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ENTREPRENEURIAL STUDIES IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper focused on the time frame for entrepreneurial studies in Nigerian universities with University of Benin: Benin City as case study. The 15 faculties was the population while the 10,994 students in the faculties were the respondents. The sample size was the 15 faculties because all faculties were purposively chosen to be represented while twenty 400Level students who were in 300Level in the 2021/2022 academic session were chosen each from the 15 faculties, making 300 students as respondents. Results revealed that the one academic session for entrepreneurial studies in Nigerian universities was inadequate. It was recommended that government should review the one academic session and makes it four years, from 100Level to 400Level, in order for students to acquire adequate knowledge needed as successful entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Studies, Public Universities, One academic Session, Four Academic Sessions.

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INTRODUCTION

University education is meant to produce high level manpower for the development of the different sectors of the Nigerian economy through the acquisition of adequate knowledge and skills, among others for national development. One of the indices for a developed nation is high employment rate of graduates from universities and other institutions of learning and a buoyant economy where small and medium scale industries run by entrepreneurs thrives. A nation where

graduates are being churned out without meaningful job awaiting them is not seen as a developed nation. In Nigeria for instance, university graduates are produced every year but many are not meaningfully employed in the public and private sectors as well as being successful entrepreneurs creating wealth. According to Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2023), the unemployment rate in Nigeria has risen to 42.1%. This shows that high rate of unemployment in Nigeria is caused by inadequate education and skills training, labour market mismatch, among others (Nwekeaku, 2013; Adelokun, 2011).

This situation in Nigeria is believed to have arisen from the curricula of Nigerian universities which are observed as mismatch to university education, to the needs of the labour market and needs of the economy, that is, education without skills. Harbinson (1973) declared that...Any nation that cannot develop the skills and knowledge of her people and utilize them effectively for national development remains undeveloped. As a result of this high rate of unemployment, the government thought it wise to introduce acquisition of relevant skills to the Nigerian university education curricula and so entrepreneurial studies was injected into the Nigerian universities curricula as a compulsory course of study in the 2007/2008 academic session, though some private universities already had it in their curricula before then (Okojie, 2009). This was considered as very laudable by various stakeholders of public university education in Nigeria. However, it appeared that, the government did not make adequate preparation for its take off in terms of the resources required, especially the duration of time required for such a course. This was observed to have slowed down the actualization of the main objective of the course which is the production of adequately trained university graduates with adequate skills to create wealth after graduation because of the growing rate of unemployment in Nigeria (Nwekeaku. 2013). Results were not too visible and tangible as many students in public universities were purported to have complained of the duration of the course which is one academic session which they felt was not adequate when compared to their counterparts in private universities, such as Covenant University Ota Ogun state that was making waves about entrepreneurial studies to the extent that it became a "Mecca" of sort to other universities, tertiary institutions and corporate bodies like the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) who visited and went back to use Covenant University's as a template and as a template required by CBN for grants.

It was believed that the private universities had smooth take off and attained this height because of the duration of the course which runs from 100Level to 400Level which is the final year, all other things being equal. There is this observation of the perceived complaints of students in public universities concerning the duration of entrepreneurial studies that the time frame for the course is one academic session at 300Level, which ideally is not more than nine months, all other things being equal. This is observed to be a short period to acquire any skill. Those (Artisans) who are learning and acquiring these skills outside the formal school environment spend not less than two years and above to acquire the skills, depending on the skill or skills being acquired. There is this public outcry that, if unemployment must be eradicated or reduced to the barest minimum among Nigerian university graduates, so that they can contribute meaningfully to national development, entrepreneurial studies as a course in public Nigerian universities should be adequately taught. Entrepreneurial studies is not only a process of acquiring skills but also to acquire adequate skills, knowledge about the business world, for example, proposal writing, preparation of quotations among others.

Stakeholders are suggesting that the students in public universities should start entrepreneurial studies as a course from 100Level to 400Level, so that by 400Level, they would have started selling skills acquired, creating wealth with it before their compulsory one year National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme or programme. If this is accepted, they will be gainfully employed if no jobs for them and possibly employ and teach others thereby contributing their quota to national development. The observed one year allocated for entrepreneurial studies in Nigerian universities appears to be too short for acquiring adequate skills. This according to stakeholders of education can mar the laudable intention of government of producing university graduates who can create wealth per adventure of inability to get jobs after graduation, with adequate skills for self and national development.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

- Find out if the duration of one academic session for entrepreneurial studies is adequate in Nigerian universities.
- Determine if the students acquired adequate knowledge during the duration of one academic session for entrepreneurial studies in universities.
- Ascertain if the students think four academic sessions from 100Level to 400Level is adequate for entrepreneurial studies in Nigerian universities.

Research Questions

To guide this study, the following research questions were raised

- Is the duration of one academic session adequate for entrepreneurial studies in Nigerian universities?
- Did you acquire adequate knowledge during the one academic session for entrepreneurial studies?
- Do you think four academic sessions from 100Level to 400Level will be adequate for entrepreneurial studies in Nigerian universities?

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive research design was used for the study. The population was the 15 faculties in University of Benin, Benin City 2021/2022 academic session. The respondents were the 10,994 final year (400Level) students in the faculties who offered entrepreneurial studies in their 300Levels. The sample size was the fifteen faculties selected purposively because the researcher wanted representations from all the faculties while the respondents were 300 students, twenty each from the fifteen faculties. The questionnaire used was named "Entrepreneurial Studies in Nigerian Universities Questionnaire (ESINUQ)". It was divided into two sections; sections A and B. Section A was about the demography of the respondents while section B was questions on the research questions and answered by the respondents. YES and NO were used to answer the

research questions. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher and her trained research assistants. Data collected were analysed using percentages as shown in Table 1.

RESULTS

Table 1: Results of the Study

S/N	Research Questions	N	Yes	No
1	Is the duration of one academic session adequate for entrepreneurial studies in Nigerian universities?	300	300 (100%)	-
2	Did you acquire adequate knowledge during the one academic session for entrepreneurial studies?	300	-	300 (100%)
3	Do you think four years from 100Level to 400Level will be adequate for entrepreneurial studies in Nigerian universities?	300	300 (100%)	-

Results from Table 1 revealed that the 300 (100%) said yes that the one academic session for entrepreneurial studies in Nigerian universities is inadequate. The 300 (100%) said no to research question two, that they did not acquire adequate knowledge during the one academic session for entrepreneurial studies. Table one further revealed that the 300 (100%) students said yes to research question three, that they think four years from 100Level to 400Level will be adequate for entrepreneurial studies in Nigerian universities.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings revealed that the students are not satisfied with the one academic session for entrepreneurial studies because they did not acquire adequate knowledge in the different skills they want to learn (Nwekeaku, 2013). This portends that the goal of entrepreneurial studies in Nigerian universities is not being met, as important as the course is. They however expressed their satisfaction for a possible four academic sessions, from 100Level to 400Level for entrepreneurial studies. This will enable them acquire adequate knowledge in their chosen skills as well as acquiring in depth knowledge of how the skills so acquired operates in the labour market. There is need therefore for government who is the owner of public universities to review the duration of entrepreneurial studies in Nigerian universities from one academic session at 300Level to four academic sessions, from 100Level to 400Level in order to make the programme achieve its goals for national development. If this is not done, there will continue to be high rate of unemployment in Nigeria,

CONCLUSION

It is concluded based on the findings that the one academic session for entrepreneurial studies in Nigerian universities is inadequate for the students to acquire in depth knowledge of their chosen skills. If the course must achieve its goal of producing entrepreneurs as owners of small and medium scale businesses in the different sectors of the economy of Nigeria for national

development, then one academic session for its study is inadequate, especially when artisans spend more than one calendar year to acquire their chosen skills.

Recommendations

The government should as a matter of urgency review the one academic session for entrepreneurial studies in Nigerian universities to four academic sessions, from 100 Level to 400 Level, for adequate knowledge for the students' chosen skills in order for them to succeed as entrepreneurs in the competitive labour market and place them in positions that will make them compete favourably with their counterparts globally.

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