

VISION AND MISSION OF BUSINESS EDUCATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Dangana, A. Bawa

Abstract

The business, commerce, industry, including the educational sector need new information and technology systems for prompt and efficient activities. The recent information technological changes have considerably altered business functions and programmes. The effect of these innovations is felt in virtually all human endeavours. For business education to thrive and in order to prepare students for the present and the future, attempt must be made to -urgently incorporate technological developments in our school systems. The new information technology systems directly affect work in the areas of professional aids, document production, filing/retrieving and communication aids which come about as a result of three technologies-computing, micro-electronics and telecommunication. This paper focuses on the concepts of business and information technology, highlighting the challenges posed, impact/benefits of these new systems to business education.

Introduction

Business education as a programme and field of study is very vital in the wheel of nation building, contributing positively and very significantly to all facets of the national development and by extension to improving human capital, social, economic, political and material resources. Business education has touched and is still touching the lives of many in the industries, commerce, business offices, communication as well as in information and technological sub-sectors of the Nigerian economy.

The new information technology systems is relatively new to the Nigerian society and its application to the educational industry is viewed with fear and mistrust. The traditional business teacher is used to the chalkboard and printed material to supplement his teaching method, while the business students are used to the presence of the business teacher, the security and belongingness the confines of the classroom offers. The present technological era has (partially and not wholly) replaced the human teachers with electronic tutor, the chalkboard with electronic screens, pages of books with soft-copies logged in the computer memory and libraries with the CD Rom packages. The new development offers students the opportunity to step outside the walls of the classroom when is appropriate and desirable to do so.

The twenty-first century, no doubt, poses a great and significant challenge to business education in the new area of information technology. This is because, the rate of growth in information handling is quite alarming and should be a major concern to all business educators. We are currently living in an information society and global environment where computer age is already giving way to information age. According to Nwosu (1999) and Osuala (2004), the world focus now is on information technology (IT) and how business can be transacted through the information superhighway.

Philosophy of Business Education

The quest for standards by the tripod of excellence in tertiary education supervision in Nigeria- The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and the National Universities Commission (NUC) has made possible the blue-prints on Vocational and Technical Teacher Education in Nigeria of which Business Education is an integral part. The Philosophy(ies) of N.C.E, B.ED; M.ED, and Ph.D. Business Education, is to understand the concept and philosophy of the National Policy on Education (NPE, 1998 Rev.) as regards Business Education in national development.

Concept of Business Education

The concept of business education has been severally defined. Many authors define business education in the context of general orientation for proper understanding of business activities. Some see it as a vocational training in selected business and office skills, while others define business education as a phase of education which prepares teachers/educators for the teaching of business subjects.

However, in order to better understand the concept of business education, few of the many versions put forward as the definitions of business education by scholars, leaders and authorities in business education are presented.

According to the Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education

(1975) in Osu (1987);

Business education represents a broad and diverse discipline that is included in all types of educational delivery systems, elementary, secondary, and post secondary...Business education can begin at any level, it can be interrupted for varying periods of time; and it can be continued throughout the life span of an individual. Business education includes education for office occupations, distribution and marketing occupation, business teaching, business administration and economic understandings (pp. 53).

Esene (1997), points out that there is a two-fold philosophy of business education:

- (1) It offers to every individual an opportunity to develop those skills, abilities and understandings that will enable him to handle competently his personal business affairs to develop an understanding of the vocational opportunities available in the broad field of business and to assume his citizenship duties through enlightening participation in and understanding, and appreciation of Nigerian enterprise system.
- (2) It offers to the learner who wishes to pursue a career in business an opportunity to develop an understanding that will qualify him to perform and progress in a business occupation from senior high school or to enter a tertiary institution for vocational business programme and on graduation fit into employment in the economy.

Business education, according to Osuala (1998), is a programme of instruction which consists of two parts:

- (a) Office education, a vocational education programme for office careers through initial, refresher, and upgrading education leading to employability and advancement in office occupations, and
- (b) General business education, a programme to provides students with information and competencies which are needed by all in managing personal business affairs and in using the services of the business world.

Okoh (1999), observes that training teachers of business courses is only an integral part of business education. It is also concerned with the training of individuals to fit into occupations outside the classroom. He concludes by saying that business education is an all-embracing concept.

Tonne (1961) as cited by Agbionu (2001), states that business education is

A type of training which, while it helps to achieve all the aims of education at any level of training, has for its primary objective, the preparation of students' entrance upon a business career; or having entered upon such a career, to render more efficient service therein and to advance their present levels (pp. 121).

Osuala (2004), further states that business education represents a broad and diverse discipline that is included in all types of educational delivery system, elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities. Business education (Osuala, 2004), includes education for office occupations, distribution and marketing occupations, business teaching, business administration and economic understandings.

Mission of Business Education

According to the Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education (1975) in Osu (1987), the mission of business education is:

1. To educate individuals for and about business

2. To provide a continuous programme of planned learning experiences designed to equip individuals to fulfill, effectively, three roles:
 - (a) To promote and distribute goods and services as workers,
 - (b) To use the results of production as consumers; and
 - (c) To make judicious socio-economic decisions as citizens.
3. To provide career information that helps students relate their interests, needs and abilities to occupational opportunities in business.
4. To provide educational opportunities for students preparing for careers in fields other than business to acquire business knowledge and skills needed to function effectively in those careers, for example, to handle effectively both oral and written communications and to develop effective inter-personal and human relations skills.

The mission of business education at the college and university level, according to Osuala (1999), is to train the necessary manpower for industry, business, public and private business establishments.

Osuala (1999), states that in line with its mission, business education opens various career opportunities to its graduates, namely, teaching in schools at various levels (depending on level of the degrees (qualification) obtained); working in commerce and the public sector of the nation's economy, undergoing advanced studies in business, taking up management positions in various organizations, and developing training programmes for industries and business.

The Role and Functions of Business Education

The role of business education in the development of students' vocational and academic abilities cannot be over emphasized. Osuala (1998), opines that business education through the business educators sponsor business seminars for students, training and re-training workshops and conferences for the practicing business educators, develop a resource library in the business education department, encourage inter-school activities and provide opportunities for students to participate in professional and civic organizations. All these are done to help build up the students' academic and vocational abilities.

Looking at the functions of business education, it has in so many ways helped and contributed in manpower development for any nation. It reflects previous education and experiences; career needs, learning goals and personal aspirations of students. Business education prepares managers and employees to be workers with institutions of business and to give extension and rehabilitation education to those already employed in business occupation. In the same vein, it provides career guidance to adult students to increase their awareness of varied job opportunities and changing requirement for career entering and achievement. It provides training, which reflects changes and innovations in business brought about by technological advances. It also meets the needs of adults including the handicapped, disadvantaged and gifted. It equally prepares individuals for work in local business and other organizations as well as provides wide-ranging interest, abilities and goals of adult learners.

Concept of Information Technology

Various authors have attempted to define information technology from different standpoints.

Evans (1986), states that information technology is the acquisition, processing, storage, and dissemination of vocal, pictorial, textual and numerical information by a micro-electronic based combination of computer and telecommunication. According to him, this means that information technology simply is the application of technology to information.

According to Chartterton (1992), information technology is the application of science of Aluenyi (2000), describes information technology as the host of systems, equipment and materials essentially computer based which is used to achieve the set goals of an organization in relation to the functions of an office. Aluenyi (2000), describes information technology as the host of systems, equipment and materials essentially computer based which is used to achieve the set goals of an organization in relation to the functions of an office.

information handling.

Trends in Information Technology and Vision of Business Education in the 21st Century

Information technology no doubt, is not a new idea. We have been applying technology to information for a very long time. However, it has created a lot of excitement lately because of the rapid advances in the technology that is associated with microprocessors, and its product revolution which started with three key inventions-the typewriter, the telephone and the computer. Since then, information technology has expanded the use of these basic instruments-The Computer, Word Processor, the Telephone, the Internet, the Electronic Mail (E-mail), Facsimile, Teleconferencing, Voice Messaging System, Videotext, Interactive Radio, Connectivity and Computer Aided

Instruction.

In the 21st century, the business teacher's working environment would need a total overhaul. His/her office would no longer be infested with potholes and/or sometimes dead and stinking rugs and air-conditioners. A fresh and attractive environment will add to teacher satisfaction and an indication to the student-teacher trainee that teaching is not worthless after all.

The 21st century business education major would be equipped not only with 'business skills' but also with 'entrepreneurship skills' such that on graduation, such a graduate can gain employment, establish a vocational business outfit or combine both, can float evening classes offering instructions in typewriting, shorthand, business and office methods, accounting and commerce thereby creating job for self and others.

In the face of the unfolding realities of information technology holding sway in the 21st century, this would lead to the introduction and provision of services based on member cards, electronic funds transfer. Business education of this century will bring out the knowledge and use of innovations in information technology whereby with the aid and use of Information Technology, the business world will provide a range of services/products that are customer satisfaction oriented and the customer will dictate the mode of provision.

In the empowerment of the business environment, any business that survives and operates in the 21st century will be one that will be reaping the fruit of its labour in building a clientele made up of customers it has groomed, polished and encouraged to utilize services with enhanced revenue and income.

In the 21st century, business education will lead to self-reliance, therefore, graduates will no longer wait to be employed by government establishments, instead, they can set up business of their own and get others employed, thus improving the nation's economy.

The economic environment of the 21st century will be technologically driven, making the economy globalized and turning the whole world into a global village with countries and nations being tiny parts of it. Industrial standards will be uniform, making goods and services to be of the same specifications, quality and utility values. A lot of attention will be paid to environmental developments and improvements, so as to facilitate and maintain industrial and social development and growth.

A people of averagely high literacy level that would be well educated and sophisticated will populate business education in the 21st century. They would be so well enlightened that they would be fully aware of their rights and privileges as citizens of the country and customers of organizations and companies.

Several knowledgeable people have forecast what the 21st century will be like. Aina (2000), opines that for our own purpose, a compendium of relevant features will suffice.

- Globalization.
- Competitive pressure.
- Reducing of international boundaries.
- Mobility of capital and labor.
- Increased trade flows through liberalization and the Internet.
- New technologies especially in information and communication.
- Growth of the service industries.
- Increase in leisure, culture and tourism.
- Increased anxiety and fear stemming from changes in occupation.

According to Lee Hai-Chan in Aina (2000),

...We are about to step into a new era of unprecedented changes as national boundaries disappear and globalisation proceeds. Future jobs will require more diverse vocational abilities and knowledge, calling for educational reforms and a guaranteed system of life long learning (pp. 263).

Aina (2000) concludes that if we, as business educators, are not satisfied with the status quo, and if indeed we are not satisfied with what traditional education has achieved for our society, then we must provide an alternative and according to him, we are in a position to do so.

Recommendations

For business education of the 21st century to be relevant to technology and national development, the following suggestions are proffered.

1. The Business Education Curriculum needs to be reviewed/updated to reflect a new programme structure in view of its meeting the ideal business education curriculum
2. Proper administration and thorough supervision/monitoring should be carried out regularly so that the actual objective and the general purpose of business education would be achieved maximally at all levels of human endeavor.
3. Provision of adequate, modern and state of the art equipment, facilities and personnel for use, training and re-training both staff and students for skills, competencies and efficiency.
4. Business education should as a matter of utmost urgency, be re-evaluated, re-organized and re-designed.
5. Lastly, there should be good and harmonious working relationship between the institutions and industries to make for a better training and acquisition of skills relevant and needed since the institution alone may not be able to procure, acquire and own all the necessary equipment needed for training.

Conclusion

Business education of today is no longer business education of yester-years. It should now be treated and handled from the global point of view because its study makes students experience the practical application and use of basic skills for real work situation. Pragmatism is the actual philosophy of business education, so this all important function and role should not be over-looked in the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies. The realities of the business world are reflected in course and programme contents and teaching/instructional strategies that incorporate current business practice and the professional activities of business teaching. These course contents are found in Accounting as well as teaching practice and students' industrial work experience (SIWES), Marketing and Distributive, Secretarial and Office Education, Business Administration and Management programmes etc. The relevance of business education will reduce the global world to a tiny global village with the use of the various technological advances for technology and national development in the 21st century.

References

- Agbionu, E. (2001). Adjusting NCE Business Education Programme Towards Promotion of Entrepreneurial Success. *Business Education Journal*, 3 (4), 119-126.
- Aina, O. (2000). Future Directions in Business Education. *Business Education Journal*, 3 (3), 259-266.
- Atuenyi, N.C. (2000). *The Role of Information Technology in Business: The Secretary*, (7th Ed) (Pp. .23-24)
- Chartterton, P. (1992). *Technology Tools for Your Home and Office*. London: Kogan Page Limited.

- Esene, R.A. (1997). *A Handbook on Managing Teaching-Learning Process for Business Education*. Agbor: Royal Pace Publications.
- Evans, D.W. (1986). *People and Communication* (4th Ed). London: Pitman Publishing Limited.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (1998). *National Policy on Education*. Lagos: NERDC.
- Okoh, N. (1999). Business Education: Vision and Mission for Sustainable Economy Key-Note Address. *Business Education Journal*, 3 (2), 1-8.
- Osu, O.E. (1987). Business Education in a Developing Economy: The Nigerian Case. *Business Education Journal*, 2 (1), 51-58.
- Osuala, E.G. (1998). *Foundations of Vocational Education* (3rd Ed). Onitsha: Cape Publishers International Limited.
- Osuala, E.G. (1999). *Foundations of Vocational Education* (4th Ed). Awka: Meks Publishers Limited.
- Osuala, E.G. (2004). *Principles and Methods of Business and Computer Education*. Enugu: Cheston Agency Limited.

