EDITORIAL COMMENT

WHERE CAN WE WORK? CHALLENGE FOR UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM DEVELOPERS

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Several university courses today run on curricula that were designed without defining specifically, the fate of graduates of such courses who frequently end up asking this reverberating question: where can we work?

Despite the ‘endemic’ and global status of unemployment, concrete efforts to tackle the problem in Nigeria are yet to be seen. In fact, there are many Nigerian graduates who finish from the university only to discover that they had wasted four or more years in courses that obviously holds no future for them. Many Nigerian first degree graduates have found themselves going back into the university to pursue other first degree course options instead of venturing into postgraduate training in their original fields, and at the expense of their aging parents who had hoped for a reprieve after their first graduation. One then may ask: Why not scrap such purposeless university courses? Why are some opposing the transformation of such purposeless courses into viable ones?

On the contrary however, no university course is purposeless and no attempt for knowledge acquisition is a waste of time. It is only the intent in the curriculum that matters as the fate of university graduates is inextricably tied to such intent. It is positive if the direction/focus of the curricula is intended to meet the practical needs of the society, and negative if otherwise. Overall, undergraduate education should be to get the students trained, make them acquire functional skills, allow them practice those skills under supervision, and graduate them to seek for job placements or set up an enterprise that can even employ others.

Obviously, the issue of unemployment after university education explains the introduction of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities, to encourage entrepreneurship and bridge the unemployment gap. Thus, the need to reexamine the existing university curricula to come up with areas of specialization can no longer be overemphasized. There is indeed a need to decide on specific areas of societal need in other to train our undergraduates to take up such responsibilities. Of course, to take up these responsibilities, skill acquisition is required and emphasis should be on balancing theoretical instruction with real life practice.