THE NEEDS FOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COLLABORATION IN PROMOTING EDUCATIONAL INNOVATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated educational innovations for sustainable development in tertiary institutions of Nigeria calling on stakeholders’ collaboration. The study used case study survey research design method, and the field study was predominantly based on subjects drawn from Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. The population of the study consisted of all academic staff within the institution numbering about 650 from which a sample size of 242 respondents was drawn. The instrument for data collection was a special purpose checklist titled “Strategic Plan Checklist for Curriculum Innovations” (SPCCI). The results of data analysis at 95% confidence interval using Chi-Square statistical analysis techniques revealed that the three identified areas of curriculum innovations necessary for sustainable educational development to a large extent have been significantly achieved in MOUAU in line with ESD indices.

Keywords: Development, sustainability, Educational, Collaborations.

1. INTRODUCTION

The emphasis of the Nigerian educational curriculum over the past forty years has been on general education. Although there is a little incorporation of vocational education at the post-primary and tertiary school levels; the outcome has been a large number of educated youths who are unemployed after graduation. The challenging issue of unemployment in our local communities and the nation at large is so monumental and calls for a curriculum development reform. In other words, there is the need for collaborative activities for curriculum development that will enhance employment sustainability after graduation.

According to Wodi and Dokubo (2012) the colonial government in 1954 reformed the then existing educational system from 8-6-2-3 (that is, 8 years of primary, 6 years of secondary, 2 years of higher school certificate and 3 years of university) to 6-5-2-3 (that is, 6 years of primary, 5 years of secondary, 2 years of higher school and 3 years of university). This reform, which merely reduced the years of schooling from nineteen to sixteen years left the curriculum still heavily academic. The 6-3-3-4 (that is, 6 years of primary, 6 years of secondary split into
junior and senior secondary of equal duration, and 4 years of university education) and now 9-3-3-4 system presently in operation has neither solved the problem. As such, the clarion call for innovations and stakeholder’s collaborative efforts for sustainable educational and economic development in the country is inevitable.

The global focus on education for sustainable development is a dynamic move that encompasses a new vision of education. It is an education which, when effectively implemented at all levels of schooling will shape the world of tomorrow by equipping individuals and societies with the innovative and entrepreneurial skills needed for the daunting global challenges. It is an education that emphasizes the need for a global change in thinking about the direction and nature of human development (Palmer, 2013). It is a new system that is fundamentally different from its predecessors with its major emphasizes on sustainability.

The vision of education for sustainable development promotes and facilitates new multifaceted approaches to one of the core issues of our time, namely globalization and its many forms of growth and expansion. Educating the citizenry to be aware of how it cuts across the world globally, and its subsequent impact on societies, institutions and individuals, should thus be the driving force in our educational policies and practices across the country. As such, a curriculum where students have the opportunity to learn the core values, behaviors, and lifestyles required for a sustainable future and positive societal transformation cannot be overemphasized.

Furthermore, policies, practices, and ideologies of education should define and determine ways in which the knowledge, values, and the skills needed to make development, sustainable are transmitted in all parts of the world, especially among youth who take charge of the future (UNESCO, 2007 Ahunanya, Osakwe, & Uche, 2010). According to UNESCO (2005) ESD stands for education that enables people to predict, to confront and solve the problems that threaten our survival on this planet. This education hinges on the values and principles that promote equity, gender parity, social tolerance and social justice, poverty reduction, environmental protection and restoration, natural resource conservation, and a just and peaceful education. It takes due account of the three pillars of sustainable development which are environmental protection, economic development and social development of societies.

It is a holistic approach to the educational curriculum and management with a constant reflection on what to teach, and how to teach in order to clarify and extend the ability of students to think for themselves, reflect and debate on issues so as to form their own opinions as well as foster life-long learning that emerges from discovery that is relevant to the learner’s life experiences (Nnabuo & Asodike, 2010). The implication for this curriculum is that since skills depreciate rapidly in the fast changing global economy, and since workers must compete in the constantly changing world environment, workers’ skills need constant upgrading to keep abreast of the times. As such, our educational curriculum should no longer emphasize only specific skills, but must focus on developing learners’ decision-making and problem-solving skills as well as teaching them how to learn on their own and with others (World Bank Report, 1998d).

In many educational settings and contexts throughout the world, there remains an assumption that teachers are the possessors of knowledge which is to be imparted to students, and tertiary institutions are the custodians of these carriers of knowledge that must be transmitted in a neutral, impartial, objective as well as infrastructural rich environment to the recipients. Although, globalized education systems are becoming socially, ethnically and culturally diverse; education is often defined through discourses embedded in Western paradigms determined by dominant knowledge economies. Therefore, sustainable educational development strategies and transformative pedagogies should be developed and sustained within the curriculum of tertiary institutions with emphasizes on how learners and teachers can use
education to transform and change their understandings of the world, as well as challenge hidden differences and inequalities that played out in societal borderlands.

Such reformed curriculum should seek to balance human and economic well-being with cultural tradition as well as respect for the earth’s natural resources and should be the focus of tertiary institutions if we are to develop the required behavior towards sustainability (Palmer, 2013). Thus, in the pursuance of sustainable development through education; educators, learners, and other stakeholders in the educational sector need to reflect critically on their communities, resources, viable and non-viable options in their lives, and become empowered to develop and evaluate alternative strategies to collectively fulfill their visions and surmount challenges. The vital role that the joint efforts of tertiary institutions and stakeholders in the educational sector have to play in this regard is the focus of this study.

2. OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS

2.1 Objectives

The purpose of this study is to bring to the knowledge of stakeholders in education pertinent areas of curriculum innovations necessary for sustainable development in tertiary institutions. Specifically, the study considered:

- Innovations that enhance capacity building of in-service teachers in tertiary institutions
- Innovations in curriculum content that emphasizes entrepreneurial skills acquisition and utilization
- Innovations that enhances instructional delivery methods of teachers in tertiary institutions

2.1 Research Question

To what extent are the three identified areas of curriculum innovations necessary for sustainable education development being achieved in MOUAU in line with ESD indices?

2.3 Hypothesis

The three identified areas of curriculum innovations necessary for sustainable educational development to a large extent have not been significantly achieved in MOUAU in line with ESD indices

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the National Planning Commission (2004), NEEDS recognizes education as the vital transformation tool and a formidable instrument for socio-economic empowerment. In as much as the educational sector is crucial to achieving the objectives of NEEDS, it also happens to be the sector it seeks to reform. And one of the strategies of this reform is to update the instructional curricula of education to meet the demands of the national economy. This is in tandem with the DESD stakeholder strategy of re-orienting the curricula from pre-school to post-university, so that through lifelong education, knowledge, skills and values will be acquired by the citizenry to improve their quality of life as they contribute to the development of their society.
Zabriskie and Alan (1991) opined that strategic planning which has to do with the systematic studying of the needs, resources, and the competitive edge of any organization with the view of analyzing alternative course of action to be taken for its long term survival is inevitable. In today's globally competitive knowledge economy, updating of curriculum needs should be a regular exercise in any organization and should provide the basis for making current decisions. Most tertiary institution teachers are never trained in the art of teaching before or after their employment. It is only those trained in the departments of education before taking up lectureship appointment that blends their lecturing with other methods of teaching (Njoku, 2012). While some lecturers read their notes to their students, others talk to their paper with the students listening and jotting down. In other words, many lecturers do not have the capacity for training undergraduates.

Clark (2001) in Saint, Hartnett and Strassner (2004) suggest that university departments need to change their curricula every three or four years in order to ensure that the content of their teaching reflects the rapidly advancing frontiers of scientific knowledge. There is thus the need for curriculum innovation of the teacher education programs since the unique position of human capital as a resource in national development is anchored on the fundamental principle that human beings are the prime movers of any development; as such investments in education is premised on the basic assumption that investment in human capital will assist a nation to improve both its gross national existence as citizens of nations and planet earth (Samuel 1987).

The Knowledge for Africa’s Development (KAD) Conference (2006) echoed the same concern and gloomily noted that Africa faces enormous educational challenges at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, noting that she has the poorest installed educational infrastructure, the lowest enrollment rates, and the lowest numbers and quality of teachers. On the average in Africa, less than 25-30% of each age cohort complete junior secondary education and less than 15-20% completes senior secondary education. Moreover, many employers find the quality and relevance of graduates to be unsatisfactory (KAD, 2006).

The literature is replete with facts suggesting that there is the need for innovation in curriculum content and delivery methods in Nigerian higher education to enhance quality and relevance. Quality is a multi-faceted issue which encompasses how learning is organized and managed including delivery methods as well as what the curriculum content of learning is, what level of learning is achieved, what it leads to in terms of outcomes, and what goes on in the learning environment (Maduewesi, 2005). According to Okeke (1982) it is a universal acceptance that curriculum should be renewed or revised so as to take account of the societal values, needs, and problems.

Sokan (2007) writing on teacher education reforms in Nigeria as a vehicle for attaining national and international targets laments that most employers of labour subject university graduates to retooling and skills programmes after pre-qualifying them. Many students have graduated from higher education confused, dejected and regretted reading the courses they read because they find it difficult to fit into the job market after graduation. To save our future graduates from the above realization and embarrassment; all courses should be blended with entrepreneurial skills for relevance to society. Thus, the initiated compulsory entrepreneurial education for undergraduates of Nigerian Universities by the Federal Government to make them more relevant to the economy is a welcome development that requires a collaborative support of all stakeholders in the educational sector.

Since the much desired positive change in tertiary institution’s learners’ behaviour has not been achieved with the prevailing instructional delivery mode (i.e. lecture method); there is a clarion call for change. More so, with the present emphasis in the Nigerian labour market on lifelong learning and entrepreneurial skills; pedagogical approaches should change. According to Njoku, (2012), Participatory Approach to Pedagogy (PAP) should replace the lecture method. In his views, Participatory Approach to Pedagogy is a cutting edge approach to teaching-
learning encounter now used by international consultants especially those of the British Council. Participatory approach to teaching and learning is a teaching-learning encounter in which both the “teacher-figure” and the “learner-figure” are actively involved and inter-dependant. Contextually, “teacher figure” and “learner figure” simply represent the teacher and the learner respectively, implying that the learner does not exclusively depend on the teacher while the teacher does not see the learner as not having anything to offer. In fact, both of them are learning from and teaching each other as well as maintaining their respective statuses.

According to UNESCO (2004) sustainable development refers to the development that meets the need of the present without compromising the future generations to meet their own needs, and education for sustainable development (ESD) is the educational process of achieving human development in an inclusive, equitable and secure manner which includes education for poverty alleviation, human rights, gender equality, cultural diversity, international understanding among other factors. As such, The focus of Nigerian tertiary education for sustainable development should be a society where everyone has the opportunity to benefit from quality education and learn the values, behaviors and lifestyle required for a sustainable future and for positive societal transformation.

4. MATERIALS AND METHOD

This study used case study survey research design method, and the area of study was Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUAU). Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike is one of the three specialized Universities of Agriculture established by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1992. The University is located in the well-known agricultural training and research community of Umudike in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria. It lies between longitude 70 and 7005’ E and latitude 50 and 5025’N. The MOUAU’s site is a rural agricultural-based community and this brings to greater focus the role of the University as one specializing in agriculture and related disciplines. Very good understanding has been developed between the University and communities around her with a regular extension of research findings to these communities for the improvement of their farming practices and methods.

The population for this study consisted of all academic staff within the institution numbering about 650 from which a sample size of 242 respondents was drawn and used for the study. The instrument for data collection was a special purpose checklist titled “Strategic Plan Checklist for Curriculum Innovations in Tertiary Institutions” (SPCCITI) constructed by the researchers to examine innovations recently introduced within tertiary institutions in Nigeria geared towards capacity building of in-service lecturers in entrepreneurial skills acquisition and utilization, instructional delivery methods, and general quality service delivery within the institution and the country at large. Respondents were requested to agree or disagree with the statements. The result of data analysis using Chi-square statistics is as shown below.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of data analysis in Table 1, using Chi-Square statistical analysis technique at 95% confidence interval, and 2 degrees of freedom revealed that the three identified areas of curriculum innovations necessary for sustainable educational development to a large extent have been significantly achieved in MOUAU in line with ESD indices. Specifically, academic staff of MOUAU have regular sponsorship to local and international conferences, post- graduates studies within the country and abroad, post-doctoral training abroad, entrepreneurial skills training nationally and internationally, regular inspection and updating of teaching facilities like installation of interactive whiteboards throughout the university and affiliates, schools (such as
the secondary and primary schools), installation of hi-tech ICT facilities, and general infrastructural up-grading of the teaching-learning environment of the institution. The outcome of this study validates the works of Okeke (1982) Maduewesi (2005), Sokan (2007), and Njoku (2012). As such, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike; one of the tertiary institutions in Nigeria have actualized significantly some of the indices of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

Table 1: Chi-square analysis of three identified areas of curriculum innovations

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>ICBT</th>
<th>ICCES</th>
<th>IIDM</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>X²</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>X² Crit.</th>
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<td>1325</td>
<td>1256</td>
<td>3653</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>1725</td>
<td>1359</td>
<td>5059</td>
<td>242.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>124.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3431</td>
<td>3050</td>
<td>2615</td>
<td>8712</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The World Bank (1997) noted that higher education institutions must provide strategies that will take care of global developments in technology if they are to survive in a technology driven society of the 21st century. The roles that tertiary education and schooling in general play in contributing to sustainable development in all sectors of the economy cannot be overemphasized. Thus, the Federal Government and all stakeholders in the Nigerian economy need to pull forces together; focusing more attention to ways of promoting sustainable development through the formal educational sector as well as the non-formal for effective skill development and employability in the light of the present global realities. Based on the findings, we recommend as follows:

- There is an urgent need to enlighten tertiary institutions and stakeholders in the educational sector on the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) indices in view of the global challenges to human existence
- The staff of the higher education institutions, especially the teaching staff will require sensitization and requisite training on ways to actualize Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).
- Awareness of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) programs need to be created through the mass media for the populace; as well as training and retraining programs for higher education curriculum planners and administrators.
- Interactive session should be held between academic staff and undergraduate students to enlighten them on the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) indices and implementation strategies of the Federal Government as well as other stakeholders

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