow for more active learning techniques even at the expense of reduced course content. While some may argue that demands on faculty time drive this reliance on lecture based methods, Becker and Watts (2001:4) suggested that there was evidence that current practices were "... established by convenience, custom and inertia rather than efficiency or, especially, by what represents effective teaching practices in today's undergraduate curriculum".

Service-learning components can range from a short experience that accounts for a small portion of the course to a service-learning component that is the basis for the entire course. They can also occur with one community partner or multiple community partners. McGoldrick (2008) discussed several service-learning models that can be integrated into a course as community service action research, community problem solving and student-based instruction. Additional ways to engage with the community and still

create a learning experience for students are field trips or discussion panels where members of the community can attend a class or classes in order to engage in a discussion with students on problems within the community (Gbadamosi, 2012; Watts & Becker, 2008).

Service learning can increase effectiveness in Economics classrooms by addressing students' complaints about the abstract nature of Economics by providing them with opportunities to deal with real world economic issues in their communities. Also, on career exploration and aspirations, students who participated in service-learning reported gaining career skills, communication skills and positive increase in career exploration knowledge (Gbadamosi, 2012; Calvert, Kurji, & Kurji, 2012) and developed positive work orientation, attitudes and skills (Mitchell, Trotter & Gelmon, 2005).

Adding a service-learning component to an Economics class is more than just a service activity add-on. Several researchers have reported effective service-learning experiences in Economics classrooms such as Caplan (2002) had his nearly 100 principles students help local health agencies administer survey to underserved members of his community. Also, Mitchell, Trotter and Gelmon (2005) and Lopez (2009) described the use of student-based instruction in a service-learning experience that involved students in higher education teach elementary students basic economic concepts.

Utilising Service Learning Instructional Strategy in Teaching Economics Lessons

Developing a service learning course involves four stages. These are:

- a. **Preparing and Designing a Service-Learning Course:** The success of any service-learning activity depends on careful preparation and planning. With guidance from their teacher, students identify a real community need. They often collaborate with community partners as they prepare to provide meaningful service.
- b. **Implementing a Service Experience (Action):** Action is the direct result of preparation, enabling students to confidently carry out their plans and apply what they have learned to benefit the community.
- c. **Learning through Reflection:** Reflection is an essential and critical component of service-learning. Through reflection, students ask questions, and put facts, ideas, and experiences together to derive new meaning and new knowledge. Tools for assessment may include oral reflection, small group discussion, presentations, surveys, essays, reports, or research projects.
- d. **Demonstration:** Demonstration enables students to provide evidence of what they have gained and experienced through community involvement. They exhibit their expertise through public presentations—displays, performances, letters to the editor, class lessons for peers or parents—that draw upon the preparation, action, and reflection stages of their experience (Cathry, 2014).

Challenges of Service Learning

Common areas of concern among faculty and students developing service-learning projects are integration with course content, control over learning, time consuming, assessment and students' dissatisfaction with the work (Ziegert & McGoldrick, 2008). The challenges might be attributed to the participatory nature of the strategy which requires a facilitator (teacher) to prepare, guide learners to connect content of the lesson to real life situation, and the attitude of learners if they took the lesson for fun and put less attention to the objectives of the interaction.

Effective Teaching of Economics through Service Learning Instructional Strategy as an Education Intervention to Ameliorate Graduates Unemployment

Economics curriculum integrated with service learning is capable of developing in the undergraduates entrepreneurial skills such as how to develop business plan, way of raising capital, starting income-yielding venture and run it successfully, risk taking/risk management skill, communication skills, marketing skills, leadership skill, negotiation skill, team spirit skill, perseverance skill and creativity skill, among others. Service learning gives students the opportunity to apply theories to solve real-life problems in non-profit community organisation, and local government, tutor high school students in Economics, research and engage in advocacy, among others. Next are few illustrations of how service learning instructional strategy can be applied in Economics lessons.

Case study I: Economics students can take part in a service-learning project that is part of the “Principles of Economics” course. The community partner could be a secondary school in the neighbourhood. Part of the project could be preparing a 45-minute interactive lesson on one of the topics listed in the syllabus such as ‘personal finance’ and then teaching the lesson to students individually or in group. University students will apply the theories that they learned in “Principles of Economics” class and put it into context for secondary school students. The learning goals: increasing economic literacy, accountability, promoting self-reliance and understanding monetary decisions of individuals, family units and households. Economics students will have additional opportunities to apply economic concepts in practical ‘real-world’ settings. The topic ‘personal finance’ will include monetary decisions as related to current and savings bank accounts, loans, and investments in company shares, and getting the secondary school students to “understand that there is more to Economics than the interest rates, resources, money, and consumption. On the part of university students, they will discover that money is scarce. This means that it is not enough to go round people seeking to finance their needs. They should prepare a business plan and use the business plan to seek funding from different sources of finance available to them.

NOTE: The entrepreneurship skills that could be developed through the above student-based service learning are communication skills, risk-taking skill, self-reliance, among others.

Case study II (‘Project Analysis’ course): Practising Economists can be invited into the classroom as facilitators in order to coach students in practical skill of working as a consultant. Projects will be chosen through the interaction between the school and organisations/communities/local government. The resource persons will team up with the lecturer in-charge to help students develop consulting skills as they work on real, community-based consulting projects.

NOTE: The entrepreneurship skills that could be developed through the above research-based service learning are management skill, communication skills, negotiation skill, team spirit skill, perseverance skill and creativity skill.

Counselling Implications of Economics as an Entrepreneurship Booster for Alleviating Unemployment

Entrepreneurship education policy is closely interlinked with overall entrepreneurship policy as well as economic and social development plans or strategies. It is a lifelong learning process, starting as early as elementary school and continuing through all levels of education, including adult education. It should build positive attitude towards business and develop entrepreneurial competencies to successfully plan, start and manage a business.

The counselling implications of Economics as an entrepreneurship booster for alleviation unemployment by developing entrepreneurial skills in education according to Osuala (2010) and Olorunmola and Agbede (2012) includes: It provides meaningful education for youth which could make them self-reliant and subsequently encourage them to drive profit and be independent. It provides graduates with the training and support necessary to help them establish a career in small and medium sized businesses; with enough training in risk management; and with training skills that will make them meet the manpower needs of the society. It also stimulates industrial and economic growth of rural and less developed areas; exposes graduates to enough training which will make them to be creative and innovative in identifying new business opportunities; provides small and medium sized companies with the opportunity to recruit qualified graduates who will receive training and tutoring in the skills relevant to the management of business centres and stimulates rural economic and industrial development. It also boosts the self-esteem of the unemployed graduates by making them realise their purpose of existence and enhances the self-confidence and self-efficacy of the school leavers and also makes them to be psychologically fulfilled.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that Nigeria economy is dwindling and this has resulted in high unemployment rate among graduates. This is in addition to the lack of incorporating Economics into the entrepreneurship education to alleviate unemployment rate. It was realised from this paper that, without economic mentality, Nigerians may not be able to alleviate unemployment rate. Economic mentality was seen as an important ingredient in entrepreneurship education because it considers demands and supply of commodities of the entrepreneur. Without economic sense, it will be difficult to market the goods of the entrepreneur, and make good profits on the products. This paper proposed a reform of the instructional delivery process to assure that Nigeria fast-track the pace of alleviating unemployment using Economics as booster.

Policy Implications of the Study

The implication of this study is that, if service learning is appropriately incorporated to the teaching of Economics, it would equip the undergraduates with relevant, suitable knowledge, attitude and functional skills for the world of work, thus, reducing graduates' unemployment. It will also, enhance resourcefulness and better utilisation of community natural resources, reduce rural-urban drift and social ills thereby, improve the well-being of the entire society.

Recommendations

Economics lecturers are counselled to adopt service learning instructional strategy in the teaching of Economics courses (lessons). Economics and entrepreneurship should be brought together as one and be infused into the secondary schools and tertiary institutions curricular. Faculties should collaborate with entrepreneurial studies centres for capacity development of staff, resource materials, equipment for training students to run small business and arrangement of skills training of undergraduates in virile business.

All Economics teachers without a teaching qualification should be given on-the-job pedagogical training. There should be continuous professional development to equip all lecturers with skills in modern methods of teaching that promote entrepreneurship skills especially the use of service learning instructional strategy. University lecture timetable should be re-structured to give opportunity to students to perform community-service in order to apply the knowledge acquired in the class to solve real-life problems. University management is counselled to make funds available to carry out service-projects and the institution of sound management practices; accountability and transparency in the utilisation of such funds are important ingredient for success.

The university should collaborate with the industrial sector to bridge the gap between universities and industries for the relevance of the curriculum and acceptability of university graduates. Government should create conducive environment for entrepreneurs by promoting our locally-made goods.

Economics students are counselled to embrace service learning as one of the means to combine community service with learning to make learning real and useful for entrepreneurship. Parents should encourage their wards on the need to discover their entrepreneurial skills and make good use of them to be self-reliant and independent.

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