

DIVERSIFICATION FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: THE NEED FOR CURRICULUM REVIEW IN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The world is gradually changing and it is pertinent for university administrators to follow emerging trends in university education. Due to the dynamism of the 21st century university education, the university curriculum requires a massive diversification in line with the ongoing university educational trends. Diversification in the university educational system requires the expansion of the scope of the university curriculum into varieties that would allow for creativity, innovation, self-dependency and would eventually lead to sustainable national development. The aim of this paper is to enhance the diversification of curriculum in Nigerian universities to bring about sustainable national development. The objective of this paper is to identify modes of achieving diversification within the Nigerian university curriculum. Some of the modes of achieving diversification in Nigerian university educational curriculum include the introduction of entrepreneurship, e-learning, ICT and software training, amongst others. The challenges faced in the diversification of the Nigerian university curriculum for the attainment of sustainable national development were discussed in this paper to include lack of funds, lack of adequate facilities, poor reception to change, amongst others. It was concluded in this paper that the main focus of university administrators should be the diversification of the university curriculum to allow for their students to adapt to modern day trends in university education and to enable these students compete intellectually and innovatively with their global peers. Possible solutions to the challenges discussed in this paper were proffered to include provision of adequate funds, provision of adequate facilities, adaptation to current global trends in university education, amongst others.

Keywords: Diversification, Curriculum, Sustainable National Development, University Education

Introduction

Diversification is the introduction of variations into a system to bring about a broader scope and also to further encourage creativity and innovative ideas. The Nigerian economy has over the years seen a major decline and cannot cater to the job demands of Nigerians, especially youths that have graduated from the university. White-collared jobs in Nigeria do not seem adequate to provide for the daily needs of Nigerians. Thus, most Nigerians rely on their "side hustles" to bring in the additional income. University education is generally a factory for the production of graduates who intend to use their university degrees and get good jobs in the labour market. Due to the competitive nature of the job market, only those graduates that have attained additional skills alongside their university degrees get the jobs as the employers see them as potential employees that can contribute more to the company/ organization. Those without said skills are then left behind in the employment market. It is against this background that it is pertinent for universities in Nigeria to foster diversification in their curriculum in order for their students and even staff to gain additional skills sets which would be advantageous to them in the 21st century society. This paper is aimed at enhancing the diversification of curriculum in Nigerian universities to bring about sustainable national development. The objective of this paper is to identify modes of achieving diversification within the Nigerian university curriculum. The importance of diversification in sustainable

development is to bring about changes from the known to the unknown concerning curriculum review in order to fill the gap created by the knowledge economy.

Diversification

Diversification when it pertains to university education in a nutshell is the variation of different courses that would not only bring about knowledge in the students but also provide them with practical skills. The end result of diversification is that it would bring about resourcefulness and self-dependency amongst the students. Diversification of the university system in Nigerian has a lot of benefits for the Nigerian society to maximally utilize her abundant resource – base to rebuild the economy and enjoy the benefits of all the linkages, synergy, economies of scale, grow national technology and foreign investment profile, build human capital, exploit new opportunities, lessen averagely operational costs, increase national competitiveness and grow the standard of living and confidence of the citizens for national renaissance (Suberu, Ajala, Akande and Olure-Bank, 2015). Varghese and Püttmann (2011) added that diversification is the process by which a system becomes more varied or diverse in its orientation and operations. Diversification entails the establishment of different economic programmes and investments for the country to be self-reliant, employable, and useful to itself (Kpee and Gbinu, 2017). The FRN (2013) aims at enabling the learner to learn knowledge, develop conceptual and intellectual skills, attitudes, values and aptitude conducive to the all-round development of their personality and proportionate to the societal, economic and environmental realities at the national and international level. Madumere-Obike and Ukala (2009) are of the view that the growth of any nation depends on a functional education system that recognizes the needs of the society.

Curriculum

A curriculum can be seen as a general overview of the academic activities of a course that a university/college utilizes to guide the academic year. All curriculum are designed bearing in mind the learner's prior knowledge and is meant for a particular group of learners (Scott, 2014). Governments have implemented the topic in policy briefings and educators and researchers have developed models for curriculum innovation and the integration of sustainability competences (Lambrechts and Hindson, 2015). Esu (2010) had described the curriculum as the bridge that the school uses to connect itself to the society. Curriculum development can be challenging, therefore the involvement of all stakeholders, especially individuals who are directly involved in student instruction, are a vital piece in successful curriculum development and revision (Johnson, 2001). Morris and Adamson (2010) opined that a curriculum is a detailed plan for instruction set by policy-makers and comprises a variation of procedural and non-procedural courses that are essential to complete a particular degree. It was also described as a policy statement about a piece of education to indicate the ways in which the policy is to be realized through a programme of action. (Ahmed & Adamu, (2019)

Okoye (2013) mentioned that curriculum is a programme which is made up of three components: programme of studies: programme activities and programme of guidance. Curriculum development is an important aspect of higher education (University education inclusive) to produce informed graduates who are knowledgeable about sustainability. Adegoke (2004) cited in Danladi and Okoro (2016) advocated for a competency-based curriculum which is seen as the ability to cope with a certain class of problems encountered on the job or in a workplace, or any desired activity. Nwankwoala (2018) emphasized that a closer look at the concept of curriculum as planned learning experiences also exposes the fact that learners or students while in school are not restricted to learning only the planned learning experiences or curriculum content. They learn from the various things they see, hear, or feel. All these aids their academic performance. Also, Clark (2011) stated that university departments will need to change their curricula every two or three years in order to show that the content of their teaching reflects the rapidly advancing frontier of scientific knowledge. To the author that is not enough, but it should also put into consideration the reality of life presently.

At the heart of quality, the curriculum is the premise that all students can learn and are capable of being successful. Therefore, a quality curriculum is one built on high expectations, aligned with state standards, and is highly rigorous.

Sustainable National Development

National development, in the words of Emeh and Ogaboh in Okemakinde, Adewuyi and Alabi (2013) involves the total transformation of society making humanity the focus of the development drive and seeking to develop man's potentialities in a total sense. It includes the reduction of poverty, wealth creation, equitable distribution of wealth, ensuring nutrition and health, housing and auxiliary services, social security and welfare which would in turn contribute to the development of the nation. Sustainable development calls for constant effort to initiate programmes and executing them for the overall interest of the people (Akegwu, 2014). In order to contribute to the national growth of Nigerian economy for sustainability, it has been discovered that university education shall make optimum contribution to national development: intensify and diversify its programmes for development of high-level manpower within the context of the nation's needs, among others (FRN, 2013). Nwadiani (2015) rightly put it that in Nigeria, education is both in public good and an investment on one hand, and on the other hand a catalyst for stimulating and sustaining overall national development. There are very important major barriers to the successful embedding of education for sustainable national development into many of the subject & disciplines in Higher education due to an overcrowded curriculum; or being perceived as irrelevant by the academic staff, limited staff awareness and expertise; limited institutional drive and commitment (Scott, 2017). Pyle (2014) asserted that the main barriers are based upon the fact that humans do not usually like to make changes, adding to the lack of proper communication within the organization, as people time overload is a barrier to achieve progress towards sustainable national development. This in turn leads to incidences of corruption within the system thus hindering national development for sustainability.

University Education

The university is a community of scholars and students engaged in a complex task to which humanity looks up for overall human progress (Okah & Worlu, 2013). The aim of university education is to produce skilled manpower, that are efficient and effective in their chosen field of study and who will help to cause growth and national contribution to national development (Ofor-Douglas, 2021). The major purpose for establishing universities in these countries was, and still is, for the institutions to play a pioneering role in addressing problems of poverty, social disorganization, low production, unemployment, hunger, illiteracy and diseases (the problems of underdevelopment) which appeared to be common on the African continent (Mosha, 1986) cited in Odhiambo 2018). University education contributes to the advancement of cultural awareness, whose benefits accrue mainly to society. As part of their education, they cultivate cultural awareness and a desire for cultural and artistic opportunities (Coleman, et al; 2021). The objectives of Nigerian universities are to be pursued by intensifying and diversifying university programmes for the development of high-level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation, making professional course contents reflect national requirements; making all students part of a general programme of all-round improvement in university education; and making entrepreneurial skills acquisition a requirement for all Nigerian Universities (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). A university determines a country's economic success, and also defines the vibrancy and depth that it would need to transform into a knowledge economy. Universities provide specialized technical or professional knowledge which create profit opportunities to both the society and the individuals. The economic perspective calls a university a "supermarket" and the educational services it offers "products" which are "sold" to a large scale of "customers". It is important to note that universities play a vitality role in the achievement of a knowledge-based economy in any country. A university is a universally accepted major instrument for the promotion of socio-economic, political and cultural development, being the driver and source

of knowledge and skills for high level manpower production (Emenalo, 2016). It is to be understood that university education is seen as an important aspect of sustainable development goals that are related to the transforming and empowering the citizens with relevant skills, knowledge and attitudes to enable them become productive members of the society (Chankseliani, & McCowan, 2021).

Modes of Diversifying the Curriculum for Sustainable National Development

The following serve as the various modes through which university administrators in Nigeria can achieve diversification of their university curriculum for sustainable national development:

1. **Entrepreneurship education:** This would serve as a major contribution to the curriculum in order for university administrators to achieve diversification which would in turn bring about sustainable national development. Entrepreneurship education is the education that provides training expenses and skills that prepare people with entrepreneurship knowledge, competence, and skills needed to be self-reliant (Meziobi, 2013). Oyekola (2015) considered entrepreneurial education (entrepreneurship) as the process of creating something new with value, by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial, psychic, and social risks, and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary, personal satisfaction and independence. Entrepreneurship education may benefit students in their acquisition of knowledge and skills as well as in the increasing intentions towards entrepreneurship (Nabi et al, 2017). Oguntimehin and Nwosu (2014) mentioned that entrepreneurship can be seen as a form of education tailored towards self-reliance thereby leading to a reduction in unemployment problems. They further provided that entrepreneurship activities being a dynamic process of creating incremental wealth by individuals who assume the major risks in terms of equity, time and career commitment. Entrepreneurship education promotes various skills such as tailoring and designing skills, computer skills, business and marketing skills, catering skills and much more. The findings of Omozuawo and Ugheoke (2020) and Onwuchekwa and Ahamefula (2020) have established that effective acquisition of entrepreneurship skills and competencies could result in wealth creation, job creation, poverty eradication, unemployment reduction, development of local technology, improvement in economic growth and development respectively. A university produces an "entrepreneur", knowledge becomes a "product", the student becomes a "customer" giving rise to a kind of knowledge or academic capitalism, thus strengthening the role of universities in a knowledge economy (Bratianu, 2014; 2015).
2. **E-learning:** Another contribution to the diversification of the Nigerian university curriculum for sustainable national development is the e-learning process. E-learning as a concept cannot be said to be entirely new in Nigeria though with the emergence of ICT, e-learning process has entirely been transformed into higher and new level; taking over the convectional correspondence programme (Nwabufo, Umoru & Olukotun, 2012). E-learning has many benefits that include: widening access to the reach of many learners in a flexible manner, improving the effectiveness of learning and teaching via technology, increasing efficiency in e-Learning administration, reducing public spending in education and training, and increasing quality of research among others (Arkorful and Abaidoo, 2014). E-learning is one of the most significant educational innovations powered by the ubiquitous technology which has given learners vast alternatives access and opportunities for quality education (Eze, Chinedu-Eze & Bello, 2018). Tarus and Gichoya (2015), emphasised the need for the e-learners to also be inducted and trained in ICT and e-Learning skills in order for them to learn in this entirely new setting.
3. **ICT training:** This is another major contribution to the diversification of the Nigerian university curriculum for sustainable national development as it is through the training in ICT skills that one can achieve the benefits of the e-learning process. Kashorda and Waema

(2014) argued that a high degree of ICT implementation and use enhances learning, teaching and research. Godwin in Chigozie-Okwum (2018) emphasized that when teachers are digitally literate and trained to use ICT, these approaches can lead to higher-order thinking skills, provide creative and individualized options for learners to express their understanding and leave them better prepared to deal with the on-going technological changes in society and the workplace.

Challenges

Despite the fact that universities can achieve diversification of their curriculum for sustainable national development through the above-stated ways, there are some challenges that hinder them from engaging in the aforesaid activities. They include:

1. **Absence of Entrepreneurship Education in Nigerian universities:** As earlier discussed, entrepreneurship education would aid students in diversifying their skill set thereby giving them a variation of job opportunities to choose from. However, the absence of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian university curriculum is a big setback to this dream as the avenue for learning these skills have not been made available in most Nigerian universities. Where there is poor entrepreneurship education in a university, students would not be able to grasp the concept of self-employment and independence. Thus, a student that is not self-sufficient, dependent, and unemployed would result to theft and other devious means to make quick money. This would further endanger the Nigerian society and lead to a decline in the growth and development of a nation (Ofor-Douglas, 2020a).
2. **Poor Adaptation to E-learning:** E-learning is a modern way of teaching and learning that some individuals are not comfortable with as they are stuck in their old ideals of how teaching and learning should be. Their refusal to adapt to these modern learning technics are seen as setbacks to the diversification of the Nigerian curriculum in terms of the introduction of e-learning into the university system as the e-learning process cannot progress where the instructors refuse to progress.
3. **Lack of Funds:** This is another major challenge facing the diversification of the Nigerian university curriculum as the existing funds are only able to cater to the courses the university can afford. The introduction of e-learning and entrepreneurship education into the Nigerian university curriculum is no small feat as these modes of diversification are generally expensive to carry out due to the high cost of their materials. Ochai (2012) in Ofor-Douglas (2020a) rightly mentioned that finance is the lifeblood of every organization and its management requires special attention. Apart from sourcing fund for the provision of infrastructure and other support services, management of funds is important for the sustainable growth and development of e-learning and entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities. Eyiche (2012) cited in Nwachukwu (2019) that the manifestation of the poor funding of Nigeria's education from the mid-1970s into 2000 causes wide spread causes of areas if unpaid teachers' salaries, school infrastructures and equipment are non-existent, dilapidated or grossly inadequate.
4. **Lack of facilities for E-Learning and Entrepreneurship Activities:** This problem arises as a result of lack of funds to buy the needed materials for e-learning and entrepreneurship education. E-learning is challenged with the problem of material devices such as computers, computer laboratories, internet and e-mail facilities, video phone systems and teleconferencing devices, fax and wireless applications, digital library, digital classrooms, multimedia systems and the problem of multimedia courseware development among others (Olutola and Olatoye, 2015). A study carried out by Afolabi and Uhomoibhi (2017) reveals lapses in e-learning applications in developing countries when compared with the practice in developed countries of the world. Nwana (2012) maintained that acute shortage of e-learning materials such as online internet-connected computers, e-mail facilities, multimedia

television, multimedia computer and digital library served as a great hindrance to the use of e-learning. Atakpa (2016) submitted that the deplorable or complete absence of infrastructural facilities has constituted the poor development of entrepreneurship education in institutions of learning. These e-learning materials are either expensive or too technical to use.

5. **Lack of ICT training:** It was also revealed that the few available ones such as offline ordinary computers, scanners, printers and reread-made of software are not utilized because the teachers lack the knowledge and skills of computer application. The only material identified as available and in use is the telephone. Eze (2016) mentioned that despite the benefits associated with training and retraining programmes as a strategy for improving the quality of teachers in tertiary institutions, it is to a large extent neglected. Alabi (2014) rightly put it that the immediate aim of teacher training and retraining programmes in tertiary institutions is to improve the quality of teachers in terms of teaching and learning processes. With a decline in the training and retraining, the employees' level of productivity will be very low because the world is a global village and there is a level of technology the staff employed must be acquainted with. In the light of this, employees that are not regularly trained to tend to perform poorly to standard. (Ofor-Douglas, 2021c) cited in Ofor-Douglas, (2022).

CONCLUSION

This paper discussed the diversification of the Nigerian university curriculum for the facilitation of sustainable national development. It was stated in this work that the diversification of the curriculum in Nigerian universities is a step forward towards achieving sustainable development as innovations within the university environment would bring about easier and faster productivity. This would ultimately lead to enhancement of the skill set of the Nigerian university graduates and bring about self dependency. These graduates would then be able to compete with their peers globally. The challenges faced in the diversification of the Nigerian university curriculum for sustainable national development were discussed to include lack of adequate entrepreneurship education, poor adaptation to e-learning, lack of e-learning and ICT facilities, lack of funds amongst others. Possible solutions to the challenges stated were resolved as follows:

Way Forward

1. Entrepreneurship education should be inclusive in the Nigerian university curriculum to promote sustainable national development. There should be sensitization on the benefits of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities.
2. There should be a widespread adaptation to the process of e-learning as it is the way of the technological era.
3. Ample funds should be provided for the diversification of the Nigerian university curriculum from the Federal Government, NGOs, TetFund, interested philanthropists and foreign universities that would be interested in partnering with Nigerian universities for the attainment of sustainable national development.
4. Adequate provision of e-learning materials and power supply within Nigerian universities to facilitate the e-learning process should be put in place. This can be possible through partnerships with international universities that are familiar with the e-learning process, Partnerships with technological companies such as Google and Microsoft would further allow for the growth of e-learning within Nigerian universities.
5. Consistent training and retraining of staff and students on the use of ICT facilities to also further the use of the e-learning process should be a watchword.

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