

## **Business education as a panacea to economic emancipation in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects**

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### **Abstract**

*Business Education is a form of education that majorly focuses on skill acquisition for its recipient. It comprises of the necessary training for gainful employment as well as basic skills that aimed at developing individuals with the right attitude to work and the competency necessary to be relevant in the world of work. The paper aimed at positioning business education as a panacea to economic emancipation in Nigeria. It discussed the environmental challenges of business education, which among others include curriculum challenges, non-availability of e-learning facilities, government discriminatory attitude in funding, public attitude and perception and inadequate infrastructure. The paper also highlights the prospects of business education to include job opportunities, ability to be self-reliant, job creators and employers of labour among others. It was thereafter recommended that business education lecturers' should be encouraged to undergo refresher courses in modern technologies to keep them abreast of new development in the field, experts must be welcomed during curriculum review, awareness programme need to be created by the government of the importance of business education in terms of job creation among other recommendations.*

**Keywords:** *Business Education, panacea, economic emancipation, prospects and challenges, employment.*

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### **I. Introduction**

Vocational and technical education is that type of education that leads to acquisition of practical skills, which enable individual to be employed in a chosen occupation to become self-reliant in order to contribute to overall national development. Abdulrahman (2013) opined that vocational and technical education is expected to meet the aspiration of Nigerian society, to shape its future and provide solutions to some of its social, political and economic issues. Branches of vocational education includes technical education, agricultural education, home economics education, computer education, fine and applied art education, agricultural education and business education. Business education is an aspect of vocational education offered in Universities' faculties of education and Colleges of Education in Nigeria. Common options of business education include accounting education, marketing education and office technology and management education.

Business education, an integral part of vocational and technical education; is the type of education that equips the individual with knowledge, occupational skills and competencies needed to enter into business world or teaching profession in order to earn a living. Business education as a discipline is expected to expose its recipients to diversity curricula, hence, it is that type of education that inculcate in its recipients the attitudes, knowledge, skills, and values that is required for sustainable livelihood and social-economic development. According to Ogwuogo (2013) business education prepares beneficiaries for gainful employment and sustainable livelihood. Business education prepares an individual for self-reliance and employment of others, whereby graduates no longer wait for white collar jobs, but rather provide jobs for themselves and get others employed as well, thus improving themselves and the nation's economy (Nwosu, 2006). Business education focuses on skills and knowledge acquisition for the recipients with a view to enhancing their capability for self-employment. Amuchie and Matsayi (2018) define business education as an aspect of education that provide the knowledge, skills, understanding and other attitude needed to perform well in the world of business as producers or consumers of goods and services that business offers. There is a general belief that the economic development of any nation depends on the quantity and quality of its resources and the appropriate utilisation of

resources in both the production and consumption processes. The development of business education skills, as an education for business and education about business, is vital to a nation economic emancipation.

Economic emancipation can be achieved through the exploitation and utilization of both human and material resources in our environment to improve the economy of a nation. The progress of a country and the development of its manpower is the primary aim of education. The quality of education of any nation is the major key to her economic development. No nation can progress as expected without a good and effective education, such as business education that is planned to provide the necessary competencies and skills to its citizens for national development. National development involves the improvement of the social welfare of the people and inculcation in the individuals the skills to live, learn and work as productive citizen in a global society. A nation economy improvement needs an education that provides self-employment, enhances productivity and self-reliance that can reduce the over-dependence of school graduates on white-collar job. Whichever process a nation wants to improve her economy, the system of business education provides the bedrock on which the activities of the development have to be funded. Therefore, business education perceived to be the great weapon that can be used to bring or achieve a quick desirable changes or development in the country's economic, political, sociological and human resources.

For the attainment of great achievement of productivity and sustainable economic development, appropriate attention and optimum recognition must be given to the promotion of business education in Nigeria. The need for business education cannot be over emphasized because it is the bedrock of a stable and dynamic nation. If business education is given the recognition it deserves, it will solve the problem of poverty and unemployment among the youths of a nation, and it is one of the most valuable treasure any nation can invest on. Productivity can be maintained only if employment opportunities are adequate; and promotion of business education would enable an individual to be more useful and productive citizen of the society.

For a nation to develop economically she must be ready to educate and train its workforce and give them the skill and knowledge required to perform effectively; poorly educated and unskilled workforce cannot develop a nation. Amoor (2010) however noted that business education plays a significant role in the economic development by providing knowledge and skills to the learners, thereby, enabling them to adequately impart knowledge into others, and handle sophisticated office technologies and information systems. For growing economy and thriving of businesses, the institutions responsible for human capital development should be properly funded to enable them produce skilled manpower that will be relevant in the world of work.

The development of this educational system has been identified with some constraints which serve as hindrances to its development. These hindrances include:

### **Inadequate Training Materials**

The use of training materials enhances learning achievement. Business education courses are practical oriented courses which cannot be taught without equipment; we only achieve the best output when both theory and practical are taught together. Due to lack of relevant training materials, business education teacher had resorted to theoretical teaching instead of demonstration of skills through the use of necessary equipments. A teacher who makes use of appropriate instructional materials to supplement his teaching will help enhance students' participation and intensive thinking. Msheliza (2015) asserts that teaching aids is the guidance of learning activities that a teacher uses to motivate and arouse student's desire to learn. Absence or inadequate training materials, tools and equipment reduces the commitment of the lecturers, this will result to low productivity. Ifeje (2009) asserted that the teaching of business education subjects requires the use of specialized laboratories, workshops, machines and equipment. For effective teaching and learning to take place, learning facilities must be on ground to help students learn with ease.

### **Curriculum Challenges**

Curriculum is a document which comprises the contents, subject matters, goals and objectives of a particular course of study. It is the concern of business educators that business education curriculum should respond to labour market trends and projection of manpower requirement. The current business education curriculum in Nigeria as observed by Okoli and Azih (2015) is highly theoretical and rhetorical in nature. Thus, the graduates of business education programs lack the skills and competencies needed for actual performance in the world of work. Another threat to business education is poor curriculum implementation at tertiary institutions. Inability of schools to translate curriculum to practical realities is a common challenge across the three levels of education in Nigeria (Okebukola, 2004; Okolocha, 2012). Hence, there is need for business education curriculum to be restructured to meet the changing work environment in business organizations in such a way that the programme can play enhanced role in human resource development in Nigeria.

A look at business education curriculum in Nigeria tertiary institution reveals that inadequate time allotted to some of the skill courses is one of the programme deficiencies. Business education objectives is about acquiring skill; to acquire such skills therefore requires sufficient time for students practical. Njoku and

Nwosu in Ajisafe, Bolarinwa and Edeh (2015) observed that inadequate number of hours allotted to business education subjects at all levels was considered a major issue that needed proper attention. Constant practice greatly increases the likelihood that students will permanently remember new information (Anderson, 2008). Some subjects like keyboarding, shorthand and accounting that are supposed to be taught at least two hours daily is being allocated three hours per week due to overloading of the time table with auxiliary courses, hence, the training that are supposed to be taught practically are being taught theoretically.

#### **Non-availability of e-learning facilities**

E-learning refers to the use of modern technologies such as computers, android phones, digital technology, networked digital devices (e.g. the internet) and associated software and course ware (Wikipedia, 2014). E-learning requires equipment that can facilitate learning. The fact that e-learning require computer equipment and android phones to run online learning platforms poses problem for students from poor family or less privileged ones in purchasing one. It also pose problem for schools with old and outdated hardware and softwares. Furthermore, online learning demands for accepting course material in a variety of multimedia formats and taking part in online discussions which can be unnerving for students who are familiar with traditional classroom settings. No combination of connectivity, equipment and software will achieve anything if people are not trained to use them (Daniel, 2009). Lack of both technical and social skills required for the implementation of e-learning contributes to failure of e-learning programme in tertiary institutions. The learning style and level of interaction in teaching and learning process between the students and lecturer is another challenge facing the programme. Business education is a skill course that requires students/teachers interaction in a classroom setting and most especially the possibility of getting immediate feedback in face-to-face lecture. Some people perceive e-learning as not being as good as face-to-face teaching because it does not support students-centre learning. Connectivity is also a bottleneck to e-learning; accessibility of internet service or quality of connectivity in many of our tertiary institutions impedes access to online learning. For business education programme to remain relevant in global competitive world, e-learning should be graciously supported by both the lecturers and students of business education.

#### **Government Discriminatory Attitude in Funding**

Funding is a tool for quality assurance in a field of education and also a fuel that power an education. It is disheartening to know that the government of Nigeria does not take business education very serious despite the fact that the programme is designed towards skill acquisition which can enable the recipients to contribute meaningfully to national growth by being self-employ or an employer of labour without seeking for white collar job. Business education when properly funded will create an avenue through which students develop abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviours of positive value to the society (Okereke, 2015). The gross underfunding of business education programme in the country is so pathetic. Okeke and Eze (2010) opined that sufficient fund has not been channeled to vocational education which is a major problem plaguing the system. Chukwurah (2011) affirmed that adequate funding of business education should be a priority of government and stakeholders. Inadequate funding has made business education lecturers to teach the practical facts in theory and memorization. They have resorted to theoretical teaching instead of demonstration of skills through the use of materials and equipments. Consequently, students cannot make a successful acquisition of skill. There is need therefore for government to provide tertiary institutions with the necessary funds to purchase academic facilities.

#### **Wrong societal perception**

The societal negative impression is one of the issues and challenges stirring at the business education programme in Nigeria. Vocational education which business education an integral part is still considered by parents and the public at large as a domain for less academically gifted students, it also suffers stereotyping from parents, students and other stakeholders in Nigeria.

According to Amodu in Raimi and Akhuemonkhan (2014), the importance of TVET is not in doubt in industrialized nations, but in the developing nation like Nigeria, it is still being viewed with negative perception and disgust by parents and other groups. This poor perception of the meaning and prospect of business education among Nigerian citizens poses a serious problem to its learning in tertiary institutions. Business education is perceived by the society as an inferior type of education and no go area for the achievers. Instead, they opt for courses like Law, Medicine, Engineering etc. In a recent empirical survey by Akhuemonkhan and Raimi (2013), a total of 53.4% respondents described TVET as an education option designed for students who cannot cope with the rigour of conventional education system, 43.4% noted that brilliant students should not take-up TVET programmes and 40.6% perceived TVET as an inferior education designed for students from poor families. The higher reputation place on science and some other related type of education than business education by the society discourages students to opt for business education.

### **Inadequate Infrastructures**

Infrastructures are the physical and organizational structures needed to facilitate effective teaching and learning processes. Infrastructure is the resources used for effective development and implementation of any educational programme of which business education is not an exception. Nearly all the institutions offering business education are lacking in terms of laboratories, studios, model office, libraries, entrepreneurship research centers etc. Amadi and Ohaka (2018) posited that despite the importance of infrastructure to education, it's worthy to conclude that the state of infrastructure in Nigeria schools is generally adjudged to be in deplorable and decaying state. Thus, the effect of poor infrastructure reflected in almost all the sectors of the Nigeria economy and it directly and indirectly affecting global economy. Inadequate facility makes teaching to be ineffective.

For effective teaching of business education in our higher institutions, provision of educational facilities and infrastructures such as conducive classrooms, lecturers offices, laboratories and internet access are very vital for most of their practical studies and for the achievement of business education goals. Babalola (2013) was of the view that students learn better when they explore an environment that is rich in materials. Facilities needed for instruction must be capable of taking care of all those who need them. According to Onyenwe and Bongontons in Okereke, (2015) one of the pillars of a successful implementation of effective business education is the availability and adequacy of infrastructural facilities. It is sad to note that such environment eludes business education programme, most institutions of learning do not have business education laboratories fitted with modern facilities and lecture halls. The implication of this problem is that teaching cannot be effective no matter the best method and techniques used in teaching Business studies. High-quality infrastructure facilitates better instruction and improves students outcomes.

### **Epileptic Power Supply**

Epileptic power supply is a situation whereby there are poor power outages. Power failure is a deterrent to economic growth of any nation. Inadequate provision of power supply constitutes one of the greatest constrains in educational development. Access to a reliable power supply is widely considered as vital to effective teaching and learning of business education. Most business education equipment depends on the continuous availability of electricity supply to energize and power the training equipment such as computer, laminating machine, scanner, fax machines, shredder, photocopying machines, overhead projector, printer and the accessing of internet facilities. Akaninwor (1998) commented that these equipment need to be functional to make the instructional process meaningful and this call for an uninterrupted system of electrical power supply in the schools. It will be pertinent to mention that places where there is electricity supply the power is unsteady and highly erratic. As a result of the epileptic nature of electricity to institutions of learning, business education courses are only taught in theory with less practical. This therefore negates the objectives of business education, which include acquisition of skill; electricity is the power that moves laboratory practical work. Adequate electricity supply enhances student's practical learning experience and their academic performance.

### **Prospects of Business Education**

After haven detailed overview of the problems faced by business education, the present part will discuss the prospects of business education.

It is very disheartening that most business education products do not know that there are various job prospects available to them after graduation, business education offers the beneficiary the ability to be self-reliant, job creators and employers of labour. Some of these graduates roam about cities seeking for white collar job because they are ignorant of job opportunities available for them. Apart from these job opportunities, business education offers individuals with vocational and professional skills that enable them to prepare for business career and teaching of business subjects.

Furthermore, business education aims at equipping students with skills, knowledge and competences necessary to perform in business occupations and for entry into employment either as self-employed or an employer of labour. Business education graduates or experts hold the best job prospects, climb to the top of their pick from a variety of possible career paths, beginning with practical training programme in major offices/companies, they can be an analysts, managers and consultants. Graduate of business education may work in manufacturing sectors; distribution sector; education sectors; ICT sectors and government business sectors.

There is a great opportunity for career selection in business education; one can opt for teaching or become a business owner and be self employed, work with a company or pursue careers in marketing and public relations.

## II. Conclusion

Recognizing the fact that skill works such as business education is the bedrock of any national development. The problems of this form of education should be address and see how business education can optimally utilize the human and material resources towards productivity and economic emancipation in Nigeria.

## III. Recommendation

For business education to be a panacea to economic emancipation in Nigeria, the underlisted recommendations were proposed for implementation by the government, policymakers and stakeholders for the improvement of present status of business education in Nigeria.

1. There is need to support and strengthen the business education lecturers; they should be encouraged to undergo on-the-job or refresher courses in modern technologies in order to keep them abreast of new development in business education methodologies for learning objectives to be achieved.
2. Adequate and modern facilities should be provided in our tertiary institutions. They should do away with the obsolete technologies imbedded in their curriculum and thus adjust it to the curriculum that is relevant to the needs of the country, industry and the individual to avoid the rampant skills mismatch. Equipment and facilities for training the students should be the replica of what is obtainable in today's world of work.
3. Government should support business education by properly and adequately funding it as it serves a basis for economic revival and a main stream activity to enable transformations to take place very fast in the nation.
4. The curriculum planners should welcome business education experts during curriculum review to ensure that contents to be taught are in accordance with technological and modern day organization practices.
5. The fact that electricity supply depends on Power Holding Company of Nigeria, which is controlled by private companies, government should endeavor to purchase standby generator for the institutions to enable them power the equipments and government should do everything in her power to solve the problem of power generation in Nigeria.
6. Government should endeavour to create awareness programme for people about the relevance and importance of business education on job creation and economy emancipation in Nigerian.

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