

UTILIZATION OF BUSINESS EDUCATION POTENTIALS FOR MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Business Education is an aspect of education wherein emphasis is laid on preparation and participation in occupation of social values. National goals (as contained in National Policy on Education) are attained through the nature and quality of educational programmes. This paper examined the vital functions (such as provision of manpower, career opportunities, contributing to the objective of self-reliance, consumer efficiency and inculcating appropriate work habits) of Business Education Programmes in facilitating the attainment of our national objectives and to foster manpower development. Major setbacks against the optimal contributions of the programme (which include inadequate funding, planning, evaluation, awareness of programmes offerings, and curriculum defects in terms of programmes affinity and goals etc) were highlighted and recommendations made.

Introduction

'Our national development is dependent on the realization of some goals as stipulated in the National Policy on Education which are:

A free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy; a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens (FRN, 1998).

National development in this context means the upliftment of the well being of entire nation towards improving human life and living. It represents change involving complete reshaping of the entire societal system^ be it socio-economic or political. The question then is, whether there are necessary means through which these values could be achieved? One wonders if we have the means of generating the required wealth to make our nation free and self-reliant. Both the materials and human resources may be available, but do we have the trained talented individuals that can tap the nation resources? Nigerian economy has undergone so many setbacks from traditional buoyancy through imperial exploitation, oil boom; indigenization, oil glut, austerity, counter trade, Structural Adjustment Programme, privatization, deregulation etc. The dynamics of the Nigerian economic situation has been plunged into so many predicaments through various measures taken by the government. Prominent amongst them are: low level of employment, abject poverty, devaluation of naira, high inflation and ultimately a declining standard of living (Shonekan, 1996).

Education

- On the educational sphere, many measures have been taken by the governments to correct the deficiencies in the philosophical foundation of Western education which was underdeveloped. This was due to the realization that the nation depended on the skills, ingenuity and technical-know-how of their citizens for the realization of their national objectives. Since 1969, various seminars, conferences and workshops were organized and commissions have been instituted with an aim of promulgating a national education programme to revitalize education in Nigeria. The result of all these culminated into the new National Policy on Education, the 6 - 3 - 3 - 4 system of education. Various national curricula and commissions emerged along with the 6 - 3 - 3 - 4 policy at various strata of our educational system, with little achievement in terms of standard and quality of the programme and their products (Sofolahan, 1991). Thus, our educational institutions continue to turn literate but mostly uneducated/unemployable graduates. As Uzodima (1987) rightly observed, over 70% of Nigerians are unemployable because they do not possess the necessary work skills. These work skills include mastery of the theoretical, practical and work attitude, ingenuity needed to get a job performed.

Politics

On the political arena, Mba (1985) described Nigeria as a nation of division, conflict and diversity. Our divisions and diversities become vehicles for achieving selfish interests. A decree could be promulgated in the morning, amended in the afternoon and repealed the following day. Elections could be held and annulled thereafter, our leadership and policies have been unstable and unpredictable. The spirit of democracy, patriotism and nationalism continue to elude us. Instead we embark on ethno-centricism, statism and sectionalism all of which thrive and continue to jeopardize our national development. Several socio-cultural vices such as indiscipline, robbery, arson, looting, bomb blast, religious/ethnic bigotry, poor attitude to work and god fatherism further compound the problems in our society. A country like ours bedeviled with these vices certainly cannot be said to be developed, hence lack of adequate basic ingredients of national development. It is not a surprising thing to note that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1996) classified Nigeria as the 13th poorest nation on earth with Gross National Product of £675 and 9th most illiterate nation.

National Development

The central focus now is how to come about the appropriate ingredients of national development so as to pursue our national developmental aspirations. As economic development is said to be the basis of national development, it is therefore pertinent to examine the major contributory factor in the production of wealth - the labour force. Manpower development is one of the major instruments designed to improve and upgrade the characteristics of the Nigerian economy outside technological, national and political development and stability (World Bank, 1979). A special well trained labour-force (manpower) is the key to the wealth of any nation as seen by Striner (1982). Since we cannot claim to have such a well trained manpower in Nigeria, we have to find an appropriate way of coming about it. This could be found in the pavilion of Education. The type and quality of educational programme that can bring about the desired national objectives is in no other than the Vocational Business Education.

Business Education

Hill (1922) defined Business Education as an aspect of education where in emphasis is laid on the preparation and participation in occupations of social values. Thus, Business Education possesses the qualities that inculcate the value of respect for the dignity of labour, for work and dignity of individual; faith in man's ability to make rational decisions as well as shared responsibility for the common good of the society as required, by the National Policy on Education (FRN, 1989) Business Education strives to achieve the three domains of taxonomy of education namely:

Cognitive -- developing individual intellectual ability; psychomotive-
enabling the individual to acquire vocational skills and affective - instilling in the
individual the right social values and work habits (Bloom, 1979).

Business Education offers an individual the opportunity of becoming an intelligent consumer of economic goods and services (Lornax, 1967). It does this by enabling him understand the economic system of the society through such knowledge as economic consumer education, general business law, Computer Education, marketing, accountancy, management and so forth.

Anyaduba (1986) summarized the goals of Business Education when he stated that "it is concerned with the education of the individual for business and about business". In addition to provide general education, it is also designed for vocational training (Tonne, 1954; and Ulinfun, 1986). Thus, Business Education provides learners with adequate occupational intelligence and skills for occupation, choice and development, training for career preparation and work adjustment in the individual's chosen occupation such as typewriting and data processing. The citizenry in today's business world needed to be better informed (Aina, 1985), so as to improve the general economic system of our society.

The Functions of Business Education in Manpower Development

Business Education is pivotal to all aspects of managing our national economy. It offers ingredients needed for higher productivity, efficiency and effectiveness in resource utilization (Eguelu, 1992). Vocational Business Education plays the following vital roles in the development of our national economy.

1. Self Reliance

Business Education contributes to the objectives of self-reliance by establishing relationships between students' educational programme and the world of work. As Ulinfun (1986) rightly asserted that:

and indeed it is training of an individual's total person for business, in business and about business. Individual is therefore trained to develop knowledge, competences and attitude that would enable him fit into the economic world as employed or self-employed.

2. Work Habits and Social Values

Business Education inculcates appropriate work habits and social norms. Nigerians are known generally to possess very poor attitudes towards work and lack of dignity of labour exemplified in lateness, absenteeism, insolence and rude behaviours (Ivok, 1987). Business Education has a wide range of programmes such as field study trips, seminars, workshops and Students' Industrial Work Experience/Teaching Practice. All these programmes give the individual student personal character, loyalty, accountability, cooperation, prudence and business etiquette. The inculcation of all these character traits go a long way in increasing our productivity at work and vis-a-vis manpower development, and also avails its students the opportunity of an on-the-job training, thereby giving them the feeling of working on the actual job situation before completing their studies.

3. Consumer Economic Efficiency

Business Education contributes to the objective of consumer economic efficiency. Balasa (1987) opined that:

As a producer an individual will be able to make judicious allocation of the productive resources and as a consumer, he becomes an informed and skilled buyer; he develops standards for guiding his expenditure.

Thus, Business Education provides training for, in and out of business world ranging from investment opportunities, insurance policies, advertisement, mode of financial transaction, means of payment and borrowing to entrepreneurship.

1. Career Opportunities

A wide range of career opportunities are provided for the beneficiaries of Business Education programme. Occupational fields, ranging from accounting, banking, insurance, education, marketing, data processing and so forth, exist in all the business organizations in the Nigerian economy. Business and related disciplines account for most of the job vacancies being advertised in our Nigerian magazines. For instance an analysis of job vacancies advertised in New Nigerian magazine revealed 51% for business and related disciplines as against 34% in engineering/medical and related disciplines (New Nigerian, May, 1998).

2, Provision of Manpower/Skill Acquisition

Business Education programme provides training and retraining in knowledge, skills and attitude both within and outside the school setting. Products of Business Education could be seen in all spheres of economic life as accountants, managers, consultants, analysts, secretaries and so forth. It assists in the provision of manpower for gainful employment as well as opportunities for an individual to grow and advance in his chosen career. By so doing the individual becomes more skilled, productive, competent and income generating because, the scarce resources would be effectively managed. Perhaps, it was in recognition of the above facts that the National Policy on Education NPE establishes a link between education and national objectives as:

The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competences both mental and physical for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society (FRN, 1989).

Set backs

Despite the laudable objectives and role played by Business Education in national development, its programme is faced with serious constraints. Studies in Aina (1985) and Ahukanah (1987) identified the following major constraints of Business Education.

i. Inadequate Funding

There is inadequate funding of education and to acquire and maintain the needed equipment and facilities. Funding of education has always been a hydra-headed problem. Since it is capital intensive and more of social service, the government feels reluctant to pump funds into it as she would to the petroleum sector. If education is not funded and it collapses, all other economic sectors will automatically crumble.

ii. Inadequate Planning and Supervision

There is lack of adequate planning, supervision and evaluation of programme activities on the part of educational planners and administrators. Proper planning, supervision and evaluation of educational programmes would enhance maximum production of manpower for national development, if not, educational programme would be unproductive and shabby.

iii. Lack of Adequate Awareness of Programme Offerings

There is lack of adequate awareness of programme offerings, values and roles played in national development on the parts of parents, students, business community and administrators. Creating adequate awareness of Business Education programme, its values, and roles played in national development would go a long way to boost the morale of business community, parents and their wards for maximum output in the Nigerian economy.

iv. Lack of Opportunities for Retraining

There are inadequate opportunities for training, retraining and development of experts especially in terms of sponsorship and graduate level programmes. If personnel are sponsored, it would stimulate their interest for optimum production of wealth for the entire nation. Poor training leads to poor performance and consequently a fall in the standard of educational programme in the society.

v. High Rate of Teacher Turnover

There is high rate of teacher turnover, caused by such factors as poor conditions of service, lack of commitment and the desire for quick money syndrome in the society. When a teacher is allowed to work under hard condition, he/she cannot perform wonders, he tries to make ends meet from other ends; there is bound to be lack of commitment and dedication and subsequently a fall in the standard of educational programmes affecting both the learner and the entire society,

vi. Curriculum Defects

There is defect in the curriculum in terms of programme affinity and goals. The curriculum question is about what should be included in the syllabi, who are involved in planning, administration and evaluation and at what stage? Who has a final authority? Is it the government, teacher, society or the economic sector? All these pose a problem to curriculum planning and implementation. Curriculum planning can be a joint effort of all those that are involved in deriving its benefits but to be overseen by trained experts (teachers). The teachers are the implementers of the subject curriculum and are better placed to measure and evaluate whether or not the curriculum so designed has achieved the yearnings of the learners, individuals, as well as the society.

Recommendations

1. Education is the pivot of all human endeavours, therefore, it has to be funded by all viable economic sectors (industries, commercial banks, and petroleum) where high percentage profit is made annually.
2. There is an urgent need for the curriculum to be reviewed in the universities and colleges to include more vocational business courses to prepare professionals for participation in industrial, public service and private business managements.
3. Research grants/allowances should be given to researchers to enable them determine areas of occupational requirements as well as requisite work habits and competences.
4. Governments and educational institutions on their part should stop the unilateral introduction of educational programmes.
5. More intensive on-the-job training such as workshops and seminars should be organized for those who have graduated and are already working, so as to arm them for management tasks.

Conclusion

The bane of our economic and social problems has virtually been our inability to manage our resources efficiently as manifested during the oil boom and Gulf War periods. Education and economic development are linked together with education being the determinant factor.

There has been a public outcry about the calibre of graduates of our educational institutions. Nigeria should therefore have to pursue vigorously a viable functional education programme to enable it achieve its national objectives. This paper is strongly advocating for Business Education programme as pivotal to all aspects of managing our national economy. It offers all ingredients needed for higher productivity, efficiency and effectiveness in resource management. Similarly if business is the main engine of economic

growth, then Business Education is the gas that fuels the engine.

For Business Education to perform its veritable role in the Nigerian economy, all constraints in the implementation of its 6 - 3 - 3 - 4 curricula are to be eliminated. The utilization of Business Education potentials for manpower development has to be abreast with relevant employment opportunities, skill acquisition through such means as organizing workshops, seminars, industrial attachment and sabbatical leave placements

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