

BUSINESS EDUCATION: AN IMPERATIVE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CREATIVE SKILLS IN STUDENTS FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Over the years the administrators of Nigerian educational system have placed emphasis on the practicability of the system in terms of knowledge, competencies, skills and abilities given to recipients irrespective of the disciplines, in this wise, business education play prominent role in exposing its students to the practical aspect of its course content. Practical skill acquisition course like those in business education provide a rich platform for the development and advancement of critical thinking, imaginative and innovative faculties of students such that their abilities to acquire learning experiences can greatly be enhanced through flexible learning environment where they are made to think out of the box and come up with ideas/knowledge relevant to meet the economic, social, educational and environmental needs of their community/environment. Based on this, the study examines the place of business education in developing student's creative skills that will enable them contribute to the nation's developmental processes. Also, strategies for acquiring creative skills necessary for self-reliance and sustainable national development were examined. It concludes that achieving sustainable national development lies in the hands of skilled manpower capable of driving the economy to an enviable height.

Keywords: Creative education, business education, sustainable development

Sustainable national development is a yardstick which indicates the developmental level of an economy. The ability of a system to meet the needs of its citizens in a way that will not temper or destroy the resources (human and material) in the environment; in other words, the survival of both elements is dependent on healthy environment capable of stimulating varieties of opening for growth in economic, financial, social, educational, political and cultural life of the people which will impact positively on overall development of the nation. In line with this view, Munasinghe in Oroka (2018) is of the opinion that sustainable national development is a process of improving the range of opportunities that will enable individual humans and communities to achieve their aspirations and full potential over a sustained period of time while maintaining the resilience of economic, social and environmental systems.

The development and sustainability of an economy is a function of creative minds that are products of a creative educational system. Sustainable national development relative to creative education demands the educational system and indeed the process of instruction delivery should be learners centred rather than teacher centred which challenge the creative prowess of students such that they are able to come out with novel ideas and method of doing things which will translate to change in the system. Crossadale (2019) is of the opinion that an economy is said to be experiencing sustainability in terms of growth, development and advancement when there is poverty reduction, improved living standard, good governance, reduced depletion of natural resources, social vices, quality education, transparent and acceptable business practices as well as zero tolerance for corruption. Similarly, Ekundayo 2015, Udoh and Akapn 2015 in Ojeje (2018) reiterated that a country is said to achieve national development when there is rapid growth in the income of the population as a result of increasing economic activities cumulating into abundance of employment opportunities for citizens; poverty alleviation due to improved income earning of poor class, access to quality health care services, education, transportation, drinkable water as well as a political system that permits participation of all classes of citizens. Among the various indices mentioned above, poverty and unemployment has become a serious epidemic ravaging majority of Nigerian populace in spite of abundance of natural resources which generate considerable revenue, it is still tagged one of the poorest nation in the world. It is believed that the current social investment programme of President Mohammed Buhari administration to provide 100 million jobs to the poorest of the poor, Nigerians will have a sigh of relief from poverty and unemployment. Business education for sustainable national development is on building skilled manpower needed for economic transformation and according to Ebong in Boyi (2013) for any country to attain sustainable national development, it needs skilled manpower ingredients for national development. The aim of this paper is to examine the place of business education in developing students' creative skills that will enable them contribute to the nation's developmental processes.

Theoretical Framework

This research work is anchored on the theory of Discovery learning postulated by Jerome Bruner in 1960s who believed the best way to learn and acquire knowledge or skill useful for problem solving is through self-discovery, that is learning by 'doing' or 'practice'.when students proffer solution to learning task by themselves through interacting, examining and manipulating objects, situation, struggle with query and argument or performing experiments (Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia). It emphasizes the use of intuition, imagination and creativity in getting solution to problem. It also holds that knowledge is not transfer but conceived. Concrete learning takes place when learners (students) construct knowledge by themselves. From the angle of self-construction of knowledge Giambattista Vico in Ojeaga and Orunuahe (2011) posited human can only clearly understand what they have themselves constructed. Hoover (1996) raised two issues in self-constructed knowledge – first learners construct new

knowledge based on prior knowledge considered as strong influence in acquiring new learning outcome, secondly, learning is active and not passive. This implies when the learning situation is more challenging, learners are motivated to tackle the given task independently which is suitable for building creativity skills. Discovery theory basically is built on the premise that learners (business education students) have the intellectual capabilities to organize and form expected knowledge through an enable learning environment created by teachers(lecturers). Bruner (1966) in McLeod (2019) advanced three modes through which learners problem solving skills for the formation of new knowledge could be built. (1) Enactive mode – here thinking skills are developed by interacting with physical material objects in the environment. i.e learning occurred by doing (2) Iconic mode – knowledge can easily be developed and acquired when symbols, pictures, images etc. are used in the presentation of subject matter (3) Symbolic mode – at this stage acquired knowledge are stored in a symbolic form to represent concepts. The import of this theory in this write up lies in the fact that business education as a programme of study offers students avenue in the development of creative abilities by exposing them to practical aspect of its course content, in other words, the use of machines, equipment, tools, objects, diagrams, pictures and other electronic system together with verbal explanation from lecturers/instructors facilitate self-learning environment where students can gather information, organize, sort, classify, analyse, manipulate and manoeuvre learning task to develop new skills or knowledge. Pappas (2016) gave the following tips as key principles in achieving discovery learning

- Curriculum content should focus on the development problem solving skills
- Every aspect of the subject matter should show how learners interact and perceives the world so as to fashion out new ideas.
- Core curriculum should be on skill mastery which enable learners master more useful and powerful skills.
- Course design should make room for learners to organize concepts and expand their knowledge base through self-exploration.
- Teachers should take into consideration the place of culture which shape belief and value system of learners and how they perceive themselves and the world around them.

Creative Education and Sustainable National Development

Prior to the technology age, then Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was a major yardstick used in measuring the wellbeing and level of development of an economy; but in this era of technological advancement the development level of an economy encompasses all strata that makes for growth, development and sustenance of both major and minor indices of the economy. Presently, there is public cry for creative education that will bring out and develop creative skills potentials of learners, redirect knowledge acquisition from mere theoretical approach where learners are meant to memorize and reproduce same content of instruction as given to critical thinking which involve practical demonstration of knowledge – discovering of ideas, finding solution to

problems thus putting in place structure dominated by creative minds capable of building a society that can provide and preserve resources both for present and future generation. Creative education result in the identification and development of abilities, competencies, skills and behaviours necessary for quality manpower development for transformed economy. Nkom in Obafemi (2015) is of the view that development that puts in place a better society for all should include among other things “improvement in peoples’ capacity to understand and tap resources of their environment for their good and the good of humanity, as well as a society where creativity, productivity and popular participation are enhanced”.

The capacity to tap environmental and economic resources efficiently lies in the teaching-learning process; in the sense that learning should be tailored towards inculcating in learners the ability to think, produce innovative ideas capable of solving problems especially issues relating to individual and economic advancement. Oroka (2018) opined that creative education is based on individual needs and abilities. The ability of students to use imagination and critical thinking to create new and meaningful forms of ideas where they can take risks, be independent and flexible is said to be creative education (Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia). Creative education involves a balance between teaching knowledge and skills, and encouraging innovation (Radovic-Markovic, 2016). In line with this assertion, John (2017), sees creative learning as “the process of acquiring knowledge and abilities using creative processes – that is creating theories, tests, stories, solution, analysis and designs as opposed to simply trying to memorize information”. It is base for national development- the focus is on building the imaginative and skilful minds of learners to produce novel ideas through self-discovery and exploration. In addition, it stimulates cognitive domain enabling a varieties of approach in tackling problems which pave path for originality in idea generation, promote full involvement of students in the teaching-learning process, deeper comprehension of concepts which increases interest, achievement, performance and collaboration.

Creative education relative to sustainable national development is on the provision of structures to meet the basic human needs, massive employment generation of youth, bridging the dichotomy between upper class and lower class, improvement in climatic condition, income capital, foreign reserve, as well as changes in the method of teaching delivery. Both terms are interrelated and interconnected while sustainable development seek to meet the need of individuals and society through judicious utilization of resources without altering the root source of supply. Creative education on the other hand equip learners with conceiving mind for creating naval ideas necessary for positive changes and advancement of society. It occupies an important aspect in leaching-learning process for sustainable learning outcome. Students need creative and innovative approaches to achieve the lofty height of constant changes prevalent in the business world. The future success of the Nigeria economy depends on crop of inspired creative minds who are major drivers of world economy, if students must be able to drive the economy to appreciateable height, it means the repositioning and restructuring of the educational system to identify and incorporate creative skills in the curriculum,

teaching methodology and evaluation methodology in a bid to enshrine learning environment which encourages creativity behaviour from learners. Olaleye and Akinwunmi (2010) submitted that the component that produces sustainable development are economic, social and environmental development. Similarly, Elaine (2008) sees economy, society and environment as the three pillars for sustainable development. The interaction and integration.

The Place of Business Education in Sustainable National Development

Business education a subset of vocational education is a holistic form of education established to educate and train students to be productive, self-sufficient, self-reliant and contribute meaningfully to the economic wellbeing of the society. It is education that gives students handful opportunities to discover and build innate potentials for functioning in any given society. The American Vocational Association (2012) in Jubril and Idris (2019) sees business education as a broad and comprehensive discipline whose instructional programme encompasses knowledge, skills, vocation and aptitude needed by all citizens in order to effectively manage their personal business and also function in the economic system. Managing personal business effectively is anchored on the capability of individual to solve and proffer solution to problems through acquired knowledge and skills. Umeano and Ifi (2019) stated that business education is one vital programme in Nigeria tertiary institutions that has the capacity to bring about the required liberation and stimulate citizens for global competition and national development. Nwokike and Chukwuma (2019) submitted that business education as a discipline is meant to prepare individuals economically, politically, socially and technologically in transforming human resources and enhancing economic empowerment. This implies business education promote all round development of students necessary for effective functioning in a multicultural society. Through its programmes, students are opportune to acquire relevant skills, competencies, knowledge, values, attitude needed to gain employment, and make advancement on the job. It focuses on all round development of students such that knowledge acquired enhances recipients' chances of providing goods and services to others or as employees either in public or private sector. In addition, it affords recipients' privilege to either function in the teaching profession or business world. These key functions are explicitly spelled out in its programme objective which include: (1) To empower students with desirable skills, knowledge and value to perform specific functions so as to become self-reliant (2) To help students appreciate the world around them and contribute maximally to the social and economic development of the nation (3) To empower students in such way that the students will develop intellectual capability that would help them make informed decisions in all sphere of life. (4) To help students become judicious spenders and develop proper values for the achievement of healthy living and growth of the nation (5) To understand the political framework of a nation so that students can contribute to the national and economic development of the nation. These objectives no doubt reveal the crucial position business education occupies in building creative skills required for positive and lasting changes both for the individual and the society.

Presently, the focus of education at all levels all over the world is self-discovery learning which subject learners critical reasoning in order solve problems themselves and fashion out ideas. Preparing students with requisite knowledge is an enduring process of preparing skilled manpower to drive the economy in the direction of growth, development and sustenance. Driving the economy in the right direction is dependent on the creative and innovative prowess of the drivers, in this case, exposure of business education students to vast knowledge and skills places them as veritable instruments in the utilization of economic, social and environmental resources, therefore achieving sustainable national development lies in the hands of skilled manpower that can meet global competitiveness of the 21st century business world

Strategies for Promoting Creative Skills Ability among Students

There are different methods that can be employed to assist students in developing creative skills for personal and societal advancement. Some of these include:

- **Visual presentation:** Visual presentation of instruction content makes for a better understanding of abstract concepts as well as ease the job of the teacher. Through computer software program, teachers are able to design and present instruction content in colourful and attractive sound, motion, pictures, graphics, images etc in a manner that students are able to conceptualise and process learning experiences effectively such that experiences gain can be retained, recalled and reinforced concepts with little or no difficulty. In other words, learning becomes more real, interesting and permanent. The need for creative skills development in all programmes of learning in the educational system especially in business education programmes is that the classrooms of 21st century are already witnessing digitalization of instruction delivery mode, research methodology, examination assessment, information processing and presentation etc. Learning experiences acquired through creative skills tend to be more permanent than mechanical. Research finding by Jain and Billaiya (2017) revealed the use of visual presentation in classroom assists in generating creative thinking skills of students and that it encourages them not just to learn by listening and writing but they can find their own initiatives to express their understanding

- **Unconventional learning practice:** It is believed that if one must attain desirable and profitable height then he/she must be ready to do things differently. Doing things differently demands approaching issues in an unusual way to achieve results. In this era of technology students implore technology device to create new learning experiences and knowledge. They are able to manipulate data, explore relationships intentionally and actively process information, construct personal and socially shared meaning and reflect on the leaning process adequately through use of various ICT device (Folorunso and Oludele 2014). In teaching-learning environment especially in this technology age a lot of rich educational technology resources abound which when employed in classroom instruction delivery could aid teachers in designing and processing teaching materials outside the traditional method of drawing up lesson

plan, lesson note and cardboard instructional aide through different digital tools like podcast.

- **Homework:** The achievement of learning experiences can be assessed in several ways some can be done in the course of instruction delivery; some will demand students visiting places outside the school environment while others can be given to students as a take home assignment for them to work on at home. At home they spend extra time searching for solution to assigned task, this process exposes students to diverse resource materials which at the long cumulate to the discovering of new techniques. The use of assignment in creating conducive learning outcome facilitate the development of creative thinking in students. Given this premise, teachers should employ different assignment format that will assist creativity interest in learners. When this is done it will challenge the different class of learners to be up and doing. Reiterating this view Nishant (2018) submitted that homework improves students' memory and thinking skills based on the fact that they solve problems without much external assistants. Prommin and Jutharat (2018) examined the impact of homework assignment on students' learning revealed that homework benefited and supported students' learning in acquiring knowledge, developed leaning skills, increased academic achievements and encourages students' collaborative skills and speaking between teachers and students for homework clarification.

- **Collaborative learning:** This approach involves students working together in group or team to accomplish a given task. Team members are made to work on different areas of given task synchronously through the use of software packages in proffering solution to problem. It is an educational approach to teaching and learning involving groups of learners working together to solve a problem, complete a task, or create a product Laal and Ghodsi (2012). Johnson (1989) and Pantiz (1999) in Laal and Ghodsi (2012) explained several benefits accrue to students' learning through collaborative learning some which include: increases students' self-esteem; active students participation in the learning process; reduced anxiety; develop appropriate problem solving techniques and promotion of critical skills Is a situation in which two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together Chatti Hamdan and Schaper (2012) in Fakomogbon and Hameed (2017). They identify scales of participation, learning context and methods of collaboration as characteristic pillars a for successful collaborative learning. The first characteristics centred on size of learners which could be in pairs or smaller groups and duration of time spent. In learning context, the focus is on allocation of materials for tackling the problems and evaluating performance while methods of collaboration dwells on approach to be deploy to achieve set learning goals. This approach inspires and stimulates the creativity of thinking capacity of students to define the task systematically, sequentially and logically giving rise to the construction of new ideas necessary for sustainable development.

- Outside the box thinking: This is an interactive approach to creative skills development where students redefine problem areas in an attempt to discover alternative methods for solving problems. It focuses on three dimensional steps – thinking – working – gathering. The first dimension which is centres on developing students understanding the nature of problem, the second dimension is on operational mode of resolving problem area – actual application of principles in finding solution to variables in question while third dimension assembles all possible alternatives for resolving difficult area. This approach is very important in classroom situation as it challenges students to draw inference through brainstorming and comparison in tackling problem. Outside the box thinking is also used in product/service analysis and according to Dam and Teo (2002) at the heart of outside the box thinking is the intention to improve products by analysing and understanding how users interact with products and investigating the conditions in which they operate. They further explain that this method can help human to systematically extract, teach, learn and apply techniques in solving problems in a creative and innovative way in personal lives, business lives and societal lives.

Conclusions

Sustainable national development has become worldwide phenomenon aimed at proper utilization of resources in meeting the need of present generation without destroying the resources to meet the need of future generation. This translates to the preservation of both human and material resources needed to run the entire system for sustainable development to take place. Preserving the present day economic, social and environmental resources requires strong and firm creative manpower who are able to fashion out profitable means of managing the system for the betterment of present and future generation, here business education takes the centre stage as it aims at equipping students with creative, innovative and analytical skills etc. for productive functioning. Conclusively, business education in relation to sustainable national development will entails enriching and remodelling content of its curriculum to house sustainability standard required to train and mould competent manpower crucial for managing the nations resources

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