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The Commercialisation Of Knowledge Production Among Students Of The University Of Port Harcourt, Nigeria :the Praxis And Provisos.

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Background

In recent time, there had been an urgent need for the understanding of and a planned framework for the introduction of the commercialization of knowledge production concept in our universities. Many dimensions to this need had been attempted. This include drawing up new course descriptions or revising the mix of the course subject portfolio. However, it is now becomes very obvious that such development requires a good deal more than just looking into specific course contents, or setting up an entrepreneurial centre and or introducing a course in entrepreneurial education as announced by Baridam (2009) during the 25th Convocation Ceremony of the University of Port Harcourt.

The exact practice borne out of experience and the rapidly growing body of literatures on education and teaching in innovations and the commercialization of knowledge productions all indicate that in this particular field, the demands to be met differ greatly from developments in other fields. By exploring indepths the frames that have to be changed, some fundamental conditions for the future of our universities stand tall for them to become part of the current development known as the Global Knowledge Economy (GKE). By attempting to take bearings of the exogenous conditions of the role of the universities in the Global Knowledge Economy (GKE), and in particular how to interpret these conditions for the future of the commercialization of knowledge production concept and how to evaluate their effect on internal structures and processes, a look at the roles of the teacher in this all important exercise becomes evident. Our point of departure is that teaching students to commercialize knowledge production poses huge challenges to the context in which it takes place.

The interaction between university, business community and public authorities is an important part of the preconditions for a society in change. These interactions imply among other things, the establishment of network and hybrid organizations to further innovation and improve competitiveness. This constitutes the basic for an understanding of the commercialization of knowledge production concept in our universities. Several report support this recent development, the basic fact is that “the classic truth seeking” university – e.g Nigerian Universities including the University of Port Harcourt is fastly being challenged at this time by a new type of university (not found in Nigeria now) that does not regard knowledge in the same absolute sense as the classic and it enters into close innovative learning circuits with external partners. Bager in Christensen and Poufelt (2005) maintained that it is essentially the newer and younger universities (not in Nigeria) that are moving in the direction of what one would call the “network university” in which research is targeted at specific demands and where funding is the responsibility of both the private and public sector and the emphasis is on both single and multi-disciplinary ventures as purported by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2003).

Prompting our universities into the “network university” calls for changes in the framework of our universities if they are to contribute to progress and economic welfare in a global competition. Certainly, the developments we have witnessed in a number of foreign universities in recent years and the political pressure that is evident all indicate that stronger forces are needed now than ever to make

our universities change automatically from a passive, elitist self-definition (ivory tower) into direct active participant institutions in society. All efforts point towards the changes being needed as expressed in a slogan launched by the Danish government in 1995, that society should change from being dominated by a culture of employeeship believed to have been characteristic of the educational system in the 1970s and 1980s. into a culture of self-employment or the commercialization of knowledge production. Today, in Denmark research and development results from the Universities are contributing immensely to furthering economic growth. This is because their universities have been accepted as institutions which serve as central carriers of knowledge and culture and capable of exchanging ideas and competences with the society it is part of. Paradoxical to this, in our universities, there is a rising number of young people who enroll in disciplines that last longer and longer. In the process, this young people tends to lose contact with the (business) life that is supposed to provide the foundation for the entrepreneurship culture desired. This is avariance to the speedy demand by the labour market that the knowledge and culture imbibed from the University be emptied into them as posited by Uche and Kpee (2009). Of a truth, the decrease in the number of firms and the increase in the number of young people enrolling in longer education have led to more and more voices both in the school system in general and in particular at the university level demanding that a contact between the University and “the society the university is part of” should be re-established.

Our university can react to this only if it urgently supports the development of the awareness and skills necessary for developing an entrepreneurial mindset and skills as recently started by the University of Port Harcourt. Beside, our universities need get entrepreneurs into the classroom, introduce apprenticeship scheme and encourage students to work with skilled and experienced entrepreneurs and while allowing more entrepreneurial training, match it directly with public research programmes. Erroneously, while the network universities stimulate entrepreneurship mindsets, the classical truth seekers teach it, and too few younger people (student) consider starting and running their own business along with schooling as a realistic and appealing career option. There is urgent need now to expose more young people to entrepreneurship even from an early age life the primary and secondary schools. The potential for people to become entrepreneurs later in life need also to be encouraged. This can be achieved if stimulating entrepreneurship mindsets is extended to other disciplines than business subjects and business schools.

Gibb (2002) emphasized that entrepreneurship education is most effectively placed in centres that do not have too strong formalized ties with business schools and that general education in this field is left without too much formalization. He posits that it is better to have a looser structure in order not to strangle the “entrepreneurial spirit”. Gibb (2002) insists that the ideal is to establish our university in an area with access to, and cooperation with, the “stakeholder community” and to take part in joint ventures and incubator activities together with other stakeholders in order to always look at one’s values with other stakeholders’ eyes. This could have led to why in the Anglo-Saxon world, a clear distinction exist between “university” and “business school” and why in post civil-war Nigeria clear distinction existed between “commercial schools” and Grammar Schools”.

In Gibb’s (2002) believe, our universities have been presented with a challenge by the politicians to shift from being glorified “citadels of intelligence” and “ivory towerism” to “networking” and “modernism” centres. This will imply a costly leaving the “narrow” but “comfortable” entrepreneur definition of merely business orientation to focusing on developing the “commercializing of knowledge production or “enterprising” student. Such a student may turn into a “self-employed” than “employee-ship” person may

own his small or big enterprise hence could be called an entrepreneurial or commercialization of knowledge production person pursuing entrepreneurship and innovation with utmost vigour. Gibb (2002) has simply separated such an enterprising student from another group called the entrepreneurial student when he said the former's behaviour is characterized by being creative, full of initiative, and acting on his initiatives, being able to inspire others and capable of doing things in quite a different way. The other type of person, "the entrepreneurial person" relates similarly except that in addition, he will contemplate being self-employed, starting his own enterprise. The clarion call for our universities today is to imbibe the entrepreneurial culture so as to chun out into the waiting society, entrepreneurial men and women with knowledge production not wasted but used for the advancement of man and society.

The Problem

Nigeria as a nation had her early entrepreneurial and business classes. These two classes did not however develop as much as would be expected. We are also aware that our colonial masters placed more emphasis on employership than self-employee-ship and so employment was seen as the hullmark of success for any school leaver. Lately the employer-self-employee gap becomes so noticeable that institutions of learning become compelled to prepare their products to meet the demand of town either through employee-ship or self-employee-ship. The current shift toward self-employee-ship education poses a huge challenge to our universities which are still gropping and pretending to lead among the "classical truth seeking" universities which Europe and other civilized worlds dropped in the 1970's. Our concern today and the point of departure of this paper solicit for how the legion of challenges facing our universities can be overcome so that the products chuned from our university compete favourably with those of the "network universities" and see certification as a call for self-employee-ship than for pursuit of non-existing white elephant jobs.

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study offer solutions to the problems identified.

1. How has the University of Port Harcourt encouraged the commercialization of knowledge production (entrepreneurship) among her students?
2. What challenges face the University of Port Harcourt in encouraging commercialization of knowledge production among her students?
3. What strategies has the University of Port Harcourt adopted against the challenges militating against her encouraging the commercialization of knowledge production among her students?
4. How can the University of Port Harcourt distinguish her enterprising students from the entrepreneurial students?

Method

The study adopted a survey design approach. Opinions of respondents were surveyed and information generated coded into data based on which the research questions were answered.

The population for the study which also constituted the sample comprised all the one hundred and eighty (180) staff in various positions of responsibility of the University of Port Harcourt.

A self designed 43 items Executive Staff Entrepreneurship Opinion Questionnaire (ESEOQ) validated by two experts in educational management was used in generating responses to the items on the Research Question. The ESEOQ has two sections: Section A of three question item sought demographic information about the respondent. Section B contains 40 simple items with responses coded along a 4-point modified likert scale type using very true, true, untrue and very untrue and scored 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The maximum scores on section B therefore stood at 160 while the minimum score was 40.

The ESEOQ was self-administered on the respondents, however the current face-off between the federal government and university campus unions reduced contacts and responses. Out of 180 respondents expected, only 120 could be reached, and only 105 returned the completed instrument in good form.

The reliability index of the instrument was obtained using the Split-half Approach in a pilot study. The instrument was administered on few similar staff of the Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Port Harcourt.

Scores obtained from the administration were collated. The Spearman Brown Prophetic Formular was used to compute the reliability of the split half scores and a reliability coefficient of 0.86 was obtained.

Simple descriptive statistics the mean scores was used in providing answers to the research questions. Mean score of below 2.5 was interpreted as untrue while scores of above 2.5 true.

Results

Table 1: Weighted mean scores of opinions of respondents on encouraging the commercialization of knowledge production in the University of Port Harcourt

S/N	Steps of Encouraging Commercialization	Mean	Decision
1.	Introducing a course in entrepreneurship in all faculties.	3.26	True
2.	Exposing students to entrepreneurship training	1.09	Untrue
3.	Encouraging students start and run their own business.	2.05	Untrue
4.	Strictly supervising students on Industrial Work Experience.	2.00	Untrue
5.	Making apprenticeship training a one year programme.	1.02	Untrue
6.	Making embarking on one year apprenticeship	0.06	Untrue

	condition for graduation.		
7.	Vigorously teaching entrepreneurial mindset	3.02	True
8.	Vigorously stimulating entrepreneurial mindset	1.04	Untrue
9.	Bringing experienced entrepreneur to the classroom	1.00	Untrue
10.	Establishing entrepreneurship unit as in GES Unit.	1.07	Untrue

From table 1 the high mean scores of 3.26 and 3.02 indicate that the University of Port Harcourt is at its low-ebb in encouraging the commercialization of knowledge production among her students. Introducing a course in entrepreneurship and teaching entrepreneurship mindsets are all wrong approaches to achieving the network university benchmark all universities are craving for today.

Table 2: Weighted Mean Scores Respondents Opinions on Challenges Faced by University of Port Harcourt in Encouraging Student Commercialization of Knowledge Production.

S/N	Challenges faced	Weighted Mean	Remark
		<input type="text"/>	
1.	Passive elitist self definition ivory tower orientation	3.64	True
2.	A society dominated by culture of employee-ship.	3.25	True
3.	Ideas are recycled and not put into practice.	2.96	True
4.	Research and Development Results are dumped on library shelves.	3.52	True
5.	Exchange of ideas and competences between university and community	2.22	Untrue
6.	Contribute toward society and economic growth	2.27	Untrue

7.	Education programmes last longer than necessary.	3.28	True
8.	Educational programmes are disconnected with business life.	3.44	True
9.	Demand for transfer of knowledge from University to society is too speedy.	3.26	True
10.	Entrepreneurial education is more embraced by management students.	3.00	True

Table 2 above show many high weighted mean scores ranging from 2.96 to 3.64. These high mean scores suggest that the University of Port Harcourt face many challenges in encouraging the commercialization of knowledge production among her students. The highest mean score of 3.64 indicate that the greatest challenge faced by this university is the old orientation she started with, where the university is looked upon as an ivory tower and citadel of knowledge that needs no change. Faced by this deceit the university has failed to contribute effectively to society and economic growth hence the lowest mean score of 2.27.

Table 3: Weighted Mean Scores of Respondent's Opinions on Strategies adopted by the University of Port Harcourt to Combat Challenges Faced

S/N	Strategies Adopted	Weighted mean score	Remark
1.	Vigorously stimulating the entrepreneurial mindset	2.16	Untrue
2.	Vigorously teaching the entrepreneurial mindset	3.36	True
3.	Introducing entrepreneurial programmes in her primary and secondary schools.	2.10	Untrue
4.	Bringing entrepreneurs into the classroom	1.82	Untrue
5.	Introducing compulsory apprenticeship programme.	1.68	Untrue

6.	Matching entrepreneurial training with public research programme.	1.00	Untrue
7.	Establishing entrepreneurial department in all Faculties.	1.88	Untrue
8.	Establishing entrepreneurial courses in all departments.	2.90	True
9.	Operate a loose structure as not to strangle entrepreneurial spirit.	2.00	Untrue
10.	Access to and cooperation with stakeholders is pursued vigorously.	3.00	True

From table 3 above, the low mean scores ranging from 1.00 to 2.16 indicate that the University of Port Harcourt has adopted little or minimal strategies to combat the challenges she faces in introducing the entrepreneurial concept among her students.

The highest mean score of 3.36 shows that the University is on the fast track adopting the wrong strategy for encouraging the commercialization of knowledge production among her students by vigorously teaching instead of stimulating the entrepreneurial mindsets. However, the high mean score of 3.00 indicate a better strategy adopted by the University to see her value from the stakeholders eyes by opening a small window for community-university interaction.

Table 4: Weighted Mean Scores of Respondents Opinions on Distinguishing Between an Enterprising and an Entrepreneurial Student in the University of Port Harcourt.

S/N	Qualities of Enterprising Student	Weighted	Remark
		<input type="checkbox"/>	
1.	Creativity	2.94	True
2.	Full of Initiatives	3.00	True
3.	Inspire others	3.06	True
4.	Do things in a different way	3.30	True

5.	Contemplate becoming self-employed	2.00	Untrue
6.	Start his own business	2.24	Untrue
7.	Pursue entrepreneurship and innovation	2.40	Untrue
8.	A self employed person	3.04	Untrue
9.	An employee-ship thinker	3.00	Untrue
10.	Act on his initiatives	3.24	True

From Table 4 above, the high mean scores ranging from 2.94 to 3.24 all indicate distinguishing features of an enterprising behaviour while the low mean scores ranging from 2.00 to 2.24 show characteristics of an entrepreneurial behaviour. The table indicate that students of the University of Port Harcourt are more enterprising than entrepreneurial in behaviour.

DISCUSSION

This study established that the University of Port Harcourt like many other Nigerian Universities is attempting at making the commercialization of knowledge production among her student a part of the academic curriculum. If noting else, the building of an entrepreneurial centre and the introduction of a course in entrepreneurship in all faculties support this claim. This was buttressed by Baridam (2009) as contained in the Vice Chancellors address during the 25th Convocation ceremony, when he stated inter alia. “the buildings for the international students, centre and Entrepreneurship centre which were commissioned during he 24th Convocation are now fully functional. A course in Entrepreneurship has been introduced in all faculties of the University” Though this development is insignificant, it signals a good beginning to attaining the status of an entrepreneurial university concurrent with the network university of the season.

The study also identified numerous challenges sewing as hiccups on the University’s efforts at encouraging entrepreneurship serving among her teeming population of students. Some of these challenges not peculiar to the University of Port Harcourt include Ivory-towerism nature of Nigerian Universities and the peculiar nature of the Nigeria society that lay more emphasis on non-existing white elephant jobs and bemoan self-employee-ship Barge (2005) had earlier supported this as bottlenecks to lifting our universities from what he described as “classic truth seekers” to “network universities” when he opined that it was only the newer and younger universities that were striving to enlist as network universities. According to Gibb (2004) these new universities are so tied to society that they look at their values with the stakeholders (society) eyes. The challenges facing our universities may therefore soon serve as springboards to achieving the desired height in no distant time.

The University of Port Harcourt has not rested on her oars as frantic efforts are being made daily to surmount the challenges identified. One of such efforts, teaching entrepreneurship in all faculties,

though not a very suitable approach may one day brighten the horizon of entrepreneurial education in the University. This literature in this study held that entrepreneurship is mindset is better stimulated than taught but the University of Port Harcourt teaches and not stimulate it. Opening windows for community interaction and involvement, and for collaborative purposes also, presuppose a future billed for change. This study holds that in the University of Port Harcourt, the entrepreneurial mindset is no longer a strange term as was before in very recent years.

From the result of this study, sharp distinction was made between an enterprising and an entrepreneurial student behaviour. The study listed behaviour such as creativity, full of initiative, ability to inspire others, doing things in a different way from normal acting on one's own initiative as behaviour inherent in an enterprising person. Gibb (2002) had earlier supported this finding when he described the entrepreneurial person as being similar to an enterprising student except that the entrepreneurial student may always contemplate starting his own business. Amadi (2009) supported this claim when he expressed that in the Danish language it was suggested that the term "enterprising imagination" be used to include characteristics such as imagination and creativity for an enterprising student. Importantly, this study established a dividing line between an enterprising and an entrepreneurial person's behaviour.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The commercialization of knowledge production is an approach to shift the Universities from a narrow sense of preparing graduates for the labour market to the broad sense of preparing graduates for life. This concept is avariance with what obtained now e.g. Ivory towerism citadel of learning and employee-ship. The current trend where town and gown open windows of interaction and cooperation suggest that our universities is preparing for the dynamism of society and will be ready to comply with the dictates of the community housing it. The onus is a fertilization between stakeholders and the University to advance society in the most current direction. If the Universities chun out enterprising persons into her community, the old concept of "ivory towerism" is then being replaced gently by "networking universities" or business schools or at least entrepreneurial universities.

Based on the foregoing, the following recommendations may leap our universities to the entrepreneurial limelight.

1. Entrepreneurship mindset should be stimulated among our students using the following approaches.

(a) Opening of a functional entrepreneurial unit with courses as in GES Unit.

(b) One year intensive apprenticeship for each student in a staggered manner or manner chosen by the student.

(c) Satisfying apprenticeship training as a condition for graduation.

(d) Experienced apprentice – masters not academic lectures should be introduced into our classrooms to teach different skills.

(e) Industrial work experience should be strictly supervised but not used as alternative to apprenticeship training.

2. Universities should operate a loose structure so as not strangle “entrepreneurship spirit”

3. Universities should offer loans / grants to student to start and run their own businesses.

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