

**Business Education Skills: A Necessity for Economic Sustainability of Nigerian University Graduates****Akpan, Nsini, PhD****&****Okon, Queen-Esther Edet**

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Abstract

Business education is widely recognized as educational system expected to provide a competent workforce to complete and excel in a rapidly changing environment and improve a country's economy. A nation's ability to generate a steady business opportunities can only come about when its people take to vocational activities. This paper discussed business education skills. A necessity for economic sustainability among Nigerian universities graduates. This paper highlighted how Business Education could equip its beneficiaries with personal skills, consumer knowledge and skills for managerial and clerical abilities needed to adapt to change economic and business realities and these skills made them to be wealth and job creators rather than wealth and job seekers. Guidelines for starting a business and proper orientation in dealing with business risks were postulated. The retooling of Nigeria depressed economy and unemployment challenges which calls for Business Education skills for economic sustainability were enumerated. This paper highlighted the following changes working against the success of Business Education in Nigeria: inadequate infrastructure, poor funding, poor industrial exposure, formulation of policies by non-experts, poor teaching and learning environment, non-implementation of government policies. It was suggested among other things that adequate funding of business educators should be a priority of government and stakeholders.

Keywords: Business Education, Skills, Challenges, Economic sustainability.

Introduction

Education remains a proof upon which the wheels of the society revolve and entrepreneurship can be considered as one of the solutions to reduce poverty, increase incomes, migration and develop employment in rural environments. Education lies at the heart of every society Ezeani (2002) opined that education is a key and a vital element in the broad development of the nation's youth capacity to address and solve difficulties. Education forms the basis for the proactive positive economic, social and political changes in the society. Therefore, education in Nigeria is not an exception. It is an instrument for effecting change in the development of individual, community as well as the entire Nigerian society. Education at all levels must have relevance to the needs of individuals and the society. It has to be the actuality of the environment and the modern world. These are the core values that make education a prerequisite for change. Education is the process by which an individual gain knowledge or insight, develops attitude or skills that prepares him/her to be useful citizen.

Concept of Business Education

Business Education is one of the vocational education courses studied in the Nigerian universities. It is the training of learners in business education production as well as in teaching business education in schools. The main business education skills is to produce business education graduates who are competent in both the theory and practice of business,

and also in the professional qualities for effective teaching of business studies in secondary schools and Business Education at University levels.

According to Osuala (2009), Business Education covers all spheres of life activities in any nation, and so, it is important to everybody and every nation it also prepares students with necessary skills and knowledge to take active part in entrepreneurial business. Aluja (2009) affirms that Business Education is an educational programme which involves acquisition of skills, knowledge and competence which makes the recipient/beneficiary proficient. Business Education could simply be said to be education for business in the market place, offices, and in the society. Business Education means many things to many people. Ajoma (2010) viewed Business Education as that education which provides its graduates with training in business skills and economic competence.

Business Education is an educational programme that equips an individual with skills, knowledge, values and attitude that would enable individual to function effectively in the economic activities of the society and the world of work self-reliance. Usoro (2016), states that Business Education is an educational programme which involves the acquisition of skills, knowledge and competence which make the recipient/beneficiary proficient. Usoro (2016) affirms that Business Education creates a platform for the acquisition and development of various skills which cuts across the three domains of learning (Cognitive, Psychomotor and Affective) and when these skills are harnessed will be more relevant at different times of one's life. Frank (2014), sees Business Education as an aspect of educational programme offered at the higher institution of learning which prepares students for careers in business. Business Education as a discipline is expected to expose its beneficiaries to diverse curricula, hence, it is that type of education that inculcate in the recipient attitudes, knowledge, skills, values that is required in the business world. Business Education is a sub-sector of the general vocational education programme that is aimed at inculcating the right type of skills, attitudes and knowledge. It is expected that, to produce core entrepreneurs who can create jobs and employ others within the economy. It is that content that is specifically designed to inculcate skills, attitude and knowledge for businesses with a view of engaging the world of work for greater productivity.

Business Education is an important part of vocational and technical education. According to Tema (2007), Business Education is the type of vocational education which prepares learners for gainful employment and sustainable livelihood. Idialu (2007) avers that it is a form of vocational education that is dictated towards developing the learners to becoming productive in teaching, paid employment and self-employment. Also, according to Amoor (2010) Business Education plays a significant role in economic development by providing knowledge and skills to the learners thereby enabling them to adequately impart knowledge into others and handle sophisticated office technologies and information system.

Objectives of Business Education

The objectives of Business Education are broadly aligned to providing skills and competence for industrial usage according to Osuala (2009), the objectives of Business Education include but not limited to:

1. Providing individuals with a broad orientation on their contribution to the expectation from business.
2. Providing training in those phases of education which concerns every member of the society.
3. To develop the ability to use these skills in the environment of business
4. Educated individuals have innovative ideas to connect themselves with the probable audience. Hence, they take the message out in a far better way.

5. Preparing individual for making logical sensible socio-economic decisions as a national member of the society.
6. Inculcating the right Business Education attitude and values for survival of individual and the society.
7. Producing vocational business educators who will impart the needed skills and competence to others.
8. Overall, Business Education invigorates a sustainable development of a company in a planned way.

Skills Performance in Business Education

Skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable one to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. According to Usoro (2016), skills are thought as a quality of performance which does not depend solely upon a person's fundamental innate capability but must be developed or acquired through training, practice and experience. Skill is an ability and capability acquired through deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to smoothly and adaptively carry out complex activities or job functions involving ideas (cognitive skills), things (technical skills), or people (interpersonal skills).

Skills have to do with the ability to do or perform an activity that is related to some meaningful exercise, work or job. It is the integration of both theory and practical in a given field or discipline. Elijah (2006) described skills as a well-established method of carrying out task. It involves the acquisition of performance capability. To acquire a skill is to acquire the habit of acting, thinking and behaving in a specific pattern, in such a way that the process becomes natural to the individual through repetition and practice.

Okorie (2000) posited that skill is acquired when theoretical knowledge is translated into practical activity. The author defined skill as expertness, practical ability, dexterity and fact, an organized sequence of actions, proficiency executed and usually displayed in flexible but systematic temporal pattern. Skill development assumes the motion of practical activity or what we do. The similarity in the acquisition of knowledge and skill is that both are concerned with some form of learning; hence they are sometimes presented interchangeably or as a substitute for the other. Psychologists however refer to skill as an organized sequence of action, proficiently executed and usually display flexible but systematic temporal pattern.

Areas of Training in Business Education

Business Education is however, broadly divided into three areas, accounting education, marketing/distributive, Office Technology and Management Education. These aspects of branches call for many career opportunities in Business Education such as retailing, wholesaling, word keeping, preparing of financial reports, auditing, consultancy services, advertising and public relations among others. All these depend on how effective Business Education curriculum is implemented by the business educator. All these recommend business education as a vital tool for self-reliance.

- 1) **Marketing/Distributive Education Skills:** This is a special programme of vocational education at the high-school level in which a student is employed part, receiving on-the-job-training, and also attends class, most of which pertain directly to the student's vocational field. The programme is vocational in that it offers instructions in "why" and how to engage in a distributive occupation rather than instruction "about" to those who might be interested. Distributive education skills are those followed by managers, proprietors, or employees engaged primarily in marketing or merchandising goods and services. Distributive education provides

instruments designed to prepare students for work in the field of distribution, which is the marketing and merchandising of goods and services. Distributive is that area of economy, which adds time and place utility to goods and services. Efficient marketing and merchandising activities enable the consumer to obtain readily, the goods and services available in our economy. Instruction in the distributive education programme presents the place of distribution in the economy, the organization of marketing and merchandising activities, and the knowledge skills, attitudes needed by all persons engaged in distribution. Ekpenyong (2005), avers that the curriculum objective here stated that distributive education was designed to give students an overview of the world of business and to enable them to develop a better understanding of the individual's relationship with business and the place of business in a developing economy.

Marketing/Distributive Skills

1. The ability to write well skills
2. Internal communication skills
3. Interpersonal communication skills
4. Public speaking skills
5. Lifelong listening attitude skills
6. Research skills
7. Cross team collaboration skills
8. An openness to trying new things skills

- 2) **Accounting Education Skills:** It is important to recognize that accounting education is education in business. It is a characteristic of account that provide insight into a business enterprise. These account data expose to analyze the result of management's prior decision-actions. This has become a valuable source of knowledge. Accounting education can be considered as experience, as practice in learning to learn, and as part of education for business. Accounting techniques are important as parts of data-processing apparatus, providing deeply significant data regarding enterprise prior experience. Accounting is one of the major occupational areas of Business Education that can prepare the Nigerian workers and students for a job or employment within a wide range of business career such as pay-roll clerks, purchasing clerks, audit clerks, book-keepers, cashiers and business teaching of accounting to other learners (Udo and Bako, 2014). Accounting is the process by which data relating to the economics activities of an organization are measured, recorded and communicated to interested parties for analysis and interpretation (Osuala, 2009).

Accounting Education Skills

1. Decision making skills
2. Professionalism skills
3. Commercial awareness skills
4. Information and technology skills
5. People skills
6. Team work skills
7. Problem-solving skills

- 3) **Office Technology and Management Education Skills:** Office technology according to Ekpenyong (2008) involves the new inventions or device in an office to

transform, or change the process of office work. It is this rapid change in the technology of office work through the use of machines to do the work that was previously done by hand that explains what we call office technology/automation.

Office technology and management is a specialized phase of vocational education that prepares students to enter teaching and office occupation as capable and intelligent members of the labour force. The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has taken secretarial education beyond the level imagined by its inventors. It has also provided job opportunities for both women and men. The use of office managerial services permeates all facets of a country's socio-economic and political life.

Office Technology and Management Education Skills

1. Technical skills
2. Conceptual skills
3. Human or interpersonal skills
4. Planning skills
5. Communication skills
6. Decision-making skills
7. Delegation skills
8. Problem-solving skills
9. Motivation skills
10. Bottom line skills

The Necessity of Enhancing Business Education Programme for Economic Sustainability in Nigeria

Economic Sustainability: Economic stability means being economically self-sustaining, self-supporting and self-reliant. As it relates to the individuals, it connotes equipping him with marketable and employable technical and vocational skills which makes himself dependent. An individual who had acquired technical and vocational skills is capable of living independent, sustainable and successful life. Such individual is productive and can create employment for others.

Economic sustainability refers to the practices that support long-term economic growth without negatively impacting social, environmental, and cultural aspects of the community. It is an integrated part of sustainability and means that we must use, safe guard and sustain resources (human and material) to create long-term sustainable values by optimal use, recovery and recycling.

1. **National Development:** National development is promoted by business education as they type of education promotes national economic awareness and gives the necessary details needed to promote business thereby promoting the Nigerian economy. Business education facilitates job competence among Nigerians.
2. **Business Management Skills:** Business Education gives the receivers what would make them better business managers that will promote their business.
3. **Provision of Skill for Financial Management:** Improper keeping of records in business by small and medium scale business operators affect the growth of their businesses and also limit their ability to secure loans from bank. One of the integral aspects of Business Education is accounting education. It is inevitable for the promotion of business success and accounting prudence.

4. Provision of Proper Orientation in Dealing with Business Risks: Risk management is a vital part of every business and the more this area is properly taken care of; the more the business tends to flourish. Businesses involve risks. Hence, Business Education gives the recipient the necessary measures that can lead to the avoidance of risk and the best way to manage risk.
5. Utilization of Proper Marketing Skills: Business Education will lead to the implementation of products that will thrive well in the market. This form of education will lead to the proper acceptability and pricing of a product by giving business operators the necessary skills to make the product available at the right place in the right time as well as using the required techniques to encourage customers to buy the products. Marketing skills is one of the attributes of Business Education, because it assists the implementation of proper marketing skills. These skills are necessary for the entrepreneurs to develop better management techniques necessary to develop their businesses.
6. Provision of necessary guidelines for starting a business: Starting a business involves certain measures which ought to be taken. Business education offers details on all types of business start-up and how they can be advanced to reach their maximum potential. Business Education offers the recipients the necessary information and guidelines for starting a business.
7. Development of Entrepreneurship: Business Education enables the identification of viable business opportunities for entrepreneurs. This will enable them to see opportunities in very critical condition. Business Education enables the growth of entrepreneurship. It will help them to utilize strength, weakness, and opportunity in order to function well as business operators.
8. Developing necessary skills for office occupation: Business Education gives the receiver the necessary skills required to develop a decent office occupation. Office occupation is one of the topics of informal business education and this topic details the scope of office occupation.
9. Giving the necessary background for teaching business studies: Students who want to extend their teaching career in business training will find business education a preparatory tool necessary for them to advance their career. This is necessary before they go for further training.

Challenges Militating against Graduates Acquisition of Skills From Business Education Programme

1. Lack of lecturers with practical vocational training and consciousness. Although lecturers awareness of business education has grown in the last seven years and attitudes towards the new curriculum has become more proactive, majority of lecturers do not know enough the aim, content and work method of business education. Consequently, they may be unable to effectively impart the desired knowledge and business skills in their students.
2. Lack of business education teachers, material and equipment.
3. Poor knowledge based economy and low spirit of composition by the government.
4. Unavailability of relevant fund
5. Poor societal attitude to business education by government and education stakeholder.
6. Poor enterprising culture
7. Inadequate facilities and equipment for teaching and learning in business education
8. Insensitivity of government to job creation and expansion strategy in skill acquisition centres.

9. Poor planning and execution of processes of action. Another notable challenges of Business Education is low public interest. This issue seems to have contributed to limitation faced by Business Education today. Business Education is generally perceived as a form of education for the ungifted and under-privileged child. This situation has made parents and elites to shun this type of education for they erroneously believed that it is meant for the less academically endowed. The low status associated with Business Education has made parents to have strong preference towards white collar career (Gambo cited in Idialu, 2007). Parents and elites prefer their children or wards to study prestigious courses like law, medicine, engineering and pharmacy. Parents are further discouraged by the low quality of Business Education, which seems to be distributed to a number of factors such as inadequate provision of financial, human, as well as material resources. The effect of the above mentioned challenges such as inadequate provision of funds, qualified manpower, modern facilities and quality curriculum, coupled with low public interest, is that skilled and competent graduates may not be produced.

Conclusion

Business Education is a welcome development in Nigerian universities. However, the government directive for its introduction in all the tertiary institutions in the country in one fell swoop without adequate preparations has aggravated the old-age problem of underfunding, dys-functionality and non-intellectualism. Business Education covers all spheres of life activities in any nation; as such it is important to everybody and every nation. It also equips students with necessary skills and knowledge to take active part in business ventures. Business Education has a formidable force that will equip graduates appropriate skills, knowledge, abilities and competence that will enable self-reliance, leading to sustainable economic growth and livelihood. It is expected that knowledge of business education, vocational skills and strategies for fund raising would make life easy for youths to establish small-scale businesses.

Suggestions

From the aforementioned, the following suggestions were made:

1. Business educators should provide graduates with adequate training that would enable them to be creative and innovative in identifying noble business opportunities.
2. Qualified teachers should be recruited by the university authorities to teach Business Education.
3. The state government should make the study of Business Education to be attractive to the students by providing incentives such as scholarship, book grants, and financial rewards to students who distinguished themselves in the study of the course.
4. Business teachers should be properly motivated through good salary packages and allowances to encourage them to work harder.
5. The Federal Ministry of Education should ensure that every educational venture in the country caters for domestic creation of goods and services and consumption through Business Education.
6. Students should be given adequate orientation at all secondary school level by their career counselors to enable the students develop positive attitude towards vocational business education.

7. Enough funds should be budgeted for education and utilized judiciously without diverting it for selfish interest. Adequate funding of business teacher education should be a priority of government and stakeholders.
8. Training, on a regular basis of all lecturers and instructors on Business Education: Lecturers should be recruited, trained and re-trained in the areas of vocational education. They should be sponsored to attend local and international conferences to acquire more knowledge so that they can effectively transfer business skills to the students.
9. The various university managements should contact some non-governmental organizations or banks to give soft loans/grants to business educators to establish and run their own businesses. This will enable them acquire practical experience from their own initiatives for onward transmission to the students.
10. Centre for vocational education should mandatorily be established in every Nigerian university and should constantly organize workshops for the students as well as invite successful businessmen and women to give talk o how to initiate, source for funds, start and run a business successfully.

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