

USING BUSINESS EDUCATION AS A VERITABLE TOOL FOR JOB CREATION FOR NIGERIAN YOUTHS AND ADULTS

Aiyamenkhue A. Oseghale

*Business Education Department,
School of Vocational & Technical Education,
College of Education, Ekiadolor-Benin.*

L. U. Egwuelu-Osayede

*Business Education Department,
School of Vocational & Technical Education,
College of Education, Ekiadolor-Benin.*

Abstract

The alarming dimension of unemployment in Nigeria has reached a crisis situation as can be seen in the way graduates in Nigeria roam the streets in search of jobs that do not exist. Not too long ago, governments both at state and federal levels carried out retrenchment exercise which affected strong, healthy and able-bodied Nigerian. Therefore, this paper focused on the unemployment situation in Nigeria and discovered that majority of Nigerians, though graduates, lack necessary skills that would enable them get employed or become self-employed. As a result of this, they are forced to take up teaching jobs in private schools even though they lack formal training in education, to enable them keep bodies and souls together. At times, some even take up such menial jobs as fetching of water and hewing of woods for eatery houses. Not to worry, there is a way out. Business Education, a sub-set of VTE, as an effective, functional and qualitative educational programme, is capable of rescuing the nation out of the situation. If properly articulated and implemented, it can provide Nigerians with the needed skills to help them become job creators rather than seekers of jobs. They can do this by setting up Business Centre on small-scale basis and before long expand it to offer employments to clerks, messengers and cleaners. When this happens, it would go a long way to create jobs for our teeming youths and adults who were hither-to jobless.

Introduction

The alarming dimension of unemployment in Nigeria has reached a crisis situation as can be seen in the way graduates in Nigeria roam the streets in search of jobs that do not exist. The situation was further compounded by the retrenchment exercises carried out by governments both at the state and federal

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levels which affected strong and healthy people. Amongst them were graduates who did not have formal training in education but now have to take up teaching jobs in private schools so as to keep bodies and souls together. It is common sight nowadays to see young Nigerians engaged in menial jobs such as motor-cycle (Okada) riding, cattle slaughtering, car wash, using private cars as taxi, in order to survive.

Olayinka (1989) stated that one major problem with Nigerians is that they do not have saleable skills to enable them get jobs. Some of the menial jobs enumerated above do not require formal training to under-take them. Often, it is found out that with time, those engaged in them get frustrated because they can no longer cope with the constraints inherent therein coupled with environmental demands of the undertakings. There is a general consensus that in order to increase the productive power of a nation, acquisition of requisite skills is a *sine qua non* hence the need to equip all employable Nigerians with saleable skills. When this happens, all able-bodied youths and adults would be gainfully employed or are able to set up enterprises where they would possibly become employer of labour and this would ultimately act as a catalyst towards reducing unemployment. These skills can only be acquired in Vocational and Technical Education, of which Business Education is a sub-set or an option.

This paper, therefore, takes a look at the role of Business Education, a sub-set or an option in Vocational and Technical

education, as a veritable tool for job creation for unemployed Nigerians especially among youths and jobless adults.

Concept of Business Education

Atakpa (2004) defined Business Education as the part of vocational education programme which prepares individuals for gainful employment through the acquisition of skills and knowledge that relate to business. Esene and Aghobu (1977) emphatically stated that VTE, in which Business education is a part, is a problem-solving process with the main objectives of improving the quality of human life.

Nwokolo (1992), however, defined Business Education, as a broad comprehensive discipline whose instruction programme encompasses the vocational knowledge and skills needed for entry level employment and advancement in a broad range of business education which include education for office occupation, distribution and marketing, business teaching, business administration and economic undertaking, Anao (1986), described Business Education as the total knowledge, skills and attitude that are required for successful promoting and administering a business enterprise. Furthermore, he stated that Business Education prepares youths and adults for world of work at the pre-vocational, vocational and professional levels. Essentially, Business Education is an education for self-reliance and a type of education that can be considered more

relevant in Nigerian teeming youths' and adults' development aspiration.

Tonne and Nansy (1979) saw Business Education as that aspect of the total education programme that provides knowledge, skills, understandings and attitude needed to perform in the business world as a producer and a consumer of goods and services that business offers.

Viewed against these backgrounds, Business Education could be perceived as education programme designed to equip its recipients with the needed attitude, knowledge, traits and skills required in the business and industrial world to meet the economic needs of the country.

Objectives of Business Education

What can be inferred from the various definitions of Business Education is that the goals of Business Education, as it were, are to guide or motivate Nigerians especially youths and adults in a learning process geared towards the achievement of the basic and specific goals and objectives of Business Education programme. Akibu (1998) analyzed the objectives of Business Education as follows:-

- (i) To prepare and expose students to career opportunities in the world of business;
- (ii) To provide students with a broad orientation on their contribution to the expectations from business;
- (iii) To prepare operators for the production and distribution of goods and services;
- (iv) To provide facilities and skills for enhancing efficient job

performance in business ...and industry;

- (v) To make beneficiaries of the programme efficient consumers of programmes of business organizations.
- (vi) To prepare students for making logical and sensible socio-economic decisions as rational members of the society.

The Youth

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2000), defines "youth" as the period between being a child and being full grown as an adult. Webster's 11 New College Dictionary agrees with the definition given by Longman and defined it as the time of life between childhood and maturity.

In this vein, youth can be said to be the period of time when a person is very energetic, strong, productive and dynamic. This is a formative period when one needs to lay solid foundation for the future, prepare for a job, made or a profession and a period when one should develop the attitude, traits and skills necessary for the production of goods and services needed for the nation too survive.

Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAD) of the United Nations (1985) defined youth as a young man or woman between the ages of 14-24 years. Also the cliché "the youths are the leaders of tomorrow" is not only factual but an inconvertible truism. Any society that is focused would definitely be interested in the future of its youths in whose hands the future of such society lies.

Unemployment

Adigbo (1988) asserted that unemployment among youths is a serious dilemma in Nigeria and many factors portend the probability of its worsening state especially with the global economic melt down that has led to the retrenchment of thousands of able-bodied youths and adults. Adebayo and Oyesode (2006) quoting Folayan (1986) stated that unemployment exists where there are people who are able to work, wishing to work, dependent on work for a livelihood but unable to obtain suitable employment.

Oladedo (1998) opined that unemployment is when unskilled/skilled, well-educated and able-bodied men and women in a society openly and actively look for employment but cannot get it, as well as those who had been deprived of their employment work-life pattern via dismissal, retrenchment, termination and premature retirement probably for lack of particular skill required for production or non-matching skills to work.

Using Business Education as Veritable Tool for Job Creation for Nigerian Youths:

Business Education is a sub-set of Vocational and Technical Education, and if properly harness, sustained and improved upon, has the capacity to bail out Nigeria from the doldrums of unemployment that has become pandemic in the country. Business Education is multifarious, in that it can prepare its recipients as teachers,

self-reliant persons, employers of labour, office workers, etc.

The programme encompasses specialized academic activities such as Accounting Education, Secretarial Studies Education, Marketing and Computer Education, thereby providing a wide range of job opportunities for its recipients. Secretarial Studies Education, an option of Business Education, officers skills and competencies especially in this era of office automation, information and communication technology (ICT) as one area where the impact of sustained Business Education should be seen to reduce unemployment having provided trainees and recipients employable skills.

The followings are some of the job opportunities available or open for graduates of Business Education.

(a) Appointment as Secretaries

Graduates of Business Education from Polytechnics, Colleges of Education, Universities of Technology, who opted for Secretarial Studies/Secretarial Administration or Office Management can be employed by private Companies, Organizations and Government Agencies and Ministries as Secretaries, Public relations Officers, Personal Assistants, Receptionists, etc. this becomes possible because of their training which have exposed them to erudite mastery of Shorthand, Typewriting (Word Processing), Law and Practice of Meetings, Business Communication, Business Law, human Relations, Office practice, Secretarial

Duties/Administration, Principles of Accounts, etc.

(b) **Set Up Business Centres:**

Graduates of Business Education can set up modern business centers where the following services can be provided:-

- (i) Typing, duplicating and Photostatting of documents;
- (ii) Laminating and spiral binding of documents;
- (iii) Computer services for students' projects and word processing to convert raw data into comprehensive and mailable documents using different sizes and styles of fonts
- (iv) Electronic mail (e-mail) whereby messages are automatically transmitted from one computer terminal to another use of telex and teleprinter machines to transmit messages from one country to the other where such machines/equipment are also installed. It is emphasized that this machines/equipment can operate on their own without someone sitting by them provided instructions had been fed into them.

(v) **Voice Mail**

This and e-mail are similar except that messages from voice mail are vocal. It operates by installation of a central computer system which digitizes the voice message, stores it on disk files and transmits it to a second terminal located in another country or area.

(c) **Establishment of Small Scale Enterprise/Business**

A graduate of Business Education can establish and manage small-scale business enterprise apart from setting up business centers with affordable volume of investment. Small-scale business enterprise is defined as a business employing less than ten people or, whose investment in machinery and equipment do not exceed N60,000 (Nigeria's Third National Development Plan, 1975-1980). What can be inferred from this definition is that any person who establishes and manages a small-scale business enterprise successfully is not only self-reliant but also an employer of labour.

The purpose of Business Education as enunciated by the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) is to prepare youths for entrepreneurial functions and for self-employment hence, its impact would be felt in the following areas with a view to attaining National Development:

- (i) Sources of revenue to government
- (ii) Employment opportunities for our teeming, youths and adults;
- (iii) Increase in the national output level;
- (iv) It will help to convert both skilled and unskilled manpower and other factors of production which are available in the economy into use:
- (v) It will help to train and educate the youths and adults to develop their managerial abilities and productive capabilities;

- (vi) It helps a country to be less dependent on other countries. Though small-scale business operates at local level, it produces necessary goods such as bread, biscuits, block, etc. If such goods are not produced at home, a country is bound to import them willy-nilly for survival and, therefore, make that country to be more dependent on other nations from whom the nation imports the items.

(d) **Provision of Saleable Skills and Appropriate Manpower Mix**

It is the responsibility of Business Education to give due attention to structure and procedure for relevant and adequate training as a way of solving the problem of inadequate supply of efficient and effective manpower needed to manage our national economy. It provides the youths and adults with necessary skills needed to increase the independent productive ventures and carry out skilled work. The different trainings the recipient receive will assist them to be successful, competent and efficient in their chosen professions or occupations. In this vein, business trainers need to know the importance of presenting well-grounded and all-embracing curricula to their students to enable them function efficiently and effectively in all aspects of employment they may find themselves in.

Limitation to Sustainability of Business Education

There are problems militating against the sustainability of Business

Education that needs to be addressed urgently to enable it play its role as instrument of job creation for Nigerians.

Some of the problems are:

- (i) Lack of relevant text-books, journals and other instructional materials need for teaching and learning Business Education subjects. Adequate steps need to be taken to make them available in tertiary institutions to aid both the trainees and trainers.
- (ii) Lack of qualified and well trained teachers to handle Business Education subjects. Teachers in this field should be encouraged to undertake course of studies in order to have additional qualifications that would enhance their performance.
- (iii) The hours allocated to teach Business Education subjects by some secondary schools, colleges of education, polytechnics and universities of technology are always too few. This is a serious issue that should be addressed urgently because of the nature of the subjects in Business Education programme.
- (iv) Lack of finance to procure equipment /facilities. No doubt facilities/equipment needed in Business Education programme are capital intensive but then there is the need to provide them in order to make the recipients benefit maximumly from the training.

- (v) Modern Business Education technologies are supposed to be powered by electricity for teaching and learning but unfortunately the epileptic nature of Power Holding Company of Nigeria creates problem for those involved in the programme because lights are not always there for the equipment/facilities to function adequately.
- (vi) Use of absolute curricula for teaching and learning Business Education subjects constitutes serious problem for the teaching and learning of Business Education. There is the need therefore, to constantly review and update the curricula being used for the programme.
- (vii) Incessant disruption of academic calendars as a result of strike actions by academics, students' unrests and political instability. These disruptions usually affect the skills acquisition of students adversely.
- (viii) Irregular payment of salaries, poor working conditions, lack of incentives and motivation usually affect the morale of teachers and lecturers. Therefore, there is the need to address these nagging issues so as to enhance teaching and learning in the programme.
- (ix) Lack of seriousness on the part of students to learn the key subjects in Business Education like Shorthand, Typewriting etc. Rather than apply themselves to learning, they would prefer to adopt unconventional methods to pass their examinations.
- (x) Public negative perception of Business Education subjects is another big problem. Some members of the public in their ignorance perceive Business Education as a programme for drop-outs and this has the tendency to have negative influence on those who normally would have been interested in it.

Conclusion

It is behavouring the obvious to state that unemployment and its associated problems are threatening the political stability of the nation and therefore, requires urgent attention. The growth rate of unemployment in the country has assumed a very dangerous dimension. However, there is a way out of the quagmire. Business Education, as an effective, functional and qualitative educational programme, is capable of producing well trained and competent people who can be employed by various organs of government and private bodies and also be self-employed. The author therefore, joins the clarion call for a well articulated planning, organizing and implementation of Business Education programmes for solving the pandemic problem of unemployment by way of producing job creators rather job seekers in Nigeria.

Recommendations

In order to surmount the problems enumerated above, the following recommendations are proffered for urgent implementation for the sustainability of Business Education for the growth and development of the nation:-

- (a) Business Educators should be encouraged through sponsorship to conferences, seminars, workshops and further studies.
- (b) Professional bodies such as Association of Business Educators of Nigeria (ABEN), Business Education Teachers Association, etc should be encouraged to produce relevant text-books need for effective teaching and learning of Business Education subjects;
- (c) Teachers with adequate pedagogy and cognate experience should be recruited and encouraged to stay on their jobs;
- (d) Constant educational tours to well established organizations with modern office equipment/facilities should be organized for both students and teachers/lecturers so as to expose them to actual work situations;
- (e) Our tertiary institutions should be equipped adequately with modern and relevant instructional materials, equipment/facilities. This should be done through the joint efforts of both the government, donor agencies, foreign partners and rich individuals because of the capital intensive nature of the facilities/equipment need for the teaching/learning of Business Education;
- (f) Maintenance Culture of the installed equipment/facilities should be advocated to avoid their constant break down;
- (g) Students studying Business Education courses should be encouraged in order to boost their interest. They will appreciate the usefulness of the skills because people learn in an atmosphere where their interest is caught and sustained;
- (h) There is need to constantly review Business Education curriculum by NABTEB, NUC, NCCE, in collaboration with other professional bodies in order to up-date the knowledge and skills required by the beneficiaries for them to perform well in their various field of endeavours. It will also help to correct the deficiencies high-lighted by employers of labour and implementers of the programmes, in the curriculum currently being used;
- (i) The three tiers of government, as a matter of priority, should take urgent steps to enhance and develop entrepreneurial skills acquisition centers with modern facilities/equipment where our teeming youths and unemployed adults can be trained in various fields of endeavours so as to reduce unemployment in the society or country.

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