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

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Abstract

Business Education is a kind of programme referred to as systematic learning experience which is designed to fit individuals for gainful employment. It is also a part of education which includes preparation for employment in any industry with entrepreneurial opportunities for which specialized education is required. It is with the above believe in mind that this paper seeks to examine the ways Business Education Could bring about self-reliance and development that could lead to self-employment after graduation. The paper also suggests various ways government could provide funds as loans to graduates which will in turn reduce unemployment. It also looks at how Business Education curriculum should be aligned with modern day facilities in business practice that will provide self employment and productivity to the graduates.

Every subject area has objectives that assist the community or Nation where they are been taught to exists to achieve her set goals in life. In Business Education therefore objectives are set to guide in achieving part of the national goals. The National Policy on Education (2004) stated the following objectives for higher education in business education as highlighted by Aliyu (2006; 64)

1. The acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value-orientation for the survival of the individual and society.
2. The development of the intellectual capacities of individual to understand and appreciate their environment.

3. The acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community.
4. The acquisition of an objective view of the local and external environments.

Business Education is therefore dependent on the realization of the above objectives. By

Re-engineering, Business Education, is to acquire the necessary useable apprenticeship skills in order to fit into Nigerian labour market. This is due to the fact that the labour markets are flooded with many applicants, where in reality only few job opportunities exists, and only few Business Education graduates are practically oriented.

Concept of Business Education

Business Education is an aspect of vocational education which is defined by (Hill, 1933) as a phase of education where emphasis is laid on the preparation and participation in occupations of social value. It prepares an individual in a specific occupational field like accountancy, management, marketing, computer studies, secretary ship, and so on as cited by Kwairanga, (2002). Business Education is an aspect of technical and vocational education described by (Ekuw and Eluro, 2002) as a programme which equips graduates with the right skills to engage in a life of work in the office as well self employment. The beneficiary can be gainfully employed in industry, agriculture, commerce and construction. Akwere (2002) averred that Business Education occupies a reasonable space in Nigerian economy, he made this by quoting Aina (1996) as follows: Business Education is a subject which permeates the entire life of nation. It touches all of us collectively and individual, be it the field of sport, the place of worship or in our domestic duties.

Business Education according to Azuka, Nwosu, Kanu and Agomuo (2006) defined Business Education as a programme of study, which is aimed at creating awareness in business occupations, preparing youths for work in business occupation; preparing people to become better citizens and consumers of goods services and business teachers.. However in (2006) Njoku gave another definition as an educational programme that equips an individual with functional and suitable skills.

Business Education therefore prepares youths for vocation and also furnishes them with relevant information concerning their lives both as citizens and as individuals. In the first instance, it develops in them certain skills, attitudes and abilities that are relevant to securing jobs in the business world. Secondly, it gives them insight into general business and acquaints them with general business information that will make them efficient and rational purchasers and consumers of business products (goods and services). Implicit in these definitions is the fact that business education is not necessarily restrictive. The principles and techniques of business are needed by all in all walks of life for use both for vocational and non-vocational reasons. Business Education can therefore be departmentalized into General Business (Education about Business) and Vocational Business Education (Education for Business).

Strategic Policy Framework for Business Education Graduates

The question to ask is how then can Business education training be promoted in Nigeria in order to achieve the strategic policy goals of the stimulating necessary skills and competencies? According to George (2009), there are five broad strategic objectives that will enhance quality training, assuring relevance and employability of trainees (graduates). He reiterated that these strategies will help to improved coherence and management of training provision that can also promote flexibility in training and lifelong learning. We therefore suggest the following as related to his own opinion:

1. Enhancing the Quality of Training

Training for high quality skills requires appropriate training equipments and tools, adequate supply of training materials and practice by the learner. Other requires looks into the relevant textbook and training manuals and qualified instructors with experience in enterprises. Quality should be seen as “fit for purpose”, rather than as measuring up to an ill-defined standard. Quality that is fit for purpose is dynamic and improves as the purpose or the job to be done. A decentralised and diverse Business education that includes school-based training, enterprise-based training, and apprenticeship training (both non-formal and informal) requires a strong regulatory framework for overseeing training curricula, standards, qualifications and funding. A suitable qualifications framework and inspection system will provide the necessary quality assurance and control mechanism within such a diverse system.

ii) Assuring Relevance and Employability of Trainees

Assuring the employability of trainees begins with effective guidance and counselling of potential learners in the choice of training programmes in relation to their aptitude and academic background. Employability presupposes the acquisition of employable skills that are related to the demands of the labour market. Labour market information systems and tracer studies which track the destination of graduates in the job market can provide useful feedback for the revision of training programmes so as to enhance the employability of trainees.

iii) Improving Coherence and Management of Training Provision

In order to ensure coherence and management of training provision, it will be necessary to establish a national agency or body to coordinate and drive the entire Business education system. The agency should be operating under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education or stand on its own as an autonomous body. In either case, the coordinating agency should include representation from all relevant stakeholders, including government policy makers, employers, public and private training providers, civil society, alumni associations, Business association (ABEN), and development partners.

iv) Flexibility of Training and Life-long Learning

Life-long learning has a beneficial effect on the development of a high quality Business education. This is because the skills of the workforce can be continually

upgraded through a life-long learning approach. This also means that learners who have had limited access to training in the past can have a second chance to build on their skills and competences. The process also involves the recognition of prior learning, whether in the formal or non-formal system.

v) Status and Attractiveness of Business Education

Enhancing the status and attractiveness of Business education will involve changing perceptions and attitudes of the public about business education. For this to happen, the use of role models in business education and the involvement of successful entrepreneurs in motivation campaigns, especially in schools, will be necessary. There is need toward embarrassing shortage of role model as to the banes of business education. Business education should be seen as a valid passport to a good job and not as a second best choice or the only educational route for the academically less endowed. The status of Business education can be re-engineered by upgrading polytechnics and polytechnic-type non-university institutions to offer technical or “skills” degrees. The trend world-wide is to strengthen polytechnic institutions and also institution that runs business education related courses. The role industrial and technological developments, re-engineer their training programmes for greater relevance and higher quality, and generally raise their status and attractiveness as higher institutions of choice.

Re-engineering Business Education

The modern economy demands possession of necessary skills and competencies to face the challenges of employability. There is the need to train Business Education graduates towards meeting the employable skills among Nigerian citizens. There is need for manpower development because the high rate of employment among graduates is attributed to lack of skills and competencies required in the world of work. According to Unugbro (2008) as cited by Olise (2011) unemployment is an economic menace and socially, a hydra headed monster that cast ponderous responsibilities and implications upon the society. Lack of employable skills is further worsened by the recent trend in technology. Employment requirements are changing due to technological advancements. The growing implementation of office automation techniques in business and technological advancements are affecting our students, teachers and even business lives in the economy.

However, business education is seen as a solution to the problem of unemployment. Many Nigerians have realized that they need training skills that can make them employable, self- employed and self productivity. Business education training gives its graduates opportunities to be self-employed and self reliant because they are theoretically and practically trained and vibrant (Harvey, 2009).

As identified by Oke (2004) business education will offer several benefit to individual and nation at large. Office practice, shorthand and typewriter/ computer studies will prepare the graduates for a well paid career such as secretary, receptionist, or personal assistance to chief executives or better still enable the individual to have his own business centres with internet facilities.

The Role of Business Education

Business Education plays a vital role in the development of the economy which is the bedrock of the national development in the following ways:

- **Manpower/ skill Development**

Business education provides individuals with the opportunity to undertake vocations capable of yielding salable skills as well as being self-employed. This is being done through its training and re-training in knowledge, skills and attitudes both within and outside the school setting. Products of Business Education can be seen in all spheres of economic life as Accountant, Consultants, Data processors and Analysts, Managers, Secretaries, just to mention a few. Thus Business Education assists in providing the required manpower for gainful employment as well as opportunities for individual to continue to grow and advance in his chosen career. By so doing the individual become more skilled. The more skilled he is, the more he contributes to the development of our resources, thereby becoming more productive. The Nigerian economy gains the more when workers acquire the competences that are needed for employment and higher productivity. This is because the scarce resources would be effectively managed, and more income generated. This further reduces our problem of unemployment as well as unemployability.

- **Career Opportunities**

Closely related to manpower development is the provision of a wide range of career opportunities for the beneficiaries of Business Education programme. Occupation ranging from accounting, banking, insurance, secretaryship, education, management, marketing data processing, and so forth exist in all the organizations in the economy.

- **Inculcating Appropriate Work Habits and Social Values**

Success in the field of work is said to be dependent not only upon the acquisition of job knowledge and skills but also upon the display of appropriate attitudes on the job. Therefore for any educational programme to be useful, it must be able to change the attitude of its participants (beneficiaries) towards a positive direction. Business Education programme avails its students the opportunity of an on- the-job-training thereby giving them the feeling of working on actual job situation before completing their studies. Equally, its concepts, principles and practices are applicable in our daily economic and social activities. By so doing, opportunities are given for the Nigerian personnel as asserted by Iwok (1987). Thus Nigerians are known generally to have very poor attitude towards work and dignity of labour, which is manifested in lateness, absenteeism, wasting of Resources, rude behaviour and insolence, as cited by Kwairanga, (2002). Business Education has wide ranging programmes that provide the individual with opportunities to inculcating appropriate work habits and social values. Such programmes include field study trips, seminars, workshops, conferences, students' industrial work experience scheme and teaching practice. These programmes give the individual a taste of feeling of working in real job situation before taking a full time job. By so doing the individual acquires such traits as cooperation, loyalty, accountability,

prudence, personal character, business etiquette, and so forth. The inculcation of these traits goes a long way in increasing our productivity at work place, vis-à-vis national development.

- **Contributing to the Objectives of Self-Reliance**

Through its varied programmes, Business Education establishes relationships between students' educational programme and the world of work. Individuals are therefore trained to develop knowledge, competencies and attitudes that would enable them to enter the economic world as employed or self-employed. As Ulinfun (1986) rightly pointed out:

Business Education is training for discipline; it is also training for self-reliance. Indeed it is the training of an individual's total person for business, in business and about business, which teaches him how and when to demand upon himself not only for his economic survival but also for performing social responsibilities.

Constraints

Despite the laudable objectives and role played by Business Education in development, its programme is faced with numerous constraints. Putting perspectives aside, the present dispensation in our educational sector cause serious setback to the realization of a successful Business Education studies (Aina, 1985, Andenyang and Kwairanga, 1985, Ahukannah, 1987); as cited by Kwairanga, (2002). Business Education is faced with the following major problems:

- a. Curriculum defects in terms of programme affinity and goals.
- b. Lack of adequate, qualified and committed personnel.
- c. Inadequate opportunities for retraining and development, especially in sponsorship and graduate level programmes.
- d. High rate of teacher turnover caused by such factors as lack of commitment and the desire for quick money syndrome society.
- e. Lack of adequate funds to acquire and maintain the required facilities.
- f. Lack of adequate planning, supervision and evaluation of programme on the part of educational planners and administrators.

Policy Roles and Recommendations

The place of Business education and training for industrialization can only happen if all the relevant stakeholders play their role. Governments, training institutions, parents and employers, all have important role to play if efficient and coherence status is to be given on Business education.

Government

- Develop and support graduates of Business education and consider the implementation toward guarantee Business Education in Nigeria through loans.
- Business syllabuses be reviewed and redesigned to include employable skills.
- Introduce policies and incentives that will support increased private sector participation in Business education.

Re-Engineering Business Education for...

- Improve capital investment in Business education.
- Establish Business Education management information systems for education and training, including labour market information system;
- Institute measures to reduce gender, economic, and geographical inequities in Business Education provision;
- Introduce sustainable financing schemes for Business Education graduates;
- Increase funding support to the sector;
- Build leadership and management capacity to drive Business Education system;
- Mainstream vocational education into the general education system, so that the vocational track is less dead-end;
- Introduce ICT into Business Education
- Constantly monitor and periodically evaluate the performance of the system and apply corrective measures accordingly.

Educational Institutions and Training Providers

- Provide training within national policy framework;
- Deliver a flexible and demand-driven training;
- Develop business plans to support training activities;
- Establish strong linkages and collaboration with employers and industry;
- Mainstream gender into training activities and programmes;
- Introduce ICT into training
- Institute bursary schemes for poor trainees;
- Strengthen guidance and counselling services to trainees;
- Network and bench-mark with other training providers;
- Involve community, parents and guardians in training activities.
- Training institutions should be encouraged to be profit-oriented and to become active operators in the training market;

Parents and Guardians

- Support children and wards to choose the Business education track;
- Reject perception that Business Education is for the less academically endowed;
- Lobby politicians in favour of Business Education;
- Support activities of educational institutions and training providers.

Donors and Development Partners

- Support development and implementation of national Business policies and strategies;
- Fund small business development research;
- Fund acquisition of training equipment;
- Support post-training employment support services for Business Education graduates, including business start-ups;

Academic Excellence

- Support capacity building in Business Educational sector – instructor training, management training, technical assistance, etc.
- Help in identifying and disseminating best practices in Business Education ;
- Support Business Educational advocacy initiatives, motivation campaigns and programmes.

Employers

- Deliver workplace training to employees
- Contribute financially to national training fund
- Provide opportunities in industry for Business Education teachers to regularly update their workplace experience;
- Provide opportunities for industrial attachment and internships for trainees
- Contribute to the development of national skills standards.

Conclusion

Education is a vital instrument of change in any country. Business Education is referred to as a systematic learning experience which is designed to fit individuals for gainful employment. The need to re-engineer Business Education is to acquire the necessary usable skills in order to fit into the Nigerian labour market. More so, it is that education which includes preparation for employment in any industry for which specialized education and entrepreneurial education skills are required. Hence the paper emphasized the need for Business Education as a major course in training of graduates. This will assist the beneficiaries of Business Education to acquire the needed knowledge, understanding, attitude and practical skills in order to be employable and self-reliant into the Nigerian economy.

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