



## **ENACTING BUSINESS EDUCATION BILL INTO LAW: CHALLENGES AND UNDERPINNING IMPERATIVES**

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### **Abstract**

*This review was about the need for enactment of Business Education Bill into law. Factors that would fast-track the enactment process were revealed. These meant that the Association of Business Educators of Nigeria (ABEN) should first put her house in order by defining the aim of the association, its characteristics, code of conduct and the need for the enactment itself. The issue of membership qualification into the association needed to be settled and the establishment of an institute to build capacity in the profession put in place urgently. The unique nature of Business Education Bill was distinguished from already existing laws and the value of the Bill to the nation when enacted was clearly explained.*

### **Introduction**

The urgent need for Business Education Law is something quite compelling to business education and business education professionals. The professionals need this law to enable repositioning of the profession and proper regulation of business education practice. The other benefits to be enjoyed by the professionals and the nation at large are unquantifiable. In order to realize the enactment of the law, the Association of Business Educators of Nigeria (ABEN) must brace up and tackle the challenges along the way. First of all, to put the house in order, ABEN must not only understand fully what it takes to get a bill enacted in the National Assembly but also document ancillary provision requirements from which the law itself will derive its powers.

One of the major preoccupations of great nations, especially developing nations, is to achieve rapid economic growth and development. That is why it is often said that business is the primary concern of any serious nation. The American example has shown that a nation is only as great as its crop of entrepreneurs and business leaders. It is in recognition of this that the government recently made entrepreneurship education a compulsory course in Nigerian tertiary Institutions. Indeed, some educators have posited that because entrepreneurship education is so fundamental to national development, it should be made compulsory at all levels of education. However, there is no adequately trained manpower to drive the programme even at the present level. Business education professionals that are supposed to teach entrepreneurship at the primary and secondary levels are few and the few available are got given the required recognition to teach it. Secondly the B.Ed. Entrepreneurship Education



programme we all yearn to help drive teaching of the course has just been approved by National Universities Commission and will take up to four years before the first set of graduates will be produced. Barely qualified teachers teach our children business subjects at all levels with unpredictable negative consequences. This trend must be reversed if Nigeria is to develop.

### **The Need for the Enactment**

The need to enact ABEN law is not only obvious but long overdue. It will, first and foremost, empower ABEN to establish Institute of Business Education so that it could impart requisite skills in the youths to enable engage themselves. The enactment of the law is more pressing now than any time for the following reasons:

1. **To fully engage the youth.** The lack of Institute of Business Education of Nigeria created a vacuum at the primary and secondary levels of education where no organized training, except general education, exists to catch them young and help to manage the population poor, the school drop outs, the almajiris, and by instilling the principles of personal values, basic personal finance, time management, entrepreneurial skills, Information and Communication Technology skills.
2. **To eradicate poverty and create employment opportunities.** The Institute, through the inculcation of the aforementioned skills, will definitely empower the youth with the requisite skills that will ultimately eradicate poverty as the youth will be easily employed or take opportunities for self-employment.
3. **To close the gaps in our educational system.** Have we imagined why the 6-3-3-4 system of education collapsed? The reason was that at the end of the junior and senior secondary education, those without the capacity for further education had no skills to fall back to and get employed or engage themselves in any meaningful way for survival. They then drop out of school. Hence what we have now are youths who have no skills and are jobless and who indulge in all forms of crime. Even the 6-6-4 system we are trying to operate may fail, if the Institute is not established to provide requisite skills so that the teeming school leavers can be gainfully engaged.
4. **To complement the nation's education system:** The Institute will provide continued education for those who have no capacity for higher education so that they can be useful to themselves and the nation thereby reducing illiteracy. As we all know, illiteracy is another form of poverty.

### **Aims of Business Education Professional Association**

The need to articulate the aims of the Association is very important so that the law makers will make up their mind on its relevance to society. Every

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professional association has aims and that of ABEN must not be assumed but spelt out very clearly. In my opinion, the aims of ABEN can be espoused as follows:

1. To promote the establishment and maintenance of standard of competence and conduct of those engaged and interested to foster and maintain a high standard of professionalism in the field
2. To organize seminars, lectures, workshops, conferences, and in-service training aimed at improving professional standards of members
3. It aims to serve as employment bureau for all members and liaises with employers of labour in respect of job opportunities
4. The professional body will ensure that members and the public at large are provided professional consultative advice. Sanders (1983) enumerated others to include: -
5. guiding the laymen in seeking to understand professional conduct
6. Regulating the relationships between practitioners and between practitioners and clients.
7. Distinguishing the scrupulous and unscrupulous practitioners
8. Acquainting the neotype with his professional obligations, privileges, and rights.
9. Protecting the competent ethical practitioners from unjust attack
10. Protecting reputation of the profession when the code of ethics is violated by one or several of the members

### **Characteristics or Qualities of Business Education Profession**

The only way to determine the qualities and characteristics of business education profession is to ensure that its services conform to strong standards. The following activities which were adapted from National Education Association of the United States of America can serve as a good guide:

1. Its activities must always be essentially intellectual
2. It should command a body of specialized knowledge and skills
3. It requires extended professional preparation.
4. Business education profession demands continuous in-service growth
5. Business education profession affords a life career and permanent membership
6. Business education profession should set up its own standards (e.g., ethical standards, licensure, etc.)
7. The profession exalts service above personal gains
8. The profession has a strong closely knit professional association.



### **Code of Conduct for Business Education Professionals**

Professional ethics are standards that govern the behaviour of members of an association. How should business education professionals behave when making decisions especially when how to behave is not clear-cut? According to Waterman (1988), code of ethics are formal standards and rules based on beliefs about right or wrong, that managers can use to help themselves make appropriate decisions with regards to the interest of their stakeholders.

Since core values are the bases of ethics, ABEN needs to create such core values that must be obeyed by all members and punishment meted on those who fail to obey such values. The following values are proffered for ABEN:

1. Members must have clear understanding of the aims and objectives of business education.
2. Members must practice excellence.
3. Encourage every member to offer quality service at all times.
4. Safeguard the confidence of members' employers, students, clients and former employers by not using such confidential information for personal gains.
5. Trust and honesty of purpose must transcend all other considerations.
6. Protect the interest of members where unjust treatment is meted by employers, clients and other stakeholders.
7. Members must ensure currency of skills and competency through attending conferences, workshops and technical sessions of the association and other related bodies.
8. Members must ensure customer satisfaction.
9. Help business educators grow in their career.
10. Members found guilty of corrupt practices, adjudged bankrupt or fail to satisfy judgement debt, shall have their chartered certificates revoked.

### **Adoption of a Unified Qualification Framework**

One of the problems to be overcome is a clear decision on academic and professional qualifications that must serve as entry permit into Business Education profession. It is obvious that a degree in business education is a given but it should not be enough for a lifelong professional career. Even when M. Sc. and PhD in business education are obtained, a stringent laid-down steps must be charted to ensure that the skills of the professional members are continually upscaled and sharpened through compulsory workshops and conferences. This serves dual purpose - updating skills and compulsory attendance and participation in all activities of the profession.

For other interested candidates whose qualifications are not business education who are admitted into the 'associate' cadre, a Postgraduate Diploma in Business Education (PGDBE) must be made compulsory. This is very important so as to make it clear that a membership of Teachers Registration



Council of Nigeria (TRCN) or a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) cannot be substitutes. This distinction is key in order to set aside, *ab initio*, the argument that a PGDE or TRCN are teacher qualifications and that a PGDBE is a duplication or unnecessary. Of course, those admitted through PGDBE qualification, just like others with M. Sc. and PhD in Business education, must also follow the lifelong professional experiences earlier explained. For candidates whose qualifications are lower than a degree in business education or outside business education, admission can only be at the 'associate' level until a PGDE and other certifications are attained and this will be discussed later.

### **Establishment of an Institute for Developing Capacity**

As a matter of necessity, ABEN needs to establish an institute that will be charged with the responsibility of designing and administering development programmes in business education that will enable certifications of members. First, the PGDBE curriculum content need to be developed and other certificate programmes at lower, middle and higher levels established and a clear-cut entry requirements outlined. Apart from the PGDBE curriculum which non-business educators must acquire, certifications in three stages must be charted so that a clear route into and progression in the profession will be clear for all to see.

A committee is required to establish the three stages of certifications and level of entry into each. The committee will also design the PGDBE curriculum which must show a clear departure from the normal PGDE so as to lay to rest any argument that may stem from people who may aver that PGDE is the same with PGDBE and therefore, enough for entry into business education profession.

### **Admitting all Business Graduates in ABEN**

It has become necessary to admit all business graduates into the fold of the Association of Business Educators of Nigeria. First, they have the business skills. All they require now is the Postgraduate Diploma in Business Education not Postgraduate Diploma in Education as the heart of the matter is to show that teaching business courses is a specialized discipline quite different from the general pedagogy obtained from a PGDE. This is why a well designed PDGBE curriculum is central to the survival and prosperity of business education. A strong case therefore, need to be made that any business graduate that does not possess a PGDBE is not qualified to teach business course in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. This is the corner stone and the basis for regulation if Business Education Law is enacted. That is the understanding in the United States of America that is championing business education.

### **Distinguishing Characteristics of Business Education Bill from Existing Regulation Bodies**

What will you tell someone who asserts that Business Education Bill is unnecessary in view of the plethora of related regulatory bodies in Nigeria?



There is the absolute need to convince the naysayers that Business Education Bill is unique and a sine qua non for sustainable national development. How is Business Education Bill different? The following reasons can be adduced.

1. It teaches personal value skills early in life
2. It teaches financial skills at the primary and secondary school levels.
3. It teaches entrepreneurship skills at the primary and secondary school levels.
4. It implements teaching using pedagogies related to business.
5. It is the only discipline whose curriculum is ingrained with technology and technology is driving business.
6. Professionals, in addition to business skills, have teacher qualification and industrial qualification obtained through students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) and cooperative education.
7. Business education helps to produce secondary school leavers with entrepreneurship skills thereby preparing them for self-employed or employable if they cannot further their studies.
8. It helps in reducing unemployment in a country.

### **Relevance of Business Education in National Development**

Business educators are the most qualified who possess the pedagogical skills to effectively impart into the youths personal, financial, entrepreneurial, and ICT skills which the business world needs right now. This will increase the small and medium enterprises that will grow the economy. When the institute is established, it will offer continuing professional training to all school drop-outs, other youths and the working class thereby:

1. Enabling them to be fully employed whether by the industry or by working for themselves through competing for millions of digital jobs of the future that will not require them to work for someone.
2. Reducing unemployment as the youths will deploy the skills acquired for meaningful livelihood.
3. Reducing poverty as the youths will learn how to engage themselves in meaningful living.
4. Reducing drastically crimes and criminality that threaten our national life.
5. **Provide the nation with a skilled workforce:** Today's workforce must be increasingly able to handle the complex tasks brought about by the technology and information revolution. Business education subjects provide workers with the necessary basic skills, such as technological literacy, communications, and teamwork skills, that will enable them to think both critically and creatively.
6. **Help Nigeria Keep Pace with Technological Change:** Changes in today's society are occurring at an exponential rate. Association of Business Educators of Nigeria is always looking to the future and



- constantly updating her curriculums to meet innovations and advances that impact the business world.
7. **Encourage Entrepreneurship in the Nation:** An explosion of job growth has occurred in small businesses. Business education subjects help prepare future workers who think entrepreneurially and who recognize and take advantage of new business opportunities.
  8. **Develop Beneficial School/Industry Partnerships:** Companies in Nigeria have an opportunity, through cooperative education, to work with business education teachers to produce employees with skills needed in the business world.
  9. **Ensure the Economic Resilience of Nigeria:** The economic resilience of a nation in a fast-changing economy or in an economic downturn is dependent upon a workforce that is flexible and adaptable to change. Business education subjects can instil a healthy respect for lifelong learning whether it is learning a new technology skill or a new method of management.
  10. **Encourage Companies to Locate Their Business in Nigeria:** In addition to looking for a good transportation system and an attractive tax structure, businesses considering whether or not to establish an office or plant in Nigeria will also look closely at the availability of a skilled workforce, particularly information technology employees. Business education teachers can provide that skilled workforce. They can also work closely with companies to develop programmes that allow future workers to train directly at the company before they graduate.
  11. **Encourage Leadership in Nigeria:** Business education subjects teach leadership skills that give future workers the ability to motivate people, communicate goals, and work to effect change. These skills will produce effective managers in industries as well as the future leaders in our nation.
  12. **Provide International Trade Opportunities:** The globalization of business has created unprecedented opportunities in trade and marketing. Business education subjects prepare future workers to deal with the complexities of different cultures and economic systems so that Nigeria can better take advantage of international opportunities.
  13. **Enhance the Economic Literacy of the Nation:** A workforce that knows how to save and invest, as well as make sound business decisions, contributes to the overall health of the nation's economy. Business education subjects teach the citizens to make responsible decisions regarding purchasing homes or cars, using credit, and making consumer choices.
  14. **Strengthen the Productivity and Prosperity of Nigeria:** A prosperous nation has a workforce trained to meet the diverse needs of the ever-changing world of business. Business education subjects provide future workers with a wide range of vital skills: information technology, business management, entrepreneurship, accounting, finance, and international business.



## **Conclusion**

The need for enactment into law of the Business Education Bill for the practice of business education is self-evident. Business education is the blood stream of economic growth in any nation. The higher the economic literacy of any society, the greater the level of development. All efforts should therefore, be made to promote economic literacy among the populace while best practices among the professionals of business and entrepreneurship education in Nigeria should be encouraged. The enactment will go a long way in this direction. The Bill when passed into law will regulate business education practice, develop and promote on sustainable basis, contemporary curricular to plug the gaps created in the general ones provided by government agencies such as National Educational Development and Research Council, National Commission for Colleges of Education, National Board for Technical Education and the National Universities Commission; create ethos for business education practitioners and introduce penalties for infractions. It would provide training and retraining opportunities for thousands of young men and women, prepare millions of youths for better employment opportunities thus reducing poverty and accelerating the pace of national development.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the review, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. A PGDBE should be adopted by ABEN as a unified qualification framework for all business education professionals.
2. The content of the qualification framework should be developed by ABEN.
3. Institute of Business Education should be established to implement programme development policies.
4. A committee should be set up by ABEN to deal with details that will make the enactment a reality.

## **References**

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