ACCOUNTING/BUSINESS EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS IN NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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Abstract
The art of teaching and learning, and its development and growth in Nigerian state, and the consequential economy and social structure failures are of a great concern. The impartation of real knowledge and fundamentals in Nigeria institutions are rusty from admission process through study and teaching methods to graduation styles. Education should be the business of bread educated men and women who are sufficiently knowledgeable about the science/art, trend and development of their disciplines. This will give us the desired business and financial managers that can take us to the next level. Information Communication Technology (ICT) should be integrated at all levels of study for our graduating students to acquire such knowledge that is quantitative and qualitative to be able to develop economic modes that will grow both public and private businesses.

Proper education is a potent instrument. It is a route for the actualization of economic growth. Education increases the dept of social values and equality in a society by leveling up the various traditional classes and the talent pool available to its society, quality accounting/Business Education will not only eradicate untimely business failures and closures, it will also be the driving wheel for the acquisition of the necessary business attitude, knowledge and skills for social development and growth.

Accountants are the financial managers and as a financial manager they are holding the nerve centre of the organization/business. According to Agbo (2009) to manage in a professional parlance means performing the functions of planning, organizing, directing, co-coordinating and controlling in an organization to facilitate the attainment of the organizational goals.

Several other strategies are applied. Amongst the foremost of these strategies is effective supervision. Hence, effectiveness refers to the extent to which output is in line with the organizational objectives while supervision means to watch and make certain
things are done correctly. Consequently, managing Nigerian educational system may imply, planning, organizing, directing, coordinating and controlling educational activity to achieve the purpose of education one of which is effective national development. In essence, if education is not managed to make its beneficiaries change positively and to effect national development, then it points to failure on the part of our educational managers. It is either they have failed to utilize the functions and strategies, or that they applied them wrongly or they did not acquire the necessary knowledge.

Business education where it is properly programmed and delivered is expected prepare institutions and their managers to not only effectively accommodate the induced shocks but more fundamentally to be proactive in anticipating. Globalization can be characterized by its influence in three main domains of human enterprise, information and communication technology, trade and labor market. Globalization is associated with Information and communication technology.

This paper, therefore, focused on the following issues.

- What is Accounting/Business education?
- Business Education curriculum at the National Certificate for education (NCE) level
- The Role of Accounting/Business education
- Constraints and challenges facing Accounting/Business in Nigeria today and the way forward.

What is Accounting/Business education? Accounting as a service activity has been defined severally by different people; Douglas Garbutt (1976) defines Accounting as a discipline concerned with the recording, analysis and forecasting of income and wealth of business and other entities. The author defined Accounting as a process of measuring, recording, classifying, summarizing and communicating financial information that is used in making economic decision to interested persons or parties while business education is basically, education for skill acquisition, vocation and competency. It has also been defined by Ayodele (2002) as a component of vocational education in our educational programme—which involves the acquisition of skills, knowledge and competencies, which make the recipient or beneficiary proficient. Business education as Kolawole and Elemure (2007) put it is the type of education that comprises activities that are aimed at planning, teaching, inculcating and developing through a variety of experiences that will provide and improve that individual with the ability of influencing his environment and enhancing his living through a vocation that will boost self reliance. It is means of holding an initial job to earn a living. Also Aina (2002) stated that business education encompasses knowledge, attitudes, skills and competencies needed by all citizens in order to effectively manage their personal business, as well as their economic situation to ensure continuous earning of reasonable income.
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The foregoing shows, that business education covers a wide range of spectrum and specialized areas of economic life activities in any society. This includes accountancy, marketing and skills in formation and communication technology. It also refers to the pedagogical and desirable business competencies necessary for self employment or being employable with a view to make the recipient self-reliant. Business education can also be appropriate training given to an individual to ensure full employment for him even in our present decreed economy. Forms the above Duru (2002) confirmed that the goal of business education has always been to give general education and equip the citizens with the necessary skills, that will enable them obtain gainful employment and become effective citizens.

Business Education Curriculum at the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) Level.

At NCE level of education, the national Commission for Colleges of Education provides the following programmes for individuals seeking to study Business Education:

- **Secretarial Option:** This option is usually taken by those wishing to be secretaries at the final year. Courses offered here include: shorthand, Typewriting, word processing and computer application. They render services of documentation, browsing, photocopying, email, lamination etc.

- **Buying and Selling (Marketing):** This aspect of business education is designed for graduates who will engage in buying and selling of items like books, shoes, stationary, office equipment etc. This can be by applying skills learnt in the course of study. Courses offered here include: Business communication, marketing management, computer application, principles of management etc.

- **Book-keeping and Auditing (Accountancy):** This programme provides for students of Business Education (Accountancy option) who can take up book-keeping and auditing services and open up office where they do it. They can also be auditors to business outfits or be employed by private or government organizations. Courses offered include: Taxation, Auditing, financial Accounting, Principles of management and computer application.

- **Education:** Students of business education are made to undergo through educational courses through three era programme for the award of N.C.E. here. Effective keyboard skills acquisition for cognitive affective and psychomotor domains are the in-thing here. Professionals and graduates from other fields are often desirous of acquiring secretarial skills like keyboard and information technology and data processing. Business education graduates of nowadays establish training centers where these skills are inculcated into other persons. They also form the majority of the labour force in the teaching profession.
The Role of Accounting/Business Education

The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in section 16 (1) (3) of chapter 11 fundamentally provides for the role of business education in the economy as follows:

- It is a tool for harnessing the resources of the national and promoting national prosperity and an efficient, dynamic and self-reliant economy.
- It is a tool for controlling the national economy in such a manner as to secure maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity.
- It is a tool for managing and operating the major sectors of the economy.

Objectives of Accounting/Business Education

- To make judicious, socio-economic decisions as citizens
- To provide career information that helps students relate their interests need and abilities to occupational opportunities in business.
- To provide educational opportunities for students preparing for careers in fields other than business to acquire knowledge and skills needed to function effectively in these careers, for example to handle effectively both oral and written communications and to develop effectively interpersonal and human relation skills.
- To provide skills needed to compete effectively in this challenging global competitiveness.

Challenges Facing Accounting/Business Education in Nigeria

The education sector as a whole in Nigeria has suffered unquantifiable amount of decay over the years and business education as a component cannot be exonerated from this deficit, its laudable objective mentioned above notwithstanding. Of all various factors that have been fingered as the reason for the whittling down of the quality of education provision in Nigeria, the one that has remained consistent is official corruption resulting form indecent governance practices. This corruption induced mismanaging of the public resources has dealt with education in particular.

The following constraints and challenges have seriously affected effectiveness in Accounting/Business Education

- Inadequate Curriculum

The truth of the matter is that due to a multiplicity of militating factors, the curricular deployed to provide business education and training in the tertiary education institutions in today’s Nigeria can be anything but adequate. They are, in specific mention, deficient in producing the type of man power required for placing Nigeria in the league of the 20 most advanced economies in year 2020.

Ideally, Accounting/business school with the right complement of inputs should be capable of developing graduates who are ready upon landing to not imagine the very essence of business.
Oral and Written Communication
Problem-solving skills
Quantitative reasoning
Information literacy
Information and communications technology competency.
Interpersonal skills (Such as ability to work in steams).
Entrepreneurial skills and Appreciation of ethical consequences of personal actions. In programming for the future, it is most imperative to domesticate or reflect the peculiarities of the environment.

Lack of Qualified Teachers: To say that all the business facilities in the secondary and tertiary institutions in Nigeria currently experience an acute shortage of qualified instructors and lecturers cannot be an over statement. In any case, the result of periodic accreditation exercise conducted by National University Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) are for everyone to see business educators are not there.

Inadequate Funding: Over the past three decades, Nigeria has witnessed a sharp growth in the number of universities, polytechnics, and colleges of Education without a complementary increase in quality and high standard provision. Put in a simple language, the quality of education offered in these institutions have continued to drop. Although, several factors have been summoned to account for this drop in quality, inadequate funding appears to be the main culprit.

Inadequate Research and Teaching Facilities: Most public business schools in Nigerian tertiary education institutions today record a poor state of equipment, facilities and materials (e.g. text books, journals, ere sources etc) that are core input unto research and teaching processes. These facilities, where they exist at all, are either obsolete, grossly inadequate, and in a state of disrepair. Furthermore, the Nigerian environment as a whole is most un conducive for research enterprise in all its ramifications. For example, while the researcher is often left on his own due to lack of business financial support for research, the required data which are hardly available cannot be easily accessed even in the quantity they exist. Furthermore, the navigation through the hazardous transportation system require to acquire needed research data can be both a night mare put off the researcher.

Inconsistency in Education Policy: Education in today’s Nigeria can be characterized simply as inconsistent as it is incoherent. Beyond the done of inconsistency that obtains at both the primary and secondary provision layers, the musical chair that is the signature of the tertiary echelon can be anything but laughable more especially in the field of business education. The colleges of education system today are at cross roads or in a state of flux.
All these inconsistencies, incoherencies and ambiguities tend in a large measure, to undermine provision in general and business education in particular in the country. When these dramas are viewed in the proper context of the speed of globalization and our need to catch up in year 2020, one cannot but come to the conclusion that since we have lamed ourselves via the shot in the foot by the nature of our education policy, our dream to make the league table in year 2010 may remain no more than a pipe one.

- **Miss interpretation of What Accounting/ Business Education is All About:**
  
  Business education which is as vast as could be thought of has been interpreted to mean shorthand and typewriting bias only. This is just an aspect of business education which comprises business education (Education for business). The business education aspect of education has been so neglected. This area comprise of those aspect of business which empowers the graduates to be self reliant. Such as marketing and accounting. The area of Management which the student offers from NCE to their Bachelor of science (B.Sc) degree in business education has not yet been recognized by few who do not understand the gritty of business education. What are we saying? That master’s degree in business management is not a relevant skill in the teaching and of business education. Do we now remove management courses from NCE and Degree Syllabuses? This argument that the meaning of business Management is still a mirage to so many. The issue is what skill has holders of other skills in Business Education to manage themselves, their offices, environment and the business where started. One can then easily say that the head is not part of the body. If the statement is wrong, then one can emphatically say that management is an integral part and parcel of Business Education that is Education about Business as well as Accountancy, Taxation, Finance, Economics, Auditing etc.

**The Way Forward**

For Nigeria to able to comfortably surf on the crest of turbulent waves of globalization, all business schools in the country must open up their curricular to take on board these new realities as identified in the preceding ones. The emphasis may not be misplaced if one insists that all these skill areas be infused in business education curriculum for effective harvest. Furthermore, an additional case has to be made for the overarching role of I.C.T. and entrepreneurial development. In this regard, it seems to me that there is hardly any better context for the adage that it is always better to catch them young than when the need is recognized to start entrepreneurial development and training skills right at the secondary school level.

- There should be credible staff training programmes adequately funded and aimed at fast tracking the production of such badly needed manpower for accounting/business educators both home and abroad.

- The door out of this quagmire of inadequate funding appears to consist of the need for the governing boards or councils of these institutions to adapt radical strategies in fund raising without standard and restraining access. A strategic approach which deploys effectively the concept of cost sharing in
education provision is one of such ideas. Considering that government has now decided its inability to go it alone, the hands of all stakeholders must be brought to the deck in the sharing scheme. Student organizations including those of the alumni should partner with the school management in addressing the financial question. The idea that education provision requires heavy capital outlay but a worthwhile investment all the same is yet to sink in us in this country. The adage that he whosoever wants omelets must be able and break some eggs is as apt here as ever.

- The problem of inadequate research and teaching facilities requires policy targeting for its credible solution. The first cut is the need for general awareness that knowledge is not only a source of enormous power and wisdom but more fundamentally it accords economies competitive advantage in the comity of nations. Research is the only known vehicle for creating this knowledge and understanding and government as well as individuals, as a matter of priority, should heavily invest in it. In this regard, it may not constitute an overkill to reiterate that sheer numerical strength in population size that has not been properly developed into intellectual capital has no serious place in our current knowledge driven world. This explains why economies with small populations but use intellectual capital base e.g. Korea, etc easily out-perform their counterparts with huge but raw, that is (unprocessed) materials, e.g Nigeria. This is an incontrovertible demographic fact.

- In view of the need to fight the economic crisis, Accounting/business education courses should be such that their recipients will have the correct attitude towards life. This means that they should fully exploit the opportunities the course offers to the full in order to be self-reliant.

- Fraud can be reduced through sound accounting/business education programme. This means that the graduates of Accounting/business education who will eventually become employees in the banks or else where should uphold the philosophy that good name is better than unmerited wealth.

- Sound knowledge of business education can also help bankers to know that the problem of liquidity for instance can be prevented by financing permanent assets funds.

- Experts are gotten only from specifics. At this specialized level whether management, marketing, Computer an other subject areas (core courses) should be treated as part and parcel of Accounting/Business Education. People should be encouraged and not be discouraged to grow in their academic careers.
Conclusion

Understandably, the hope for vision 2020 and future of Nigeria is hinged on her education system. Therefore, education should be taken more seriously through the provision of quality teachers at all levels. To restore Nigeria’s education system from her now lost, and past glory, all the stakeholders (the government, the teacher, the parents, the church and the society) must play their part, but the government must have to set the ball rolling and monitor its roll. Most importantly, Nigeria should be seen by all as our own native land in which all shall stand in brotherhood and always, though tribe and tongue may differ. National integration through equitable share of resources and power (political positions) shall be actively encouraged, whilst discrimination on the ground of place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic or linguistic associations and ties must be prohibited, not just on paper but in practice. When there is food on the table of everybody, there will be peace, progress, education standard and subsequently the entire Nigerian economy will be revived, rejuvenated and reinvigorated. Our fate is in our hands. Let’s work towards producing quality students and graduates alike to achieve vision 2020 in Nigeria.

References


