



BUSINESS EDUCATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

National Development is said to be a predictor that determines whether a country is progressing or not. A critical assessment of Nigeria's development despite her abundance in human, natural and material resources revealed that the country is yet to achieve the desired expectations as clamored by her citizens. It is on this premise that this paper, adopted literature review and participants' observation methods focused on issues and challenges of achieving National Development in Nigeria through Business Education. The paper explained critically the concepts of Business Education and National Development, contributions of Business Education to National Development and challenges hindering the achievement of National Development in Nigeria through Business Education. The paper concluded that Business Education contributes positively to National Development in spite of challenges. Finally, the paper recommended, among other things, that experts in Business Education should be involved in the curriculum review of Business Education to ensure that the contents to be recommended and taught are in line to what is obtainable and practice in modern day organizations in to promote National Development.

Key Words: Business Education, National Development, Issues, Challenges, IT, SIWES

Introduction

One of the major key players in the evolution of any nation from one economic level to another is education. Education bequeaths to student's necessary knowledge, skills and competencies which can be used to develop themselves in the future and contribute meaningfully to the growth of the society. According to Parankimmalil (2012), the fundamental aim of education is the physical, intellectual, emotional and ethical integration of the individual as a social instrument for developing human resources and for human capital formation. On the other hand, Ajisafe, Bolarinwa and Edeh (2015) describe education as a potent vehicle for national transformation and development. Education serves as a prerequisite for quality manpower development, creation of wealth, a sure path to success in life and service to humanity. It is regarded as the most powerful instrument for social progress and a tool that maximizes creative potentials of individual for self-realisation and general development. It is very important to note that Nigeria and indeed any nation's future social-economic success will depend on the ability of its people to deal with a global environment that is knowledge driven.

Business Education is one of the major components of vocational education. In Nigeria, Business Education is offered at both the secondary and tertiary levels of education. Business Education is one of the basic foundations upon which the students build an awareness and understanding of business concept. According to Abumchukwu (2010), Business education is an aspect of total educational programme which provides the recipient with knowledge, skills, understanding and attitude



needed to perform well in the business world as a producer or consumer of goods and services.

Furthermore, Azuka (2000) is of the opinion that Business Education is a broad area of knowledge that deals with a nation's economic system, prepares individuals for effective management of private businesses, working in public offices and as citizens, workers and consumers. This owes to the fact that Business Education leads to creativity. Development of every nation depends largely on the successful performance of Business Education. Business Education also equips a person with relevant skills which would lead him to better performance in his chosen career.

With the improved contents of Business Education programme, the course comprises different areas with potentials of equipping the recipients with skills in Office Management, ICT Office Applications, Book-keeping/Accounting, Business Management, Marketing, Business Communication, Records management, among others, which are all necessary for the promotion, survival of business enterprises, as well as needed competencies needed for job place and career success. Individuals equipped with tools and techniques of successful handling of various businesses can contribute to national economy. Against this background, this paper looks at the issues and challenges involved in making Business Education bedrock to national development

Conceptual Clarifications:

Business Education

Business Education has no generally accepted definition because there are as different meanings of the concept as there are many experts who have tried to define it. It is a form of vocational education that is directed towards developing and equipping the learner to become productive in teaching, various forms of paid employment, self-employment and sustainable living, (Amoor&Udoh, 2008). Abdulkarim (2009) views Business Education as a programme of instruction designed with the deliberate intent of equipping students with:

- Requisite Knowledge for making rational decisions in the business world.
- The skill of inter personal relationship for effective management and communication of business operations and the attitudes of creativity.
- The innovation and adaptation contingent with changes in the world of business that leads to proficiency and efficiency in analyzing and operating business activities.

In the view of Nwanewezi (2010), Business Educationist that all encompassing education for office occupation, business teaching, business administration and economic understanding. Thus, the primary goal of Business Education is to produce skilful and dynamic business teachers, office administrators and businessmen and woman that will be effectively competent in the job market. According to Ugwuogor (2013) Business Education is education about business. It provides knowledge and understanding of the economic, financial, marketing, accounting, management system and other branches of business endeavour. In other



words, education about business prepares students to function intelligently as consumers and citizens in a business economy. Anyeaeneh and Nkegwu (2015) note 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. The goal of Business Education is primarily to produce competent, skillful and dynamic employees and businessmen and women that will effectively compete in the every dynamic world of work.

National Development

Development is a complex issue, with many different and sometimes contentious definitions. Generally however, development means a progression from a simpler or lower to a more advanced, mature, or complex form or stage. It is the gradual advancement or growth through a series of progressive changes. Adeowu and Jekayinfa (2016) define development as a process of change by which the entire system moves away from a condition of life widely perceived as unsatisfactory towards a situation or condition of life regarded as materially and spiritually better. With these, development leads citizens to long and healthy lives, knowledge and accessibility to the resources Nneeded for a decent standard of living and ability to participate in the life of the community.

National Development is a dynamic process. Adebayo, Kehinde, Okusanya and Odusanya (2016)see national development as a multidimensional process thatinvolves the exploitation and utilization of both human and material resources to improve the lots of the nation. It involves the sustained elevation of the entire society and social system towards a better or human life. National development empowers people and promotes important changes in their lives. From purely economic perspective, national development brings about improvement in human welfare, quality in life and social well being. It is about a nation's ability to satisfythe population's needs and wants. According to Ugwuogor(2013)National Development is measured using a range of economic indicators such as:

- Gross Domestic Product (GDP): This is the total value of goods and services, produced in a country (US\$).
- Gross National Product (GNP): Total value of goods and services produced in a country, including income from investment abroad (US\$)
- Purchasing Power Parity: Takes into account local cost of living and is usually expressed per capita income.

Apart from economic indicators, there are other social indicators linked to the economy that are used to measure national development such as literacy rate, pollution level, number in higher institutions, energy consumption, mortality rate, life expectancy, environment, politics, technological advancement and rate of industrialization, respect for rights freedom, equity, justice etc. Anyeaeneh and Nkegwu (2015)stresses that a developed society is the one that has succeeded in providing a source of living for the majority of its inhabitants and that in such society,



premium is attached to elimination of poverty, provision of food, shelter and clothing to its members

Nigeria is no stranger to developmental efforts and reforms. According to Benjamin (2013) Nigerian economy has undergone many upheavals from the traditional buoyancy through imperial exploitation, oil boom, indigenization, oil glut, austerity, countertrade, Structural Adjustment Programme, privatization and commercialization, Vision 20:20:20, SEED, NEEDS, 7-Point/Transformation Agenda to unguided deregulation. The aim was to develop blueprints that will transform the nation and place it firmly on the route to becoming a developed nation. These have led the nation to so many economic predicaments ranging from poverty, huge foreign debts, low levels of employment and industry capacity utilization, low value of the national currency (Naira), balance of payment squeeze, high inflation and ultimately declining standard of living.

Benjamin (2013) further submits that any nation with the above dominants can never talk of development, as there is no headway for them. However, education, especially Business Education can enable a nation to wriggle out of these considering the skills, ingenuity and the technical know-how that abounds in the course.

Business Education and National Development:

Business Education has been defined in several ways, most of which highlights its vocational nature. It is a form of vocational education that is directed towards developing the learner to become productive in teaching, paid employment and self employment (Anyeaeneh & Nkegwu, 2015) Business Education prepares beneficiaries for gainful employment and sustainable livelihood. It is generally seen as education for and about business. It is an education that provides knowledge and understanding of the economic, financial, marketing, accounting, management system and other branches of business endeavours. Hence, education about business prepares students to function intelligently as consumers and citizens in a business economy.

As a result of the impact of Business Education on the development of human resources, productivity and economic growth, it has become inherent in the national development strategies in many societies. To achieve sustainable national development, attention should be paid to strengthening the bridge between education and schooling and preparation for the world of work with respect to improving vocational education (Business Education) in Nigeria.

According to Chiadika, Iwendi, Fassasi and Onianwa (2014) note 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 Business Education inculcates the pedagogical and business competencies necessary for imparting business attitudes, concepts, skills and knowledge; which could be personal or vocational usage. For vocational usage, it prepares an individual to become an administrator, manager or teacher. The authors went further to state that Business Education programme equips the graduates with necessary entrepreneurial skills as it encompasses the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed by all persons in order to effectively manage their personal business, economic system and be gainfully



employed. Ajisafe, Bolarinwa, &Edeh (2015) note that since the primary goal of Business Education is to produce competent, skillful and dynamic business teachers, office administrators and businessmen and women that will effectively compete in the world of work; it can then be opined that Business Education is an impetus and sine qua non to national transformation and development because economic development usually engenders national transformation.

Several fields of endeavours abound in Business Education like Accounting, Secretary-ship, Finance, Banking, Insurance, Marketing, Data Processing, Management, Teaching, etc. These are distinct but integral disciplines which are capable of sustaining one's life. They are all offshoots of Business Education. To further buttress this, virtually every organization whether profit and nonprofit oriented in one way or the other requires the services of Business Education's products (Okoli, 2010). By the virtue of this assertion, it can easily be said that Business Education contributes tremendously to economic development and consequently to national development.

On the other hand, Business Education finds expression of entrepreneurial activities in areas like stenography/documentation centre, trading, small and medium scale businesses, account officer, transportation business, thrift loan business, teaching, and so on. Moreso, social, political and economic development of any nation assured when jobs are created for or by the citizenry through the establishment of lots of businesses that will accommodate the unemployed youths in the country.

The acquisition of skills, competencies and knowledge as imbedded in Business Education helps to address unemployment and its attendant vices, increase productivity and accelerate the development of the nation. Udo (2014) notes that by engaging in paid job or running of private businesses, graduates of Business Education programme are able to reduce social crimes among youths. This lead to social gratifications such as personal amusement love, happiness, affection and enjoyment which are necessary indices for measuring level of national development.

Anyaneh and Nzegwu (2015) note 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 to others and handle sophisticated office technologies and information system. An entrepreneur does not only provide job for himself/herself alone, but provides for others too. Thus, in turn helps the individual to increase per capital income as well as the standard of living. Supporting this, Ugwuogo (2013) opined that Business Education holds the prospect of contributing, through its job creation and self-employment packages, as well as for the attainment of vision 20:2020. Thus, he stated that a gainfully employed individual contributes to GDP per capital, reduces poverty and unemployment which are some of the indices of development.

Okoli and Oduh (2004) highlight other areas Business Education as a contributor to national development.

- **Increase in labour force:** Business Education contributes its quota on this issue and will continue to contribute as the world is still broadening both in population and in technological advancement. This fact is claimed as virtually



no organisation irrespective of how small it is that does not make use of Business Education's products.

- **Economic Awareness:** The study of Business Education has helped in creating economic awareness to all the citizenry that embraced it. This implies that Business Education is one of the economic literacy which encompasses bodies of knowledge on how the wealth of the nation is derived, how it is distributed and the place of the individual in the scheme of the economy.
- It has provided educational opportunities for the students preparing for careers in fields other than business to acquire business knowledge and skills needed to function effectively in those careers.
- Inculcating appropriate work habits and social values. Business Education programme avails its students the opportunity for an on-the-job training thereby giving them the feeling of working on actual job situation before completing their studies. Business Education has wide ranging academic activities that include field study trips, seminars, workshops, conferences, Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) and so on. These activities give the individual a taste of feeling of working in real job situation before taking full time job. Through the activities, the individual acquires such traits as co-operation, loyalty, accountability, prudence, personal character, business etiquette, etc. The inculcation of these traits goes a long way in increasing productivity at the workplace, vis-à-vis national development.

Based on these assertions, Business Education couldno doubt be used as a major weapon in reducing the worrisome, untamed and over rising problems of unemployment and poverty in Nigeria thereby attaining the status of one of the twenty most developed economy of the world by the year 2020. Therefore, the acceptance of human resources as the purveyor of national development and technological advancement in Nigeria makes it imperative that Business Education should be encouraged and relied upon as the fulcrum for the production of adequate trained labour force for the development in commerce, industry and public service in Nigeria.

Challenges to Quality Business Education in Achievement of National Development in Nigeria:

Anyaeneh and Nzegwu (2015) observe that Business Education programmes are faced with numerous challenges in a bid to effectively achieve its aims and objectives. Among the numerous challenges are:

Shortage of Qualified Business Teachers: The problem mostly is that qualified Business Education teachers prefer opting out of teaching to industries, thereby increasing the shortage of qualified personnel in Business Education. Reports from studies by Njoku (2015) and Egbe & Adeleye (2017) revealed that there is acute shortage of qualified business educators to teach all Business Education subjects in the study area. Also Agboola, (2015) reported that there is a chronic dearth of qualified business educators in most tertiary institutions. The implication is that people who did not acquire training, technical competence and right pedagogies in Business Education are drafted from other disciples into the department to teach



courses without imparting the right knowledge on the students. Onyesom and Ashibgwu, (2013) assert that no matter how beautifully designed is any educational programme, cannot succeed without an adequate crop of teachers. The objectives of Business Education for National Development cannot be achieved in the face of gross inadequacy of teachers.

Poor Funding: In Nigeria, educational institutions are not adequately funded. At times, funds meant for education are directed to the other sectors of the economy. That is why Ugwuogo (2013), expresses the fact that one of the major problems bedeviling education in Nigeria today is inadequate finding and Business Education is not an exception. The author added that Business Education programmes of tertiary institutions are poorly funded, especially at the state owned tertiary institutions. Zakka, Bwaran, Yongsun and Moris (2015) report that Business Education is solely funded by the proprietors (in most cases the state and federal governments) which results in under funding or poor funding of the programme. Due to inadequate funds, the purchase and maintenance of equipment, materials and training programme for teacher becomes almost non-existing, and this is bound to affect the efficiency of the products and the programme towards national development.

Inadequate Provision of Facilities and infrastructure: Business Education programme is capital intensive. Business Education requires facilities and infrastructure, which Oludele and Dosunmu (2013) identified as representing the empirical relevance of the totality of school environment for the realization of the aims and objectives of Business Education. The author identified facilities and infrastructure like suitable buildings, laboratories, ICT and non-ICT based equipment, tools, library facilities, lecture rooms, work-books and other materials for the effective implementation of Business Education curriculum contents are not adequately provided. In some institutions, available facilities are not spaced enough to accommodate students. This corroborates Ugwuogo (2012). And Zakka, Bwaran, Yongsun and Moris (2015) report that modern equipment, books, journals and facilities for Business Education are either non-available, inadequate or obsolete in their areas of study. This creates problems for business educators. The shortage of the facilities can hinder the quality of teaching and learning since quality reduces when the facilities required for imparting and learning are not provided. Therefore, graduates of Business Education who were taught without these facilities will not in any way be able to defend their certificates.

Poor Remuneration and Motivation of Teachers: Nigerian teachers, Business Education teachers inclusive, are poorly remunerated and motivated. The problem of teacher's remuneration in the education system in Nigeria has been from its inception. Teachers salaries, allowances, entitlements are always paid in arrears; at times they are denied of these entitlements. According to Okpuzo and Ogidan (2012), poor remuneration is responsible for the poor attitude to work of some teachers, they go about doing their private businesses instead of concentrating on how to improve teaching and learning in the school.

Poor Public Image of Business Education Programme: There is still poor public image of Business Education programme. This is in tandem with the observation of Okpuzo and Ogidan (2013) that parents prefer their children to study courses like



Pharmacy, Medicine, Law, Engineering, etc. because they regard Vocational Education/Business Education as a course for “Never-do-wells”, dropouts and other peoples children who could not secure admission into other disciplines. This is why many students enroll for the course as the last resort and prefer to invest in or contribute to science and liberal education. This attitude of people towards vocational education, especially to Business Education contributes to the problems in teaching and learning of Business Education. Idialu (2007) also states that there is still a strong tendency towards white collar jobs as a result of low status associated with Vocational Education, Business Education inclusive.

Inaccessibility of Digital and Internet Technology: The non-availability of digital and internet technology in the classroom has greatly affected both business educator and students. Students are supposed to be taught the use of digital and internet facilities, considering the influence of modern office and communication technology in today’s world economy. Lack of the modern technology for teaching and learning against the UNESCO (2002) view, that Business Education teacher must have the knowledge and skills to use the new digital tools and resources to help all students achieve high academic standard and students and business educators must have sufficient access to digital technologies and internet in their classroom, school and Business Education institutions.

Large class size: Business Education classrooms in many public tertiary institutions in Nigeria are overcrowded with too many students. It is not unusual to see over two hundred and fifty Business Education students in one small classroom, as against between 30 and 40 students per class as approved the regulatory bodies (National Board for Technical Education, National Commission for Colleges of Education and the National Universities Commission). Many of the students have no seat and no writing tables and hence many remained standing when lecture is on. Even when there are tables and chairs, too many students are squeezed into one seat, necessitating the use of megaphone. The students are either crowded together or are outside the classroom, workshop or laboratory during practical work. This hinders ability of the teacher to give students individual attention needed in the teaching and learning process. The high teacher-student ratio affects quality of delivery of practical courses like Word-Processing, Data Processing Shorthand, Keyboarding ICT Office Applications and others. This agrees with Okebukola’s (2003) in Agboola (2015) submission that over-crowding in our educational institutions with mediocre students accounts, in large part, for many of the social vices on our campuses such as examination malpractice, cultism and sorting; one of the major causes of poor quality graduates.

Lack of laboratory-Centred Instructional Strategy

For Vocational and Technical Education (inclusive of Business Education), instructional to learners leading to acquisition of skills and competencies require the use of instructional resources and facilities, especially for those subjects that require practical lessons. In other words, there is need to teach such lessons in a well equipped workshop or laboratory, (Egbe & Adeleye 2017). Also, (Olawole & Abuya, 2011) submit that in order to improve outcomes, Vocational and Technical Education should be promoted through the use of workshops and laboratories that



optimize learning experiences by creating an enabling environment that leads to rapid and effective acquisition of skills and knowledge. But because of the non availability of workshop and laboratories, Business Education teachers adopt conventional teaching methods which do not guarantee skills acquisition and competencies.

Insufficient Industrial Attachment and SIWES for students

In 1973, the Industrial Training Funds launched the Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme and Industrial Training Attachment. The programmes were aimed at creating opportunities for students to acquire practical skills in typical work and business environments. Among the earliest participants of the schemes, (Abdullahi, 2010), (Mchmet, 2010), and (Akinyele, Olusanya & Babayemi, 2016) reported the success stories and numerous contributions of the schemes towards acquisition and mastery of ICT, secretarial, human relations, communication and interpersonal skills by Business Education as well as other student beneficiaries. In the present reality, it is sad to note that these laudable schemes don't seem to be making meaningful contributions towards achieving the goals for which they were established. This can be seen as a big set back because most of the expensive, state of the art machines and equipment necessary for effective business education can only be found in companies and firms. Most firms that ought to even accommodate the students for IT and SIWES placement have folded up. Some of the few available ones do not accept students for placement while some only assign the students to menial and irrelevant jobs where they manage to accept them and do little or nothing to encourage or motivate them during the exercise. All these affect Business Education as the acquisition of the needed practical and workplace/business competency skills tend to impossible.

Conclusion

Business Education remains one of the paramount foundations of human resource development and for sustainable socio-economic development of any nation because Business Education provides knowledge, skills, attitudes and understanding needed to perform in the business world as a producer or consumer of economic goods and services that business offers. Therefore the fact that Business Education is imperative to national development is not in doubt. Hence, the paper opines that the government at all levels and indeed all stakeholder should throw in their weight fully and provide all the necessary prerequisites that will enable the programmerealize its objectives. This single act will have consequent and positive effects of developing manpower, which in turn is an index for national development.

Recommendations

As a way of ensuring that Business Education is an imperative for national development, the following recommendations are made;

- Only qualified business educators should be recruited to teach Business Education course at all educational levels. The already recruited ones should as a matter of urgency go for retraining especially in the use of ICTs.
- Governments, school proprietors, donor agencies and all stakeholders should join hands in providing funds for Business Education so as to ensure scholarship award, conducive teaching and learning environment: facilities such as internet, computers, textbooks, and related reading materials are provided and maintained.



- The Federal and State Governments should improve on the incentives and remuneration of Business Education personnel.
- To combat the poor public perception and misconceptions about vocational education which Business Education is part of, vocational educators and other stakeholders should embark on aggressive public enlightenment and career guidance programmes right from the secondary school level. The education must be geared towards improving the image of vocational education for the public to appreciate.
- Because of the capital intensiveness of Business education and the integration of ICT into the programme, educational institutions should consider encouraging collaboration with other learning institutions and industries in order to address the problem of shortage of facilities.
- Government should improve on the funding of Business Education programme across all levels of education in Nigeria.
- Teacher-student ratio of 1:30 should be maintained for quality delivery of practical courses in Business Education programme.
- Experts in Business Education should be incorporated into the reviewed curriculum when the time arises to ensure that the contents to be recommended and taught are in line to what it is obtainable in the modern day organizations practices to deliver national development and transformation assurances.
- Business education teachers should keep pace with modern methods of lecture delivery as well as be skilled in the use of modern technology.



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