

BUSINESS EDUCATION: A PATHWAY TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper looked at education as the process of transforming the individual and the society. Realizing the gap that existed in the society as a result of academically oriented educational programme, business education was introduced to instill skills oriented programmes that will enhance the acquisition of appropriate skills for maximum self-development and fulfillment as well as the development of the society. The paper defined business education and looked at the relationship between business education and skill acquisition as well as entrepreneurial development and their roles in (he development of (he economy.

Introduction

Education in this context is seen as a dissemination and an innovation process elaborately organized to meet the requirements of the society, fbr basic moral education, literacy and numeracy, for specialized training related to the demands of the economy, for skilled workers, scientists and professional people and for addition to knowledge through research.

The inspired hung government investment in education is that education plays a critical role in the development process of the country. Akpakpan (2004), believes that education holds the key to a speedy transformation of the individual and the country. The National Policy on Education (NPE) (2004), believes in this and reemphasized on its philosophy of education to be that: Education fosters the worth and development of the individual, for each independent's sake and for the general development of the society.

The educational goals derived from the above philosophy of Education are:

- (i) The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity,
- (ii) The inculcation of the type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.
- (iii) The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
- (iv) The acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

Formal education, therefore, involves the deliberate creation of systematic learning opportunities and conditions to ensure the acquisition of skills and development of aptitudes and competencies necessary for coping with life problems. With this, we came to have a large increase in the number of schools and school enrolment in the country.

With time and in response to increasing wage employment these institutions turned out their products who were readily absorbed by way of employment. The global changes affected the Nigerian economy in the 1980s that most businesses could not employ new hands but rather embarked on retrenchment. Unemployment did not merely develop but was an emergency of our inability to create jobs for our teaming graduates. Granddaunts were seen loafing around major streets in the cities searching for jobs but without any employable skills. This is attributed to the nature of the curriculum .that they passed through. To overcome this problem, emphasis shifted from academically oriented, educational skills oriented programme to vocational educational programmes.

It was realized that the academically oriented programme could not provide Nigerians with the basis for designing a programme which is in harmony with the broad objectives of the National Policy on Education listed above - the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society, the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around, and, the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society.

Given the above situation it became necessary to introduce into our educational system, skills oriented programmes that will enhance the acquisition of appropriate skills for maximum self-development and fulfillment as well as the development of the society.

Business Education and Skills Acquisitions

Filani (2006) defined business education as consisting of the total activity that is planned, organized, and developed in favour of the preparation of the individual for responsible economic participation in the community. It is a sub unit of the entire vocational and technical education often referred to as technology education. The national policy on Education (2004) also agrees with this position as it defines vocational education as education meant for the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of the economic and social life.

Asuquo (2005), citing Osuala (1990), viewed Business Education as a programme of instruction, which consists of two parts

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

Business education is designed to (train or prepare the individual learner to earn a living or increase his earning capacity in an occupation or family of occupations. It prepares students for jobs at the lower and intermediate levels in the world of businesses. Iweh (2006) citing Akpan (2003) defined it as the training for the acquisition of business skills and competence needed in business occupation. From the above definitions business education has as its aim the preparation of people for-roles in enterprises. Such roles could be as employees, entrepreneur and employers.

Within the school system, students are taught or rather offered the opportunity to learn business skills through various business courses offered. In the junior secondary, we have business studies, an integrated business course designed to lay foundation in business skills in the students. At the senior secondary level, business subjects like commerce, accounting, typewriting and shorthand exposes the students to various career aspirations, which are actualized at the various tertiary institutions of learning. These institutions train these students to specialize in either of the following areas of specialization:

- (a) Office education
- (b) Accounting education
- (c) Marketing education
- (d) Management education
- (e) Professional education subjects

Besides the training given to business students, non-business students from other faculties offered as elective business courses, this is a sought of an orientation given to these students to have a general business idea.

The objectives of business education as stipulated in the NPE (2004), are to:

- (a) Provide trained manpower in the applied science, technology and business.
- (b) Provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agriculture, commercial and economic development,
- (c) Give the training and impart the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self-reliant economically.

Akpan, in Iweh, added that Business education:

- (d) Provide career information that will help individuals' relate their interests, needs and abilities on occupational opportunities in business and,
- (e) Produce business educators who will impart the needed skills and competences to others.

From the foregoing, business education grooms potential managers and middle level supervisors for management function in the economy, it encourages the spirit of entrepreneurial development.

Business Education and Entrepreneurial Development

Anyanwu (1999), defined an entrepreneur as that person who coordinates the other factors of production by assuming the associated risks and investing his resources in a business venture. He plans, recruits personnel, organizes, directs and controls the resources of a business. He must be a person who has the ability to see and evaluate business opportunity, gather the necessary resources to take advantage of them and initial appropriate action to ensure success.

Entrepreneurial education according to Nwaokolo, cited in Obomanu (2002), is an aspect of education that is geared at developing in students the skills, ideas and managerial abilities necessary for personal reliance. Business Education exposes its graduates to various methods of management, the associated risk and what it takes to be a successful manager. This therefore implies that a graduate with business skills can easily become an entrepreneur, as risks involved in the management of a business would be properly handled. The success of a business also depends on many variables -communication, motivation, employees attributes etc. business education offers its graduates an insides on how best to deal with these variables in order to attain the objectives of the business.

Adeyemi (2006), notes that Entrepreneurship involves the ability to explore business opportunity and its profitability. It is this perceived ability to identify new business opportunity and calculate with some degree of certainty its rewards that business educators can be of great importance. Business Education impacts skills on the ability to harness and combine production factors to meet the taste of the final consumer.

In the area of office education, Business Education grooms graduates with basic skills in proper administration of office duties, secretariat, consultancy services, desktop publishing, operation of business centres, secretarial technology, marketing of secretarial - related products and training and development programmes. Business Education impacts on its graduates financial knowledge to enable them take advantage of the financial markets. It instills in its graduates prudence and financial discipline. It brings about objectivity in financial reporting and interpretation; and, as well as investment decisions based on the financial reports.

Besides providing basic skills in training and developing entrepreneurs, graduates of Business Education are equipped with the task of helping their subordinates develop their capabilities. They assess the strengths and weakness of subordinates and use that to coach for continuous improvement. Their educational exposure equipped them with three basic skill sets, these are

- (1) Learning to plan better,
- (2) Learning about people, and
- (3) Learning to communicate.

Ilesanmi (2006), concludes that learning how to appreciate and capitalize on the diverse strengths of your subordinates allows you to leverage the skills and abilities of your team for maximum productivity. And this has been the bedrock for the survival of most small-scale business, which now sustains the economy.

Business Education and Sustainable Development

Development according to Okereke (1999), is the qualitative improvement in the living standard of members of the society. The quality of life in any society is measured by such indications as literacy rate, rate of employment, the distribution of income, availability of good drinking water, regular supply of electricity, decent housing, affordable medical services etc.

Sustainable economic development refers to a process of structural change in institutions or as the creation of more inter-dependence between the different industries and activities within a country. The result is a gradual movement from under-developed situation which should bring about a reduction in poverty, unemployment and inequality (Ogwo and Olaniyan 1989). Okwuosa (1976), pointed that, the elements involved in economic development are skills, applied technology, income and social goods, these variable in return determine the process and quality of production in the economy.

Business Education must strive to achieve three inter related objectives viz developing individual's intellect, enabling him to acquire vocational skills and instilling in him appropriate societal values.

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