

PREPARING THE BUSINESS TEACHER FOR THE INFORMATION/COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY ERA: ISSUES AND STRATEGIES

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Abstract

The introduction of information and communication technology (ICT) demands the acquisition and development of new skills, attitudes and knowledge in the preparation of business teacher-trainees. This will enable training institutions align the curriculum to current realities to meet the expectations of employment community. This paper examined 5 conceptual issues of Business Teacher Education curriculum program in our training institutions which border on the quality of candidates for the business teacher training program, inadequacy of training facilities, ill-equipped student-teachers, the relevance of the Business Teacher Education curriculum to meeting the emergent needs of the student, employer and national education goals as well as evaluating the Business teacher education programme. Strategies for effective business teacher curriculum implementation in the ICT era were proffered.

Introduction

Education is an organized system of learning. It can be rightly said that learning is about information which comes to the learner to help him adapt to his immediate environment and meet his immediate needs at his particular stage of development in that environment (Thompson, 1981). Whatever information a child gets, helps to determine his future focus. As a result, a properly planned and implemented curriculum is expected to aid the child in fitting into his environment and surviving. The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) made Nigeria a purpose-driven nation with its own identity to give the child knowledge that will be helpful and healthful to his growth. According to the (FRN, 2004), "government shall provide necessary infrastructure and training for the integration of information and communication technology (ICT), in the school system in recognition of the role of ICT in advancing knowledge and skill in the modern world". The process of teaching and learning and the overall educational development of Nigeria is a central issue of contemporary interest and concern. It is a truism that both teaching and learning depend on teachers, for there can be no meaningful socio-economic and political development in any society without teachers. Upon their number, their quality and their devotion, rest the effectiveness of all educational arrangement". Afe (2002), opined that even with the best of educational policy and design and the expenditure of colossal sums of money for education the ultimate realization of any set of aims for education depends on the *teacher*, as he will ultimately be responsible for translating policy into action and principles into practice in his interactions with his students. This paper reflects on the strategies to be adopted in using the generally accepted educational principles in the preparation of Business Teacher Education curriculum in Nigeria as it relates to information and communication technology.

Theoretical Framework

Curriculum can be defined, as a set of intentions about opportunities for engagement of person to be educated with other persons and with things (all bearers of information, processes, techniques and value) in certain arrangements of times and space. It can also be referred to as the sum total of the educative experiences of the pupils during his schooling period. It consists of educational objective, a body of subject matter and a list of activities to be performed to achieve the objectives. The extent to which a curriculum assists, business students and business teacher-trainees to competently enter and succeed in the work world spells out success. Any curriculum that is not developed systematically or that becomes static or irrelevant will soon have an adverse effect on all who come in contact with it (Finch and Crunkilton, 1984). Finch and Crunkilton (1984), further declared that a vocational Business Teacher education curriculum should be data-based, dynamic, explicit in its outcomes, fully articulated, realistic, student-oriented, evaluation-conscious and future-oriented.

In order for teacher education curriculum to be relevant Wheeler (1967), sees curriculum planning and development as a continuous process which he presented in a diagram that is cyclical in nature. It has the following phases.

1. The selection of aims, goals and objectives.
2. The selection of learning experiences calculated to help in the attainment of these aims, goals and objective.
3. The selection of content (subject matter) through which certain types of experiences may be offered.
4. The organization and integration of learning experiences and content with respect to the teaching/learning process within the school and classroom.
5. Evaluation of the effectiveness of all aspects of phases 2, 3 and 4 in attaining the goals detailed in phase 1. These phases are related, interdependent and combined to form a cyclical process so that over time the final phase affects the initial one.

The education of teachers in Nigeria have been expanding and growing over the years. This expansion is as a result of increase in personnel, and facilities, increase in private schools and the great demand for teachers in the private sector. In the third National Development Plan (1975-80), the federal government asserted that "the quality of the teaching staff is probably the most important determinant of educational standards at all levels". Again, in the FRN, (2004), the government declared that:

- (a) "Since no education system may rise above (he quality of its teaches, teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development; and
- (b) The minimum qualification for entry into (lie teaching profession shall be the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NICE)."

For teacher quality to rise above the education system, a strong teacher education programme is required. Afe (2002), stated that teacher education is that component of any educational system charged with the education and training of teachers to acquire the competencies and skills of teaching for the improvement in the quality of teachers for the school system.

The FRN (2004). stated the specific objectives of Teacher Education to include:

- (a) production of well-motivated *business* teachers with high personal and professional discipline, integrity and competence for all levels of the educational system;
- (b) preparation of teachers with appreciable expertise in curriculum planning, development and delivery as well as competence in research, guidance and counseling;
- (c) production of professionals who combine use of conventional teaching strategies and the world's unfolding ICT in the generation and imparting of knowledge, attitudes and skills;
- (d) continuous preparation and upgrading of teachers who can stand out for their professional competencies, sense of social responsibility and commitment, to function effectively as constructive socio-economic, moral and spiritual change agents needed to promote goodwill, peace and progress not only in the country but also in the world of the 21st century; and
- (e) exposing the *business* teachers to the acquisition of pedagogical, occupational and entrepreneurial competencies necessary for self-reliance.

Business Education is an aspect of educational programme offered at the higher institution of learning, which prepare students for careers in business. Ubulom (2000), sees Business education as the pedagogical and business competencies necessary for leaching business attitudes, concepts, skills and knowledge. Ubulom, further, staled, that it can be seen as aspects of educational or training process which an individual receives with the primary motive of enabling him acquire adequate altitudes, concepts, knowledge, understanding and skills in business activities for his persona! or for vocational usage, for careers as an administrator or manager or teacher, wherever he may find himself in the business world.

Business teacher education therefore, encompasses such programme that are designed to give pedagogical training to those who will be engaged in the teaching of (1) JSS Business Studies, (2) Compartmentalized single business subjects at the senior secondary school (SSS) which includes Book-keeping and Accounts, Commerce, Economics, Typewriting and Shorthand, and (3) At the higher institutions where they will be required to teach courses in Accounting, Business Management, Computer Operations, Secretarial Studies, Business Methodology, Business Curriculum Development and other Business related fields.

The business teacher education curriculum is structured in such a way that student-teachers are made to

complete training in the four major components of Teachers Education:

- a. General Education.
- b. Professional (Pedagogical) Education.
- c. Teaching subjects (business).
- d. Teaching Practice (NPE, 2004).

In Nigeria, there are different programmes of Teacher Education. These include programmes that are run by (a) Colleges of Education; (b) Faculties of Education; (c) Institutes of Education; (d) National Teacher's Institutes (NTI); (e) Schools of Education in the Polytechnics; (f) National Institutes for Nigerian Languages (NINLAN); and (g) National Mathematics Centre (NCCE, 1996; FRN, 2004).

Conceptual Issues in Business Teacher Education Programme in Nigeria

L The Quality of the Candidates for Business Education Programme: Going by the provisions of the NPE (2004), the Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE) remains the minimum qualification for those who are supposed to be teachers in the Nigeria educational system. Generally, the minimum entry requirement in teaching is too low in terms of length of duration of training for it to be called a profession (Imogie, 1999). It is an accepted fact that recruitment makes possible the product of effective and adaptive teachers. Fafunwa (1967), identified amongst others, categories of teachers to be found in Nigeria as:

- (a) Those who cannot make good elsewhere, but they have the minimum academic qualification required to join the teaching profession from necessity rather than from choice, and
- (b) Those who have not been to secondary schools or equivalent institutions because of their inability to pass the entrance examination, or because of lacking opportunity to do so in the past.

Such a medley of entrants to the teacher education programme in our schools today constitute the root of the recruitment of competent and professionally trained business teachers into the school system. According to Afe (1992) the Baguda seminar report (1980) indicated that Nigeria would need 369,000 teachers in 1982. In the area of vocational education alone Ehiamentalor (1985), projected that more than 21,000 teachers, would be required which resulted in the crash programme to rush potential teachers through the teacher training colleges. Ehiamentalor (2003) reported that in this direction several problems were encountered: amongst which is the available potential teacher entrants with the required qualification were few and would not be enough to feed the school;; As a result, the entry qualification into the NCE Teacher Training programmes was lowered to three credit passes in the school certificate examination and later to two credits and a pass. Some decided to run remedial programmes for the unqualified candidates for one year before enrolling in the NCE programme. The end result is that many of the women who had abandoned education to sell pepper and salt in the market enrolled in the teacher training college, to the detriment of the system. Those who were already Grade II teachers went on to a one-year pivotal programme, to enable them teach in the Junior Secondary School (Ehiamentalor, 2003). The poor quality of teachers according to Maxwell (1986) in Osho (1994) can be ascribed to the low entry behaviour of pre-service teachers. He explained further that the majority of pupils who opt for Business Education from the SSS are low achievers who invariably exhibit mediocrity in their output.

2. *Inadequacy of Training Facilities for Business Teacher Education Programme:* Chika

(2000), opined that training equipment and facilities needed for effective instruction of business education should be a replica of what is obtained and used in business offices and which the business teacher trainee must appreciate their importance. Chika, further stated that wherever these facilities and equipment are utilized, they generate greater student's interest in the learning system and also enhance retention of ideas. Nowadays, there is a short-fall in funding of tertiary institutions by the government and other stakeholders in the country, and this trend is affecting the purchase of various equipment and facilities required for training the business educators. Ugiaghc (2003) opined that poor funding cause acute shortage of typewriters, computer systems, furniture and sizeable laboratories which would make leaching and learning conducive. This has resulted to dividing students into groups during typewriting/computer practical lessons and this is why students no longer have time and space for practicing the skilled subjects in addition to normal lecture/practical periods/hours. This is invariably lowering secretarial skill acquisition.

- 3. *Ill-Equipped Business Educators.*** The preparation of teachers posed another problem. Uwameiye and Osunde (2000) opined that the nine colleges of Education (Technical) which were established to train teachers for the programme outside the four Universities and other state Colleges of Education could not cope with the number of teachers required for the

programme. They stated further that the teachers were poorly trained, as many could not teach the subjects they were trained in, particularly shorthand and book-keeping. As a result of inadequate training of the Business Educators, incompetence both in the teaching and occupational entrepreneurial skills has set in. The ability of the teachers to perform will depend on the type of training available to them, the quality of facilities, materials and the environment under which they operate (Ehiamefalor, 2003).

4. *The Relevance of the Business Teacher Education Programme to the needs of the students* in the secondary/technical/vocational schools, business skill acquisition centres/colleges. The student is studied so as to be able to assess his needs and aspirations, dispositions, interests and other factors that can influence effective teaching learning in Business Studies. Ojo (2005) identified the needs of the student at this level to include (i) exposing students to career awareness by exploring usable options in the world of work; (ii) opportunities for proceeding into the SSS; and (iii) to be able to set up his own business with minimal further training.

Education is considered in Nigeria to provide the magic for development as in the advanced countries of the world. In recent times, emphasis is placed on the study of technical, vocational and scientific subject areas at all levels of the education system. This notion has led to the review of the school curricula to reflect contemporary needs. Concerning relevance it is generally accepted that Business Education will enhance employment and accelerate economic development, hence integration into the national education policy at the secondary school level as business studies. Business Teacher Education programme should therefore be viewed from the point of occupational and pedagogical competence, relevance to the needs of the student, society and employers, comprehensiveness in scope, depth in knowledge and competence in skills.

5. *Evaluation of the Business Teacher Education Programme:* The question that may readily come to mind is (a) how are these programmes evaluated to ascertain that they are appropriate or well equipped to meet the requirements of the teachers they are to train? (b) who accredits and who obtains the reports for programme improvement? What types of work experience or practice are the student-teachers exposed to before they graduate? Who evaluates such exposures? (c) How often are field teachers evaluated to ascertain that they are current with changes and innovations in information and communication technology? Who does the evaluation and how are the results used? (Olaitan, 1985).

Information and Communication Technology Environment and Business Education in Nigeria

The greatest challenge that faces the profession and practice of business educators (and indeed the whole of mankind) is the progress and innovations offered by technological developments since mid-1990s. These developments are so pervasive that no field of human endeavor has been spared. Such innovations have created new possibilities for improving health and nutrition, knowledge expansion, economic growth stimulation and people empowerment (Oke, 2003). The combination of developments in information and communication technology (ICT), Biotechnology and perhaps, still emerging, Nanotechnology is projected to be capable of touching virtually all aspects of human activity. This means that the Business teacher-trainee curricula should be updated as new technologies emerge.

The word 'internet' is an acronym which derives from the words "international network". It may be defined as a massive international network of computers. A network is a term used to describe the system whereby computers are linked or connected together. The connection is usually done by means of cables like coaxial cables, optical fibers, etc. When two or more computers that are great distance apart are to be linked or connected together, the use of telecommunication lines, which justifies the need to use a modem is inevitable. A modem is a device that is used to link or connect a computer system to a telephone line, at both ends.

Nigeria belongs to the underdeveloped side of the digital divide. The use of information and communications technology in Nigeria is still at a very low ebb for the following reasons:

- 1) A very high percentage of Nigerians are illiterate.
- 2) Power supply is erratic. Power surges can destroy computer systems. Alternative sources of power like generators (UPS) are costly to acquire and run.
- 3) The telephone density is low. The country with a population of over 120 million, has less than 500,000 telephone lines (Obi, 2001). However, with the recent introduction of Global System of Mobile communication (GSM mobile phone), millions of additional lines are expected to be available for the next few years through MTEL, VMobile, MTN, Globacom, the current GSM

license holders in Nigeria.

- 4) The computer density is low. Nigeria has less than 6 computers per 1000 people (Obi, 2001).

If these problems are addressed, Nigeria can be integrated into the digitalized and globalised economy and reap huge benefits. Currently, more and more organizations are computerizing their operations. The most rapid rate of computerization is in the banking industry. A few banks are already fully computerized and offer a wide range of services including Internet banking, 24 hours a day and seven days a week cash withdrawals and lodgments as well as other timely efficient benefits and services.

The Internet offers wide range of functions to business and business educators too numerous to mention. Some are listed below.

- (a) *Exchanges of Information Round the Globe* are possible. Besides, it affords you speedy and quick access to global information e.g. CNN news, BBC world, Encyclopedia, scholarships, etc.
- (b) *E-commerce/On-Line Shopping*: It affords one the opportunity of buying and selling on the net as well as advertising your products and job vacancies.
- (c) *E-Library*: It provides the opportunity of access to books, journals, magazines and newspapers on the net.
- (d) *E-Learning/Education*: Distant learning can be conducted via the net. You do not need to travel to citadels of learning as you can receive lectures, write examinations and bag a degree right there in your house, through the Internet.
- (e) *E-mail*: Electronic mail is the most common and most enjoyed functions of the Internet. E-mail makes it possible for you to receive and send mails from and to any part of the world right there on your seat with your computer.
- (f) *E-Banking*: Bank transactions can be carried out on the net. Monies can be deposited, withdrawn and transferred from one bank to another, and accounts updated electronically through the Internet.
- (g) *Teleconferencing*: Through the internet, leaders of respective nations can meet for discussions with each one, not having to move out of his office or country to a particular venue.

Strategies for Implementation

1. The basic qualification of candidates for training as Business teachers should be re-examined. The entry qualifications especially through the JAMB should be as comparable and equally competitive as with those in Medicine, Law, Engineering, etc. Education should cease to be a dumping ground for candidates who cannot get admissions into other courses of study.
There is the urgent need to address the present deficiencies in the physical and instructional facilities in our Colleges of Education and Universities. What is required is adequate funding, which is crucial to the success of good primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. Consequently, it is recommended that in line with the United Nations (UN) policy, the federal government should devote annually 30% of the annual budget and, at least, 5% of our gross national product to education.
3. To sustain the teachers' morale and consequently guarantee their job satisfaction, it is recommended that a separate Teachers Salary Scale (TSS) be put in place, as a teacher's salary is a crucial factor in the process of attracting and maintaining good and virile teaching workforce (Afe, 2002).
4. There is need for a revolutionary approach to the Business teacher Education programme. The shortness of the duration of the programme does not allow the students to acquire and master enough knowledge of subject matter and competence for teaching. The period which a business teacher-trainee has to train as a teacher in the university should be increased from the present four to six years (Imogic, 1999).
5. As information and communication technology (ICY) change the Business teacher-trainee environment, so must our curricula adapt to meet those challenges. Business Educators must therefore show the willingness and given opportunity for continuous training and retraining in modern methods of managing business enterprises.

Conclusion

Advance in information and communication technology have impacted heavily on both business and business education resulting in significant changes in the nature, content, environment and structure of business and business teacher education programme. There is need to plan and organize the business teachers education programme in a way that will help the teachers to acquire the needed pedagogical and occupational competencies. The challenge for the 21st century is that the education and training of Nigeria teachers must top the list of priorities of government, because the services of the teachers are indispensable to speeding up national development and economic survival.

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