

RE-ENGINEERING BUSINESS EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYMENT AND SELF PRODUCTIVITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

It is no longer time for stakeholders involved in the development of Business Education to join the “band wagon” in condemning the programme. Frantic effort is needed to ensure its success and reduce the problem of unemployment challenges currently experienced in the country. A step towards this would be to re-engineer Business Education which this paper sought for. The paper saw re-engineering business education as a search into the past and present in order to shape the future. Therefore, the paper x-rayed the concept of re-engineering, historical development, concept and philosophies, prospects and challenges and, specific areas of re-engineering in Business Education. It was concluded that drastic steps to radically change the poor situation faced by Business Education programme such as low quality teaching and learning, lack of qualified business educators, poor infrastructure among others, should be taken to boost employment and self productivity in Nigeria.

A retrospective evaluation of Business Education programme in Nigeria especially at the tertiary level of our educational system is necessary now than ever to meet the employment challenges in the country. This process of evaluating Business Education programme involve re-engineering the programme to boost employment and self productivity.

The word re-engineering has to do with modification of existing systems, processes, organisations or products in order to make them more effective, efficient and responsive. Re-engineering involves providing products and services of demonstrable value to customers. Re-engineering Business Education would therefore, be taken to mean the modification of Business Education programmes which would involve restructuring, introduction of innovative practices for improvement. Therefore, this paper examines the development of Business Education, prospects and challenges of Business Education; and areas that need re-engineering.

Business Education is a programme of study offered in Nigerian tertiary institutions. At the Junior Secondary School level, it is offered as Business Studies which has five components namely: Shorthand, Typewriting, Office Practice, Bookkeeping and Commerce. At the senior secondary school level, Business subjects such as Financial Accounting, Commerce, Computer, Office Management, Shorthand and Typewriting. Osuala (2004) observed that Business Education has its roots in the American apprenticeship system of ancient times where learning was done under a master craftman whereby the apprentice would work with his master until he acquires the skill in the particular line of training offered. Business Education includes education for office occupations, distributions and marketing occupations, business teachings, business administration and economic understandings. It performs the following additional roles: educates individuals for and about business; provides a continuous programmes of planned learning experiences designed to equip individuals to fulfill effectively such roles as producing and distributing goods and services as workers; making judicious socio-economic decisions as citizens. It provides career information that helps students relate their interest, needs and abilities to occupational opportunity in business; provides educational opportunities for students preparing for careers in fields other than business to acquire knowledge and skills needed to function effectively in those careers.

Historical Development of Business Education

Generally, Business Education has its cradle from the American apprenticeship system of the ancient times. Here, the young ones worked with his master until he acquired the skill to mold the chalice, to shape the wheel, or to cast the accounts. Learning under a master craftman was the privilege of some. Education for most in those times took place in the home, at a master's side. In the colonial America, the

apprenticeship continued to be the method by which crafts, trades, and other job skills were learned throughout the colonies (Osuala, 2004).

In 1827, Massachusetts legislature passed a law requiring every community of five hundred or more families to establish a high school, of which “certain specified subjects, including book-keeping, had to be offered” in each high school. The inclusion of book-keeping in the curriculum of modern comprehensive high school marked a period of re-engineering in Business Education whereby the former Apprenticeship system was modified, hence Wanous (1975:55) in his Business Education chronology points out, “when Business Education blazed the trail to an enlarged secondary programme of studies, the door was opened to other vocational arts curricula”. Later, the private commercial colleges were established. This was another period in re-engineering Business Education which brought about improvement. This brief history of Business Education in the American perspective shows that at different stages of its development, re-engineering was involved. For instance, the apprenticeship system was completely modified to the formal school system. Again, private commercial schools involvement was another period of re-engineering and later, Business Education was introduced into tertiary education level. Re-engineering of Business Education programmes in schools has remained an important vehicle for ensuring the production of professionals for employment need of the society and self productivity. American had long attained economic development, employment and self productivity because of her investment in Vocational Education of which Business Education is included.

Development of Business Education in Nigeria

Like the American Apprenticeship System of ancient times, in Nigeria, Business Education as an aspect of Vocational Education is as old as man’s existence on earth. In the early days, vocational training was given to the younger ones at home, relevant to the needs of the family. With the advent of European explorers, missionaries and colonial masters western education was introduced. Osuala (2004) expounded that in its early days, Nigeria Secondary Grammar Schools provided necessary skill training for graduates to enter into highly rewarding white-collar jobs. As economic activities later become more differentiated new and distinct occupations emerged. The need then arose for people with practical skills to be employed into government, industrial and commercial establishments. Osuala further noted that in Nigeria, private indigenous proprietors introduced Business Education. The first private business school was established in 1936 in Eastern Nigeria at Onitsha.

“A search for a means of providing the youths with the educational experience which can equip them with saleable skills and competencies for gainful employment and self reliance is the main goal of the 6-3-3-4 system of education introduced in Nigeria” (Osuala 2004:36). This was a remarkable milestone in re-engineering Business Education. It was hoped that youths who may not proceed to the Senior Secondary

School (SSS) can leave the school with the necessary prevocational skills that will enable them to be useful to themselves and to the community in which they live, hence Business Studies was introduced to provide JSS students with basic prevocational skills necessary for self reliance.

Re-Engineering: What It Is

Re-engineering is defined as the application of technology and management science to the modification of existing systems, organisations, processes, and products in order to make them more effective, efficient, and responsive. The re-engineering can be systems management, process, product, or some combination.

Systems-management reengineering involves the examination, study, capture, and modification of the internal mechanisms or functionality of existing system-management processes and practices in an organisation in order to reconstitute them in a new form and with new features, often to take advantage of newly emerged organisation competitiveness requirements, but without changing the inherent purpose of the organisation itself. Process reengineering is the examination, study capture, and modification of the internal mechanisms or functionality of an existing process or systems-engineering life cycle, in order to reconstitute it in a new form and with new functional and non functional features. Often to take advantage of newly emerged or desired organisational or technological capabilities, but without changing the inherent purpose of the process that is being reengineered. Product reengineering could mean some sort of reworking of an already engineered product, and could be interpreted as maintenance or refurbishment. In order to successfully achieve this goal, an internal reengineering team should be formed. Reengineering is seen as a management tool.

Re-engineering can therefore be applied in Business Education. Like the systems – management, process and product re-engineering described above, Business Education programme can be modified (re-engineered) in the following ways:

- a. Re-engineering through the introduction of relevant courses in computer packages to enhance students proficiency in computer in line with global standards. At the moment, most schools do not have adequate computers to facilitate the learning of practical skills.
- b. Re-engineering through the application of uniform curricula in schools since graduate of one school could be employed to teach in another school.
- c. Refurbishing of dilapidated infrastructures and other facilities and to ensure that modern facilities are put in place.
- d. Allocation of adequate resources for Business Education programme.
- e. Giving Business Education students and the general public adequate orientation to eradicate the poor public perception that the programme is for dropouts.

Prospects and Challenges of Business Education

Prospects:

Business Education has been noted by many as having contributed to the development of Nigeria. For instance, Oriazowanlan and Iyekekpolo (2009) remarked that Business Education has produced skilled manpower for the employment need of a globalised economy. They added that qualitative education is essential for life transformation of the citizenry of any country. This transformation can only be achieved through competent man-power development and Business Education is a good platform for such transformation. Business Education is vital in the programme of service delivery for economic vision of 2020 in Nigeria.

- (1) Business Education offers to every individual an opportunity to develop those skills, abilities, and understandings that will enable him to handle competently his personal business affairs; to develop an understanding of the vocational opportunities available in the broad field of business and to assume his citizenship responsibilities through enlightened participation in an understanding and appreciation of the enterprise system.
- (2) It offers to the student who wishes to pursue a career in business those skills, abilities, and understandings that will enable him to enter, perform, and progress in a business occupation after graduation and it provides him with the occupational intelligence to enable him to fit into and find job satisfaction in the labour force of our complex and dynamic economy. This philosophy could be restated as objectives and shown graphically as shown in figure1.

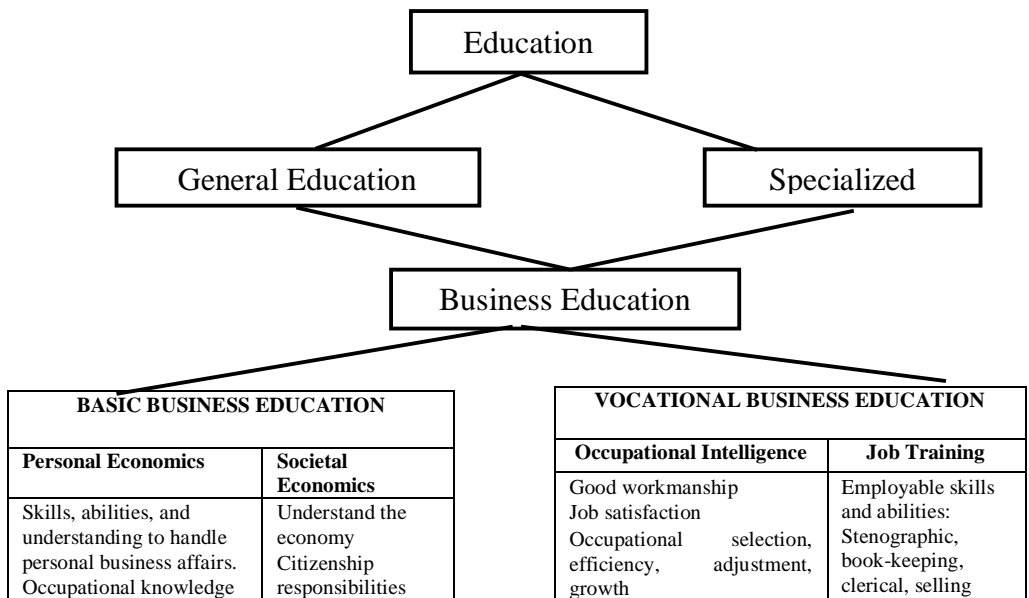


Figure 1: Graphical illustration of the philosophy of Business Education
Source: Daughtrey, (1965). *Methods of Basic Business and Economic Education*
Cincinnati, Ohio: South Western Publishing co.

Business Education helps in manpower development of any nation. It provides career guidance to students to increase their awareness of varied job opportunities and changing requirement for career entry and achievement. Business subjects such as Book-keeping, Accounting, Shorthand, Typewriting, Office Practice, Record Keeping, Computer Appreciation, ICT, Entrepreneurship, etc equip students with the general business knowledge. General business knowledge is fundamentally education for the development of economic understanding and as such, general business knowledge is very essential for every Nigerian citizen (Osuala, 2004).

Every institution has its philosophies guiding Business Education programme. These philosophies are largely rooted in the five main objectives of Nigeria as contained in the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004) which spelt out the aspiration of Nigerians for: a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united, strong and self-reliance nation; a great and dynamic economy; a land of bright opportunities for all citizens. Business Education programme in the University of Calabar for instance, is geared towards the production of high and respected professionals in the teaching, accounting, management, marketing and secretarial studies (ICT) in sufficient quality and quantity for secondary and tertiary institutions, and other business establishments in Nigeria.

The programme is also designed to help students acquire necessary analytical functional skills and knowledge in Business Education and in general business to equip them to be able to influence the development of a virile national economy. The objectives of Business Education Programme in University of Uyo include: to assist the State and Federal Government in producing a new breed of Business Education teachers for the Junior and Senior Sections of Nigeria Secondary Schools; develop high level manpower for leadership roles in the administration of Business Education programs in the Nigerian schools; equip the student-teacher with both general and specialized knowledge, understanding and skill in office occupations and distributive education; among others (Okon, 2011). From the above objectives, it could be seen that the aims of Business Education programme is to prepare graduates for gainful employment, self reliance and productivity. Therefore, Business Education offers opportunities for careers in office occupations, accounting fields, teaching and self employment.

Challenges

There are many challenges facing the implementation of Business Education programme. The researchers have grouped the challenges at all levels of education thus: administrative factors; problem of professionalism; evaluational factors; governmental factors; poor societal perception; quantity and quality of teachers and challenges of curriculum.

Administrative Factors

Nolan (1967), quoted in Ikpe (2000) noted that administrative and supervisory functions in Business Education include: assisting in examining and revising curriculum and courses of studies; holding conferences and meetings in matters affecting Business Education; organizing and conducting in-service workshops, seminars and staff development programmes; keeping business teachers up-to-date on significant legislation affecting Business Education; interviewing and selecting qualified business teachers; recommending and assisting in obtaining needed facilities supplies and equipment; attending local, state and national professional meetings and conventions. Available records in two universities visited showed that until recently, the administration of Business Education has always been in the hands of non-professionals.

Ikpe (2000) observed that funds allocated to all phases of vocational education is often merged and placed under the head of department. With this funds given to the head of department, it is easy for such person to concentrate development in his area of specialisation. He suggested that allocation of financial resources should be clearly indicated to reflect a particular phase of vocational education.

Challenges of Qualification and Professionalism

Business Education lack qualified and professional manpower to teach business subjects. Some Business Education administrators are also non-professionals. Being non-professionals, there is little or nothing the administrator could do to re-engineer Business Education for improvement. The recognised and registrable business teachers qualifications in Nigeria include the following: NCE, B.Ed, or B.Sc. Ed., M.Ed., M.Sc. Ed., Ph.D. in Business Education; a degree in business related discipline in addition to minimum teachers qualification of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) or Postgraduate Diploma in Technical Education (PGDTE) or Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) is also accepted (Ikpe 2000).

Challenges of Programme Evaluation

Evaluation is one important concept in Business Education that should not be over emphasized. Akpan (1999), quoted Olaitan (1976) who stated that “evaluation is the process of examining critically the implementation of an existing programme or curriculum in relation to the desired inputs, processes, or outputs thereby discovering the degree of achievement, accountability and discrepancies through the analysis of the data, thus providing information on achievement and making suggestions of alternatives in the form of recommendations to policy and decision maker’s for the improvement of the curriculum”.

Problems of Business Education evaluation according to the author include lack of criteria; poor knowledge about decision making; lack of competent personnel. Due to lack of evaluation of the programme innovative ideas are hardly introduced. Also, lack of evaluation hinders competitiveness with global standard.

Governmental Factors

For a long time, a lot has been said and written by scholars during seminars, workshop, conferences on the need for government to put in place policies and programmes that will promote Business Education. Such important suggestions are never considered by the government. For instance, FGN (2006) suggested that Vocational Education should be a vehicle for training youths to equip them with saleable skills which could make them self reliance as a means of ending the civil unrest which is posing a serious threat to the nation. That recommendation is yet to be implemented. Consequently, six (6) years later, the nation is engulfed with security challenges that is almost out of control. This ugly situation could have been averted if vocational education is well positioned for such role. This is why re-engineering of the programme is necessary.

Poor Societal Perception

In Nigeria, many people are yet to understand the meaning, scope and content of Business Education. Some view it as education for the handicapped or education of those who cannot cope with the sciences. Some even view it as a programme for dropouts. Most Business Education students are second choice applicants. They look at Business Education as last resort when they are unable to secure admission in their first choice of course.

Quantity and Quality of Teachers

By far, the most serious factors eroding quality in the educational system generally and Business Education in particular is the quantity and quality of the teachers. This has been a perennial problem. Meanwhile, it is generally said that no nation can live above the quality of her educational system. The teacher is in a strategic position to influence the quality of education. Ijaiya (2004) posited that teachers are

considered as the most important factor in student learning, a bridge between students and quality. Their deficiencies either in knowledge, pedagogical skills or motivation spells doom for the system. With re-engineering of the programme especially in the area of quality and quantity of teachers professionals in the system could be trained through in-service programme.

Re-Engineering Business Education

(1) **Re-engineering Business Education to Meet the Needs of Students:** There is an urgent need to reengineer Business Education to become responsive to the need of all potential students. Effective use of tests can help to identify Business Education students who need to be assisted in their studies. Used wisely, “tests are clinical and diagnostic instruments that give students timely and meaningful help and avoid more serious problems later in life” (Reeves, 2001: 15). The emphasis is on using test results to provide remedial help for such students before they get frustrated.

Ijaiya (2004) averred that accountability should not only be left into the hands students. Accountability here refers to activities required to enhance effective implementation of Business Education programme. Those who should also account are teachers, school heads, parents and government in various ways. For example, teachers can account by losing some of their free time to providing remedial assistance to needy students. Parents should spare time to come to school for information on their children and spend more money to buy additional books. Government should be ready to spend more money on Education so that a good proportion can be allocated to the improvement of Business Education programme. If there is a policy on academic standards and tests, wastage will be reduced thereby, reducing government expenditure. A policy on students improvement programme should be enhanced. There should be genuine remedial help for needy students based on correct assessment of their performances. When students acquire adequate skills, they would secure employment and increase productivity in their chosen career.

(2) **Re-engineering Business Education to Ensure Quality:** In today’s educational system, quality that makes sense is one based on student outcomes. That is what students actually learn in their programmes and what they can do with the skills and knowledge they gain (Gutierrez, 2004). In re-engineering Business Education, the increase in the number of graduates should correspond with the quality need whereby the graduates are well equipped with practical skills. In other words, neither students nor our society will be well served if we increase the number of Business Education graduates without ensuring their degrees and credentials have real value which could manifest in their occupational or personal lives in the society.

(3) **Re-engineering Business Education through Productivity Push:** This means that institutions offering Business Education must apply mechanisms and adapt systems which could graduate many more students, without increasing cost and without

compromising the quality of their education. This means that institutions must be flexible and innovative in serving their students. They must work with partners – in the community at the level of policy formulation, in philanthropy and within the institution. To achieve this, Gutierrez (2004) suggested the following steps known as “four steps to finishing first”.

- One step is to adopt some form of performance funding or outcomes-based funding – that is, rewarding institutions, not for the number of students they enroll, but for how many of those students have graduated with good level of competency both in theory and practice. Again, measures of learning will need to be key to these outcomes-based efforts over the long term.
- The second step is to provide students incentives. The idea here is to use tuition and financial aid policies strategically in a way that rewards students for completing Business Education courses and programmes on time.
- A third step is “new models” – in other words, finding new, lower-cost approaches to deliver high quality instruction to students.
- Finally, the fourth step is to incorporate teaching efficiency through modern methods, appropriate use of teaching resources and teaching evaluation.

(4) **Re-engineering Business Education through Establishment of Infrastructures, Provision of Teaching/Learning Facilities:** Adequate provision of infrastructural facilities such as lecture rooms, offices, recreation centres, laboratories and simulation rooms will guarantee greater and better outputs and subsequently economic development. Mgbekem (2005) noted that facilities usage by staff and students to do their academic activities bring about academic gains leading to the maintenance of academic excellence and acquisition of employable skills.

(5) **Re-engineering Business Education through Contents Re-Structuring and Effective Implementation of Curriculum:** The curriculum of Business Education should be re-organized in line with global demands and best practices. ICT, entrepreneurship, etc are new dimensions which must be included in the curriculum.

Summary

This study, “re-engineering Business Education in Nigeria” has been discussed under the following sub-headings. Introduction, historical development of Business Education, concept of re-engineering, challenges facing Business Education programme, prospects in Business Education and areas of re-engineering in Business Education. Re-engineering was seen as having to do with modification.

The study also assessed the development of Business Education which was traced to the apprenticeship system. The slow pace of development of Business Education programme especially in the colonial days created challenges that are still lingering in the educational system. Some of these challenges include quantity versus quality question, dearth paucity of qualified business educators, among others. The

researcher equally examined the prospects in Business Education. Specific ways of re-engineering Business Education were highlighted which include re-engineering administration in Business Education, re-engineering infrastructures and instructional facilities, etc.

Conclusion

Re-engineering Business Education is needed because of the need for it to stay competitive in today's occupational demand and self reliance. The need to reduce educational cost with enhanced quality, high productivity in Business Education can be possible with re-engineering. Therefore, drastic steps to radically bring about positive change in institutions offering Business Education in areas like staffing, ICT, infrastructure, instructional strategy, evaluation techniques, admission procedure must be taken through re-engineering.

Recommendation

In teaching Business Education, emphasis should be placed on special method of teaching that would facilitate skill acquisition. The curriculum of Business Education should consist of; general education component, general business subjects components; secretarial component; marketing and distributive subjects component; professional education component and accounting; teaching practice and industrial work experience.

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