

RE-ENGINEERING BUSINESS EDUCATION FOR SELF-PRODUCTIVITY AT THE SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL IN AKWA- IBOM STATE

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Abstract

The paper examined the impact of Business Education on self-employment and productivity at the secondary school level in Akwa Ibom State. The survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised all teachers and SS3 students of Business Education in Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State, totaling 2381 (134 teachers and 2247 students). The cluster sampling technique was used in selecting 251 students, while all the teachers were involved in the study. The sample size stood at 385 respondents. Data collection was done with a researcher-developed instrument tagged “Business Education and Self-Productivity Questionnaire” (BESPO). The instrument, which had 12 items, was duly validated and tested for reliability using the Cronbach alpha formula, with a reliability estimate of .69. Data analysis was done using t-test. The result indicated no significant difference in the mean responses of the respondents regarding the adequacy of facilities for teaching business education for gainful self-employment/productivity at the secondary school level. On the basis of this, it was concluded that Business Education at the secondary school level in Akwa Ibom State needs re-engineering to make it functional and relevant to the needs of the learners. It was recommended among other things, that adequate facilities should be provided for the teaching of business education in secondary schools in the State.

Business education is learning business techniques in order to run a successful business. Secondary education, according to the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004), is expected to prepare individuals for higher education or gainful employment. It covers an array of courses, including business related disciplines such as Commerce, Financial Accounting and Business Studies. On graduation from secondary school, students who are unable to further their education should be able to secure gainful self-employment through their knowledge of business-related disciplines and entrepreneurship. Disappointingly, this is not the case for several reasons, including poor preparation in business education at the secondary school level.

Students are eager to learn about business and economics, but their keenness is not always matched by the quality of teaching they receive, which too often is 'thorough but uninspiring' and fails to bring a real sense of excitement to learning (Akpomi, 2008). Business education needs re-engineering in order to ensure its relevance to the needs of the learners. This calls for some reforms in the area. Over the years, the Nigerian educational system has undergone extensive reforms with the aim of making education more relevant and functional to its citizens. Educational reform, whether formal or non-formal, is geared towards human development, in the widest sense of the term and in all its ramifications. To reform an educational system is to take necessary steps (conceptually and practically) to ensure that education responds to the need to help individuals and societies develop to the fullest (Obanya, 2004). Policies and plans cannot achieve the desired educational goals of a nation until they are translated into learning outcomes. Business education is inherently transdisciplinary. Students acquire the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes necessary to function successfully in the global business and economic environment through the integrated study of such content areas as economics, law, information and communication technology, and marketing. For example, the study of entrepreneurship, management or financial literacy requires an understanding of economics, accounting and many other business concepts" (NBEA, 2008).

Business Education as an academic subject in secondary schools should be transformed and rewritten to coincide with the demands of a new world of work and business. By promoting Business Education we can reach the threshold of 21st century skill competency for all students and continue to be a model for producing a workforce that is academically, socially, technologically savvy, team-oriented, motivated and equipped for self-employment/productivity (Gandy and Gryder, 2007).

Business education introduces students to the basics of personal finance, the decision-making techniques needed to be consumers, the economic principles of an increasingly international marketplace, and the processes by which businesses operate (NBEA Standard, 2007). Although there is much to celebrate in business education in our secondary schools, most of the lessons are thorough, but uninspiring. There is too much 'talking-at' students, and an over-dependence on textbooks. Students often

complain of insufficient direct contact with businesses and ‘hands-on’ experiences, such as running mini enterprises.

Another impediment to success in Business Education is the variable availability and quality of professional development for business and economics teachers in the state. As observed by Gilbert (2009), business teachers must be given the training they need to produce inspiring lessons. The best lessons actively engaged students through case studies of real businesses, role play, games and simulation. Teaching of Business Education in the secondary schools is of mediocre quality because it is based too heavily on description rather than involving students in considering real business problems and issues. Students taking courses assessed mainly through coursework often revealed a weak grasp of key concepts and an inability to apply their business understanding to different contexts (Gandy and Gryder, 2007).

However business courses remain popular with students, especially males, and they find them enjoyable and relevant to their future employment or self-employment. In order to make the teaching of business education interesting and relevant to the needs of the learner, education authorities should:

- Ensure consistent and high-quality professional development and training for teachers of business education to help them improve their teaching
- Promote more strongly the development of economic and business understanding for all students as part of the statutory provision for work-related learning and citizenship education.
- Provide detailed guidance on the learning outcomes that all students are expected to gain in terms of economic and business understanding and financial capability.
- Provide guidance on how schools and colleges can assess and monitor the progress students make in developing economic and business understanding and financial capability.
- Ensure that robust moderation systems exist to monitor the quality of qualifications that are assessed mainly internally through coursework assignments.

Schools Should:

- *Ensure that coursework assignments place sufficient emphasis on students’ demonstration of the skills of analysis and evaluation.*
- *Provide opportunities for students taking business courses to engage with employers and businesses.*
- *provide explicit and coherent programmes to develop all students’ economic and business understanding and financial capability, making the most effective use of the expertise of specialist teachers*
- *Develop further the use of information technology and other resources to enliven lessons (Curran and Stanworth, 2009 p. 68).*

Business is a key driver of any economy. Business education introduces the student to entrepreneurship; wealth creation and majority of jobs are created by small businesses started by entrepreneurially minded individuals, many of whom go on to create big businesses. People exposed to business education frequently express that they have more opportunity to exercise creative freedoms, higher self-esteem, and an overall greater sense of control over their own lives. As a result, many experienced business people political leaders, economists, and educators believe that fostering a robust business/entrepreneurial culture will maximize individual and collective economic and social success on a local, national, and global scale.

Business Education is a lifelong learning process, starting as early as elementary school and progressing through all levels of education, including adult education. The Standards and their supporting Performance Indicators are a framework for teachers to use in building appropriate objectives, learning activities, and assessments for their target audience. Using this framework, students will have: progressively more challenging educational activities; experiences that will enable them to develop the insight needed to discover and create business opportunities; and the expertise to successfully start and manage their own businesses to take advantage of these opportunities.

Business Education focuses on developing understanding and capacity for pursuit, of entrepreneurial behaviours, skills and attributes in widely different contexts. It can be portrayed as open to all and not exclusively the domain of the high-flying growth-seeking business person. The propensity to behave entrepreneurially is not exclusive to certain individuals. Different individuals will have a different mix of capabilities for demonstrating and acquiring entrepreneurial behaviours, skills and attributes. These behaviour can be practiced, developed and learned; hence it is important to expose all students to business and entrepreneurship education.

Entrepreneurial skills and attitudes provide benefits to society, even beyond their application to business activity. Obviously speaking, personal qualities that are relevant to entrepreneurship, such as creativity and a spirit of initiative, can be useful to everyone, in their working responsibilities and in their daily existence. Also the relevant technical and business skills need to be provided to those who choose to be self-employed and/or to start their own venture – or might do so in the future.

Business Education should be taught to students in all disciplines at the secondary school level. It is not out of place to say that many business ideas emerge from non-business disciplines but are often waved aside or ignored because students are not sufficiently educated in the knowledge and skills required.

Purpose of the Study

The study was carried out to ascertain the influence of Business Education on self-employment and productivity at the secondary school level in Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Ascertain the adequacy of facilities for the teaching of Business Education in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.
2. Determine the extent to which the teachings of Business Education in secondary schools equip students with the necessary tools for gainful self-employment and productivity.

Research Hypotheses

The null hypotheses below were formulated to direct the study.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of teachers and students on the adequacy of facilities for the teaching of Business Education in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.
2. Business education as taught in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State does not equip the students with the necessary tools for gainful self-employment and productivity.

Methodology

The survey research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of all teachers and SS3 students of Business Education in Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State, totaling 2381 (134 teachers and 2247 students). The cluster sampling technique was used in selecting 251 students, while all the teachers were involved in the study. The total sample size stood at 385 respondents. Data collection was done with a researcher-developed instrument tagged “Business Education and Self-productivity Questionnaire” (BESPQ). The instrument, which had 12 items, was duly validated and tested for reliability using the Cronbach alpha formula.

Table 1: Cronbach’s Alpha 21 Reliability Table

Instrument	K	$\sum S_i^2$	S_1^2	r – coe
BESPQ	12	0.21	0.65	0.69

With a reliability coefficient of .69 the instrument was considered significant, hence appropriate for the study.

Data Analysis and Results

The data collected were analyzed using Independent t-test analysis.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean responses of teachers and students on the adequacy of facilities for the teaching of Business Education in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 2: Weighted Means and T-Test of the Responses of Teachers and Students Regarding the Adequacy of Facilities for the Teaching of Business Education in Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State

S/N	Instructional Facilities for Business Education	Means score		t-cal value	Remarks
		Teachers	Students		
1.	The school has Business Education teachers.	2.5	2.7	0.97	NS
2.	Teaching aids are often used in teaching Business Education.	2.1	1.9	1.21	NS
3.	Business Education students are often taken on excursion.	1.1	1.1	1.01	NS
4.	Successful businessmen are usually invited to talk to the students.	1.1	1.1	1.04	NS
5.	Different aspects of Business Education are taught in the school.	2.4	2.1	1.06	NS
6.	There are good books on Business Education in the library.	2.3	2.4	1.11	NS

$N_1 = 134$; $N_2 = 251$; $df = 383$; $t\text{-cri} = 1.96$; Average $t\text{-cal} = 1.06$;

S = Significant; NS = Not Significant

Table 2 indicates no significant difference in the mean responses of the teachers and students in all the 6 identified instructional facilities for business education, with t-values less than the critical t-values of 1.96. The null hypothesis was therefore retained. Looking at the values of the mean scores, it is observed that all are below the cut-off point of 2.5, implying poor state of all the identified items.

Hypothesis 2

Business education as taught in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State does not equip the students with the necessary tools for gainful self-employment and productivity.

Table 3: Weighted means and t-test of the Responses of Teachers and Students Regarding the Relevance of Business Education to Self-Productivity

S/N	Relevance of Business Education	Means score		t-cal value	Remarks
		Teachers	Students		
1.	The students are sufficiently exposed to the rudiments of Business Education.	2.7	2.6	1.22	NS
2.	The students are exposed to the practical aspects of Business Education.	1.4	1.2	1.11	NS

Re-engineering Business Education for Self- productivity at the Secondary School Level in Akwa- Ibom State

3.	They are usually taken on field trips for practical experience.	1.01	1.01	1.02	NS
4.	They are provided with the opportunities to interact with businessmen/women.	2.2	2.1	1.26	NS
5.	They are encouraged to set up their businesses on graudation.	2.2	2.1	1.26	NS
6.	They are encouraged to have business mentors.	1.8	1.6	1.14	NS

$N_1 = 134$; $N_2 = 251$; $df = 383$; $t\text{-cri} = 1.96$; Average $t\text{-cal} = 1.13$
 S = Significant; NS = Not Significant

Table 3 shows no significant difference in the mean responses of the teachers and students in all the 6 identified items on relevance of business education, with t-values less than the critical t-values of 1.96. The null hypothesis was therefore retained. By implication, Business Education is not properly taught to secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Discussion of Findings

Data analysed in hypothesis 1 revealed no significant difference in the mean responses of both the teachers and students regarding the adequacy of instructional facilities for the teaching of Business Education in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. The mean scores of the two groups of respondents were very low, below the cut-off point of 2.50, signifying poor state of facilities for the teaching of Business Education in the schools. The finding is supported by that of Akpomi (2008). Although the students are eager to learn about business and economics, their keenness is not always matched by the quality of teaching they receive, which too often is ‘thorough but uninspiring’ and fails to bring a real sense of excitement to learning (Akpomi, 2008). Business related courses cannot be successfully taught without instructional facilities. These facilities give meaning to the lessons and excitement to the students.

Finding in hypothesis two indicated no significant difference in the mean responses of the teachers and students regarding the relevance of the teaching of Business Education to the students. The mean responses of the two groups were equally low, indicating poor preparation of the students for gainful self-employment on graduation. The finding is in line with Gandy and Gryder (2007). Business Education as an academic subject in secondary schools should be transformed and rewritten to coincide with the demands of a new world of work and business. By promoting Business Education we can reach the threshold of 21st century skill competency for all students and continue to be a model for producing a workforce that is academically, socially and technologically savvy; team-oriented, motivated and equipped for self-employment/productivity (Gandy and Gryder, 2007).

Conclusion

Based on the results of the findings, it was concluded that:

- Facilities for the teaching of Business-related subjects are inadequate in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.
- Lessons in business-related subjects are poorly delivered. This makes the students ill-equipped for gainful self-employment on graduation.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings, the following recommendations have been made.

1. More teachers should be employed to teach business-related subjects in secondary schools in the state.
2. In-service courses and workshop should be approved by relevant authorities for Business Education teachers to keep them abreast with the current trends in the field.
3. Facilities for the teaching of business related subjects should be provided in adequate quantity and quality to facilitate the teaching of the subject.
4. Provisions should be made for students of Business Education to be taken on excursion/field trips to practicalise their knowledge of the subject.
5. Schools should make arrangements to bring in successful business men/women to speak to the students in order to motivate and awaken their interest in Business Education.
6. Teachers of Business-related subjects should instill entrepreneurship spirit into the students, while encouraging them to set-up their own businesses on graduation.
7. Students of Business Education should be exposed to the different sources of securing assistance in setting up small-scale businesses.

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