

# REFOCUSING OF BUSINESS EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: A PANACEA FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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## **Abstract**

*Education is the bedrock in the development of any nation. Business education being a wider programme marketing and office accounting is equally seen as important tool towards national development. As far as business education has been in existence for years, it has faced deep changes in recent times. This paper critically analyzed the general needs of industry with present future realities, demands of technology and joining with industries and employing publics with a view to ensuring a more relevant and responsible programme of the study.*

Education is widely regarded as the key agent of development in any country and this is why the federal Government of Nigeria has adopted it as a veritable instrument for affecting National Development (NPE, 1981). Education unlocks the economic potentials of the people; empowers and equips the individuals in the society to participate in, and benefit from the national economy, facilitates economy development; and provides the basis for transformation (Udoye, 2014).

Business education is an aspect of general education that inculcates in the recipients the necessary skills, values and competencies required in the labour market (Ezeani, 2014). According to the national policy on education (NPE 1981), Business education is regarded as that aspect of education that leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills and basic scientific knowledge. Nwachukwu (2012) saw business as

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an umbrella name for those educational processes involving the study of techniques, related science, and acquisition of practical skills, attitudes and knowledge relating to occupation in the vocational sectors of the economy and social life of the people. Udoye (2014) saw it as a utilitarian and skill-oriented education which develops vocational skills, competencies, attitudes, habits, leadership and citizenship in business management in private and public organizations. Udoye and Iortyer (2010) defined business education as education for business and about business. This means that business education is education for teaching business skills/competencies such as accounting, market, office technology and management, entrepreneurship, basic skills, ICT etc. considering the definition above, it is evident that business education has a variety of benefits to make the youths useful as employees, entrepreneurs or to be self-reliant. Business education enhances job creation and entrepreneurship development.

One can say that business education is a vocational education which prepares its recipients for gainful employment through the acquisition of skills, values, competencies required for use in business offices, clerical occupations, and policy analysis in business all geared towards national development. This paper therefore examines the general state of the business education programme and its practice in Nigeria and proffers solution to the needs for the next decade. Osuala (2004) sees business education as office education and general business education. Office education according to Osuala consists of office career through initial refresher, upgrading education that leads to employability, advancement in office and sustaining the jobs, while general business education enables students to acquire information and competencies (skills) required in every business environment.

According to Onyesom and Umeoeshiet (2013) business education is that aspect of educational training which an individual receives with the primary aim/motive of enabling him to acquire adequate attitudes, concepts, knowledge, understanding and skills in business activities for vocational usage in careers as an administrator, manager or teacher wherever he may find himself in the business world.

### **State of Business Education Programme**

Business education as an aspect of vocational education programme is primarily concerned with the training and development of an individual. Utoware and Nosakhare in Ezeani (2014) stated that business education is education for business that is the intellectual and vocational preparation for earning a living in contemporary industrials and business environment. Business education was introduced in Nigeria schools by the federal Republic of Nigeria (NPE, 1981) with the hope that it will provide the crop of

Nigerians with appropriate skills for employment, abilities and competencies that will enable them to play citizenship roles, be self-reliant. According to Ekpeyoung in Eze and Ugwuanyi (2008) the history of business education in Nigeria is likened to a child abandoned by a father who felt that he had gotten the type of children he wanted, but was later picked by a childless man who nurtured and groomed him to adulthood. What this statement implies is that historically, business education did not come to Nigeria through the government, but through initiative of a few Nigerian entrepreneurs. Ulinfun (1982) observed that such entrepreneurs pioneered business education programme in order to meet the needs of their exports markets. According to Osuala (2004) business education was introduced in Nigeria by private proprietors.

The business has to align the delivery of these skills towards achieving the objectives education. According to Igboke (2005) the objectives of business education are; the acquisition of skills and knowledge of business, development of basic skills for personal use in the future, equipment and preparation of individuals for further training in business studies; providing basic skills and orientation for those who may not undergo further training and relating skills and knowledge acquired to national development. From the above objectives, Ezeani (2014) concluded that business education is education for preparing the individuals for the challenges in the business world. The introduction of business education in the Nigeria curricula has spanned across all levels (primary-tertiary) of the Nigerian educational system, that almost all the universities in Nigeria, colleges of education, polytechnics, secondary and primary schools offer business education courses (subjects) in accordance with the stipulation of the national policy on Education, 2004.

### **Practices of Business Education in Nigeria**

Business education as a programme of study strives to equip its recipients with knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSA's) necessary for them to secure employment in public and private organization, retain it and also advance in their chosen careers. Business education takes place at three levels namely, prevocational, vocational and professional level. In the present 6-3-3-4 system of education, business education at the junior secondary level is pre-vocational where business studies is one of the vocational subjects. Business studies in the view of and Njumogu and Njumogu in Nwokike (2011) is a subject that seeks to bring the elementary parts of five commercial subjects into one which includes office practice, commerce, book-keeping, typewriting and short hand. This subject emphasizes the practical acquisition of skills.

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Business education at senior secondary school levels is vocational and at the tertiary level it is professional. Sani (2011) opined that business education at this level embraces such diverse courses as keyboarding, book keeping, accounting, economics, office practice, computer science, short hand, business communication, and reporting business mathematics, consumer education and entrepreneurship. Sani (2011) further added that business education embraces three major occupational areas. Namely, office management, accounting and distributive (marketing) education. The graduates of different levels of business education can be absorbed in the labour market. Its graduates can be perceived to include the class of graduates who had gone through either a three year or four year study programme in business education, especially at the colleges of education or university level with the exposure to the major areas of business subjects curricular at different stages of the educational system, be effective in the use of technological gadgets and be able to find jobs and sustain them by developing competencies with regard to business behaviour and performance. Such competences include office job competences, communication competences, electronic competences, team work competences, interpersonal competences, and problem solving competences among others. Business education inculcates dependable entrepreneur skills and abilities in the students using appropriate delivery systems.

### **Vocational Business in Nigeria**

The present state of effectiveness of business education programme has not been promising. Research findings seem to indicate that the expectations for which the national policy on education (FRN, 1981) introduced business education in Nigeria schools have not been fully met. Ezeji (1992) for example stated that the industrial organization still complain of problems of inadequate supply of skilled manpower, inadequate research and development and poor quality of some locally made products. Obi and Oborah (2001) observed that business education in Nigeria today does not seem to be in tandem with the development of information technology. Hence, Nwosu (2002) described this situation as a “disaster”. Igwe and Okoye in Okwuanaso (2004) also reported that most graduates of business education have not been able to satisfy their employees. Adache in Eze and Ugumanyi (2008) lamented that the operators of business education have been characterized by inadequate facilities, poor funding, paucity of qualified teachers, inconsistent government policy and lack of awareness among the Nigeria citizens regarding business education. According to Atakpa (2012) business education is unable to provide people with appropriate skills for employment, abilities and competencies that will enable them to play citizenship roles, be self-reliant and be able to enroll in advanced business education programmes because they lack competencies in electronic office (e-office) which will enable them function effectively

in modern office occupations. Here are some current issues of concern in business education in Nigeria.

The programme of study suffers from acute shortage of suitably trained and qualified business subject teachers. In our school system especially at secondary school level it is uncommon to find sociologists and even political scientists teaching business subjects as a result of non availability of qualified teachers. Even when these teachers are trained, most of them do not come into teaching at all. The reason is not farfetched. Teachers are poorly remunerated in this country and they are accorded derogatory status. Filani (2006) was of the same view when he observed that there has been a lot of movement of excellent vocational business lectures for better pay in the industrial sectors. This portends great danger to business education in this country. Most teachers in Nigeria who pose as business education teachers are unwilling to teach the core business subjects. This has resulted to using teachers who are not professionally trained. Ulinfun (1986) supported this stating that most teachers in the field are those who may have taken a few business courses in colleges and universities. He referred to them as non business majors. Osuala (1995) described this class of teachers as interlopers in business education. It is acknowledged that the achievement of any society cannot rise beyond the knowledge of its teachers; hence the need to improve the skills of business teachers is of utmost necessity. (Balalowa, 2001).

Another issue bedeviling the business education programme in Nigeria is the dearth of professional. Ohiwerei and Okoli (2010) said that when properly organized and executed, conferences, work shops, and seminars are very effective in dealing with operational problems of teaching, especially business education, because of their “clinical” and participative approach. Okoli (2002) heighted on the need for functional emphasis on experience in thinking, acting and doing, which can only be gathered through information from conferences, workshops and seminars. It avails the business educators the opportunity to learn the latest trends and skills involved in teaching.

Quality business education is vital in the programe of service delivery in the economic vision of the next decade. It is obvious that no meaningful economic advancement can take place unless serious attention is given to programe in this country will remain a mirage in the face of:

- Poor internet connectivity which has proved to be a Herculean challenge to ICT development and utilization in developing countries including Nigeria. According to seghosine, Bawa, Ibrahim and Akuvuo (2013) this situation affects the smooth flow of information for and about business education.

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- Irregular power supply which is a major challenge militating against the use of ICT with regards to the implementation of business education programme. Power supply is needed to put virtually all the ICT facilities in use, especially as it relates to the teaching and learning of business education programmes. Regrettably, the unavailability of power supply could lead to total failure of the use of these ICT devices in teaching and learning of business education programme.
  
- Computer-illiteracy among business educators which may be attributed to a seeming phobia for using ICT facilities as instructional aids. Reacting to this, Okoh in Seghione, Bawa, Ibrahim and Akuvuo (2013) revealed that a large number of men and women (business educators inclusive) do not offer themselves the opportunity to be computer literate despite the fact that there are many computer training centers in virtually every street in the country's urban areas. This situation may not however be connected with the federal government of Nigeria inability to develop workable ICT policies that will promote the full integration of ICT into tertiary education curriculum in Nigeria. This ugly situation according to Seghopsine, Bawa, Ibrahim and Akuvuo (2013) has seriously affected the development of ICT and its application in gathering adequate information about education and the socio-economic environment.
  
- Vocational guidance helps in placing people in jobs they are best suited for. Thus vocational guidance has an important role to playing guiding students who may aspire to specialize in particular areas of business education (i.e. Accounting, marketing, secretarial, General Business etc). If students are not well guided they may end up taking a specialized area which may not suit their abilities and needs.
  
- Business Education Programme in future:

In order to meet the needs of business education programme in future decade, the following strategies are considered.

**Adequate Funding:** The under funding of the educational sector of the economy, has drastically affected business education programme implementation at the tertiary education level. Adequate funding of the educational sector will no doubt, promote the development of ICT oriented business education programme in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Adequate Training of Business Educators:** with the convergence of new learning technologies in 21<sup>st</sup> century, the methods of teaching and learning have been transformed from the teacher lecture- centered methods to student centered approaches

that are made possible with the introducing of ICTs. Today, most teachers find it very difficult to use technologies (electronic teaching). This could be traceable to the fact that they (the teachers) were not exposed to modern technologies during their preparation in schools. Based on the assertion, business educators should be adequately trained on the use of new technologies in teaching.

**Government Policy:** The anticipated progress in business education cannot be contemplated in the absence of very vigorous and consistent policies to improve and update vocational business education. Government Policies must embrace the need for the introduction of information Technology units in all business teacher educational programme

**Curriculum Improvement:** In order to cope with the problem of job obsolesce that may arise; a broad based and functional business education curriculum will be one of the laudable missions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century business education programme. There should be less emphasis on the acquisition of certificates and increased emphasis on education for work. Business teachers and their teaching methods should be updated both in contents and practice to be in tune with present and future realities of the world of work.

**Proper Funding:** business education programme is “very expensive and need to be given special funding attention. Funding of this programme needs to be improved substantially. There is also the need for proper monitoring of its implementation strategies not only to ensure accountability of funds expended but also for effective teaching and learning.

## **Conclusion**

Without doubt, there is a general fall in the standard of education. Since business education is left out in this, urgent measures need to be taken to salvage the situation and raise the standards of business education programme to meet the needs of the next decade. It is the position of this paper that all is well with business education in Nigeria. Business education may only be able to fulfill its future role in this century through the process of ready adaptability to the demands imposed by the rapid technological innovations. However, some of the measures to be taken are recommended below:

## **Recommendations**

1. It is suggested that qualified and experienced teachers in the discipline be employed to teach business education-courses. This should be done on the basis of academic

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qualifications, potential for academic scholarship, research interests, and national development priorities, proven ability to deliver and not on the basis of god-fatherism or god-motherism.

2. Business education teachers should be encouraged through sponsorship to conferences, seminars and workshops because ideas gained at such meeting will surely help them improve on the jobs.
3. Funding is crucial for the attainment and sustenance of standards especially in business education. Government therefore, must ensure that adequate funds are provided for purchase of essential equipment and facilities and for recruitment of professionally qualified teachers. However, funding should not be left in the hands of government alone. Parents and guardians and beneficiaries of business education programmes such as industries and business education professional associations must be ready to assist the government in funding education. By so doing, quality and sustainable standards would be achieved in business education for the next decade.
4. Business education teachers should be willing to learn and master the technologies need for teaching in the future, especially those technologies that operate outside classroom walls.
5. Business educators should be subjected to training and retraining from time to time in order to remain relevant and useful. Such in-service training programmes should be well planned in order to ensure quality.

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