

MKAN Career and Entrepreneurship Centre (CAREC)

Introduction

The Career and Entrepreneurship Centre (CAREC) of the Majlis Khuddam-ul-Ahmadiyya Nigeria (MKAN) is a flagship initiative that aims at the development of the human capital of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community in Nigeria. Specifically, CAREC focuses on providing a platform for the youths of the community, facilitating access to wealth of experience of veteran professionals across diverse sectors of the economy in order to enhance their competencies and capabilities. The Centre will provide necessary support to students, professionals, aspiring and established entrepreneurs through career and entrepreneurship clinics, workshops, bootcamps, seminars, and mentorship programmes.

History of CAREC

As a forward-looking body, one which has consistently fostered the development of its members, MKAN has executed several programmes in the form of workshops and seminars that were focused on the advancement of its members across private and public sectors. From project management workshops, to computer training, to economic summit and so on, MKAN has demonstrated a genuine interest in building the human capital, particularly for male youths, of the Ahmadiyya community in Nigeria.

The need to develop a more robust platform and a long-term initiative assumed a frontline status on the MKAN agenda as a result of observable trends in job market and business landscape. Firstly, the future of work is going to be technologically-driven and many existing jobs are predicted to become extinct. Consequently, there is a compelling need for young people to acquire new set of skills in order to become relevant in the era of the anticipated Fourth Industrial Revolution, where artificial intelligence (AI) and the internet of things (IoT) will revolutionise the work ecosystem. MKAN considers that a proactive, not reactive, approach is pertinent for the development of requisite skillsets that will enable its members to remain relevant in the global economy.

Secondly, the emerging trends in the global entrepreneurial drive is a force that is sweeping through Africa and Nigeria in particular. Incubator and Accelerator programmes, as well as seed funding, grants, and capacity building opportunities, are becoming commonplace. MKAN understands that its members that are entrepreneurs or those who are aspiring to make entry into the ecosystem need to plug themselves to the opportunity grids. MKAN has realised that the set of information many of its members who are struggling entrepreneurs require in order to scale their businesses may not be readily available. Accordingly, MKAN decided to establish CAREC as a vehicle for connecting its members to the wider network of entrepreneurial opportunities through provision of access to people, programmes and information that will accelerate their growth and make their business enterprise sustainable.

Considering the enormous responsibility and resources that will be required to achieve this vision, MKAN decided to pilot its initiative by opening the first of its kind programme at the 2019 Annual Convention (Ijtema) in Lagos. The programme, which was tagged Career and Entrepreneurship Clinic (CAREC), provided consulting and counselling services to members for free at the Ijtema. Prior to the Ijtema, MKAN requested members to send in their CVs for review, and more than 50 CVs and resumes were received. At the Ijtema, members visited the CAREC Consulting room to speak to the volunteers on their various career and entrepreneurship aspirations and issues. CAREC also facilitated a seminar on Scholarship and Fellowship Opportunities to more than 2000 members that were in attendance. Altogether, the programme spurred a flurry of interests in the members, who expressed their enthusiasm in participating in the initiative.

Following the initial success of the pilot programme at the Ijtema, the Sadr (President) MKAN intensified efforts to consolidate on the success by dedicating resources to development of the initiative. MKAN has identified various human resources from its pool of members to drive this initiative to ensure that it is organizationally-driven and sustainable.

Aim and Objectives of CAREC

The aims and objectives of CAREC include the following:

Aim:

- To build a community of highly-skilled professionals and impact-driven entrepreneurs with excellent character and competence.

Objectives:

- To develop a platform for equipping students with requisite knowledge for choosing and achieving a rewarding career
- To provide scholarship and fellowship information to students and mid-career professionals in order to enhance their competencies and portfolio of skills
- To facilitate access to professional development opportunities for members in the formal sectors through targeted programmes and initiatives that widen their professional networks and enhance their leadership capacities
- To promote entrepreneurship drive among members through provision of information on halal business opportunities and sustainable business practices
- To establish a mentorship ecosystem where members will have access to free advisory and counselling opportunities from experience and established professionals and entrepreneurs from within the community as well as through external resource persons
- To encourage continuous development of its members through regular engagements by means of newsletter, summit, workshop, seminar, bootcamp and industry-focused events.

Scope of CAREC Programmes

The Scope of CAREC Programmes (acronym PEEM) consist of the following:



- **Employability Programme:** review of CVs, resume, cover letter, interview skills, job essays, etc.
- **Entrepreneurship Programme:** workshops, seminars, and bootcamps on business plan development, product design, marketing and sales development, business branding, grant and funding opportunities, etc.
- **Professional Development Programme:** professional meet-ups, thematic seminars/workshops on opportunities for continuous professional development (CPD), tutorials on professional exams and certification programmes, among others.
- **Mentorship Programme:** matching of students with professionals in their field of studies/career aspirations, and young professionals with experienced colleagues in the same industry, etc.