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

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## **Abstract**

*Business Education is an integral part of Educational programme that equips an individual with sustainable and saleable skills, knowledge, competencies, attitude and values that would enable him/her to be useful in the environment he finds himself. It provides the type of education that makes an individual to be productive and self reliant and therefore become a job creator and not a job seeker. However, despite the laudable objectives of business education as stated in the National Policy on Education, it is evident that these objectives are far from being achieved. This paper critically examines the current challenges of business education and justifies the need for its re-engineering. The paper is concluded with suggestions on how to improve the delivery of business education programme which includes among others, the aggressive re-launching of business education programme through provision of more funds, facilities, materials, equipment and qualified personnel.*

Business Education as a discipline has been defined variously by individuals and authorities in business education. To a novice, business education means the same thing as business administration, business management or even secretarial or typist course. To some others, it is what goes on in the market where buying and selling of goods and services take place.

Business Education from a professional point of view is a course that offers knowledge and competencies required for entry into business occupations of all sorts and prospering in them. It is also a means by which someone not formally educated in business concepts and practical can learn how to plan, organize, file, type, budget, initiate, control, invest and save (Okouanaso and Nwazor 2000). It is a process of instructing an individual on what happens during business transactions in offices, banks, markets, and anywhere money changes hands. It is also the type of education that enables individuals to learn facts, acquire skills, develop abilities, solve problems, and be able to have business – like attitude useful for success in business transactions, (Uzoh and Orah, 2008).

Obijele (1999) in Ubong, (2002) opined that business education involves the acquisition of professional skills, competence and experiences in that aspect of education that is for and about business. Business education has to do with acquisition

of skills and knowledge required for securing, succeeding and advancing in business and office occupations that is, education about business, and education for work in business establishment. In the context of this paper, business education is defined as an integral educational programme that equips an individual with functional and saleable skills, knowledge and attitude/values that would enable him operate in the environment he finds himself. Business education enables the recipient to be a job creator (self reliant) and not job seeker (applicant). Njoku (2007) listed the following among others as the objectives of business education.

1. To empower the individual with desirable skills, knowledge and values to perform specific functions so as to become self reliant.
2. To help the recipient appreciate the world around him and contribute maximally to the social and economic development of the nation.
3. To empower the individual in such a way that he will develop his intellectual capability that would help him make informed decision in all spheres of life.
4. To help the individual become a judicious spender 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 as to contribute to national economic development

The Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) in her National Policy on Education sees Business Education as part of vocational and Technical education which is generally understood to be:

- a. An integral part of general education;
- b. A means of preparing the youth in the occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work;
- c. An aspect of life long learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship;
- d. An instrument for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development.
- e. A method of alleviating poverty.

Despite the laudable objectives of business education as enunciated in the National policy on Education, it is evident that these objectives are far from being achieved, especially the aspect that has to do with self productivity (reliance) and employment generation. There is no doubt that these days graduates of business education still roam the streets in search of white collar jobs that is hardly in existence. The reason for this among others has to do with poor implementation of curriculum of business education. This paper, intended as an exposition, spotlights, among others, the problems of business education that needed re-engineering so as to achieve self productivity and employment generation.

### **Employment Opportunities in Business Education**

Business education as a course of study offers many employment opportunities to the recipients. According to Atakpa (2000), business education is entirely vocation in the sense that the recipient is prepared for manifold purposes e.g. as a business teacher,

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an office worker and a collector of information for self use. It is a wide discipline that encompasses a number of specialist areas like secretarial studies, accounting, business management, distributive education, computer literacy and marketing.

Okwuanaso and Nwazor (2000) identified seven main categories of courses/employment opportunities in business education through which a recipient can engage himself. They are as follows:

- a. Book-keeping and accounting
- b. Clerical and general office course
- c. Stenographic and secretarial course.
- d. Distributive and marketing
- e. Business teaching
- f. Business management/administration
- e. Economic understanding

A graduate of business education who specialized in accounting can establish small business and be able to manage it effectively. The individual will use the knowledge of accounting to work as consultant to the other small business, firms and organizations.

Also, a business education graduate can establish documentary centre where they render secretarial related services to the public. Here customers can type and duplicate their documents and obtain other word processing services. Documents can be typed, photocopied, bound, laminated and even posted for clients.

Business education graduates can also engage in the establishment of school. There are many people who are interested in learning shorthand, typewriting, accounting, and other related courses. Someone with secretarial or accounting knowledge can undertake teaching these courses to people who are interested.

A business education graduate can also be formally employed gainfully. He can also make additional income by rendering private services like writing official/formal letter for people. In fact business education can reverse the trend in the unemployment world. Training in business education is expected to make the recipient stand on their own due to the acquisition of relevant skills, knowledge, competencies and ability needed for self employment.

Orah, (2008) citing Okwuanaso and Nwazor (2000) stated that business education comprises accounting education, secretarial education and office education offers five categories or classes of knowledge. These include facts, problem solving, basic skills, attitude and ideals. The authors maintained that these classes of knowledge are very important in employment generation and self productivity. This is because it makes an individual who is exposed in it to be a producer as well as a wise consumer of goods and services. Business education offers training in business skills and competencies required for use in business offices, clerical occupations and economic affairs especially in the areas of accounting, business management, Office Technology

and Management (OTM) marketing, data processing and business communication, (Orah, 2011).

### **Current Challenges of Business Education**

Business Education is currently faced with a plethora of problems. These problems are discussed below:

#### **I. Inadequate Teachers and Instructors in Terms of Quality and Quantity**

One of the greatest problems facing business education today is that of inadequate teachers and instructors. Where the teachers exist, the quality is nothing to write home about. This assertion was supported by Okwuanoso and Nwazor (2000) who stated that business education is yet to have enough qualified teachers at all levels of education where business education is taught. According to the authors, this caliber of unqualified teachers teaches students by howling and shouting on students or even by ridiculing them. Sometimes they demonstrate part of the skills but not the sub-components of the complete skills.

In most Colleges and Universities non-business education specialists are employed to teach business education. In most cases graduates of business administration, business management, economics and even engineering are employed to teach business education courses. This should not be the case, because these group of individuals lack necessary pedagogy to teach business education course. Again, most problems encountered in the business education programme at all levels are brought about by the fact that people who have general education orientation are often entrusted with the administration of the programme. Such administrators lack in-depth knowledge of what business education is all about. Tonne (1970) in Orah (2008) listed the following as the competences expected of a business education teacher

- i. Skills and attitude desirable for all educated person
- ii. Competency in business or in some phase of it.
- iii. Knowledge of principles and methods of teaching.
- iv. A general education.

Also, instructors are not in adequate supply. Instructions are needed to compliment the efforts or teachers in courses like typewriting, computer appreciation and shorthand.

#### **ii. Inadequate Materials, Facilities and Equipment**

The above is another serious challenge to business education. In most schools, colleges and universities teaching materials, equipment and facilities are lacking or in short supply. There are no right workshop studios, laboratories, classrooms and even consumables. The books in libraries are out dated and inadequate. In some cases, students are taught courses like typewriting without typewriters, computer appreciation with out computers. Functional shorthand laboratory is not in place and this cannot guarantee effectiveness in teaching and learning.

### **iii. Inadequate Funding**

This is another serious challenge to business education. Funds are needed to purchase materials, equipments, build and maintain facilities. Most times funds are lacking and inadequate. Most times, the subvention granted to institutions running business education courses are grossly not enough and in most cases would not come on time to meet the basic recurrent expenditure worse still, the other recurrent expenditure known as over head for the day to day running of business education in these institutions are not forth coming. Hence there are dilapidated structures abandoned projects and equipment. Without adequate fund, business education institutions would not be able to purchase, install and maintain needed equipment, materials and facilities necessary for adequate teaching and learning of business education, (Orah 2008).

### **Ways by Which Business Education can be Re-engineered**

There is no doubt that the objectives of business education as stated in the National Policy on Education (2004) are no longer being achieved. Hence the need for re-engineering of business education programme so that stated aims and objectives of business education will be achieved. In the words of Adesina, (1990) in Okoro and Esene, (2007), a good educational system is that which pragmatically and practically prepares the learners for life. This means that for education to be worthwhile and stand the test of time must fulfil three roles.

1. To prepare the individual for the world of business
2. To prepare the individual for self employment and self-reliance.
3. To prepare individual as an employer of labour.

School curriculum should be designed to include not only the acquisition of knowledge, but also the practical skills aimed at making the school leavers marketable and to be able to face societal competitions.

A re-engineered business education should make available teaching materials and equipment for use by professionally and intellectually trained teachers so as to produce graduates who will be able to create jobs and employ themselves instead of being job seekers.

It is the view of the author that business education be re-engineered so as to meet the following objectives of a good educational programme.

- Prepare the youth and adults for gainful employment
- Prepare the youth and adult for useful living in the society.
- Help them to constantly maintain employment mobility
- Reduce wastage in education
- Reduce to the barest minimum, employment and under employment problems.
- Arrest the under-utilization of highly trained man-power in a depressed economy and,
- Check and wipe out ignorance, disease, poverty, youth and adult restiveness.

In re-engineering business education, efforts should be made to see that only colleges and universities with required number of teachers in terms of quality and quantity are allowed to continue to teach the course. Furthermore, for any institution to run business education programme, the institution must possess all the needed

materials, equipment and facilities in order to run the programme successfully. All the institutions that are running the programme should be made to pass serious accreditation exercise to ensure that all that is needed for a successful in business education programme are on ground. Government should recognize the dynamic nature of knowledge and skills encoded in business education curricula and reviewed them regularly so as to respond to changing needs of the recipients. Also, teachers who implement the curricula should be re-trained and up-graded in line with the revised curricula.

In order to re-engineer business education, the Federal Government should introduce special grants to teacher of business education so as to retain them in the school system. Also, students should be encouraged to study business education by giving them special bursary awards and scholarships so as to lure many people to the study of business education in order to make them self reliant and productive.

Since business education is aimed at skill and competency acquisition, government should encourage more universities and colleges to establish business education departments. This will enable more and more people to enrol into the programme and acquire the needed skills, knowledge, competency understanding, and attitude needed to perform in the business world as a producer and/or consumer of goods and services that business offers, (Oduma and Ndinechi, 2007).

Bamidele (2002) stated that there is no substitute to the pursuit of excellence. Hence it is therefore suggested that the quality business education programmes in the country should be reviewed periodically as and when required just like now to ensure the following:

- (a) The programme training environment adequately replicates the work environment rather than resemble it.
- (b) The training meets the demand of labour markets.
- (c) Scholarship to the trainees to motivate and encourage those who are willing to enrol in business education programme.
- (d) That sufficient number in terms of quality and quantity and highly motivated instructional personnel are available to run the programme.

Nigeria now more than ever before should realize that business education offers individual the required competence that can make him be a productive individual both to himself and to his own environment. Therefore government should without wasting time invest more in developing and implementing business education programme in Nigeria should meet its target in 20-20-20.

## **Conclusion**

Business education being a vocationally oriented course is geared towards inculcation and acquisition of functional knowledge, skills, attitude and competency needed to function effectively and economically in today's ever changing business environment. Therefore, a country that wishes its citizens well must take business

education seriously so as to bequest its citizens functional education. In order to do this, there is need for government to re-engineer and re-position business education programmes at all levels following the suggestions made in this paper. It is only through this that the lofty aims and objectives of business education can be achieved.

### **Recommendations**

There is no doubt that economic prosperity of Nigeria as a nation and its citizens depends largely on effective and re-engineered business education programme. To achieve this, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government should as a matter of urgency re-launch business education programme in schools, colleges and universities by providing more funds, facilities, materials and equipment required for effective running of the programme.
2. Government should mount an aggressive campaign toward correcting the erroneous impression held in some quarters about business education being a course for the less intelligent people.
3. Business education should be made a bedrock on which poverty alleviation programmes rest. It is through business education that individuals can learn and acquire skills that they need to become productive and self reliant.
4. The subsidy re-investment programme (SURE-P) should include the expansion of business education programme in schools.
5. Government should review the policies relating to the implementation of business education programme. Specifically, teaching personnel who are not business education specialist should not be allowed to teach or even to head department where business education is taught. This group of people should be encouraged to study business education through in-service training.
6. Colleges and Universities should be encouraged to run evening programme (executive programmes) to enable adults and people on paid employment to study business education in order to establish their own businesses.
7. Business education curriculum at all levels should be expanded, reviewed, revised and adjusted in order to meet the changes and challenges of our time. Courses that are considered irrelevant in today's world should be expunged and new ones introduced.
8. An understudy of countries where business education has succeeded tremendously should be carried out and the system applied in Nigeria.

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